THE EFFECT OF PROCESS-GENRE APPROACH ON ESP STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN WRITING BUSINESS LETTERS

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ABSTRACT

The process-genre approach is the synthesis of the concepts of process approach and genre approach. This study aimed to investigate the effect of process-genre approach on ESP students' achievement in writing request letters and to investigate their responses to the use of this eclectic approach. This study is an action research study and the participants were 28 management students of Djilali liabes university, Algeria. The data were gained from the results of post-tests administered to the students following the completion of the treatment. The students' writing products were analyzed and compared by using independent t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The result of the study showed that there was a significant effect of process-genre approach on the students' writing achievement, covering four writing components: organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics.

Keywords: Business letters, process-genre approach, writing achievement.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is undoubtedly an important component of learning English as a second language and should be given more concentration in ESP classes in order to organize learners to deal with the communicative needs of real life situations such as writing business letters. I personally believe that ESP students, like in Algeria write without fully understanding the process of writing and purpose of writing. The old fashioned product approach, however, has not achieved its intended outcomes proved in many studies. In my opinion, students as well as teachers are not familiar with new pedagogical research in the field of writing that has undergone many major shifts over many decades e.g. from Product to Process and Genre approach. Personally, I think that the product approach should gradually be replaced with some new approaches that combines process-genre approach, which seems would prove more conducive and helpful for ESP students to meet their needs in writing business letters.

The prevalent teaching writing theories and practices in Algeria are missing with reference to teaching writing in ESP context particularly and in ESL context in general. Therefore, this research has two basic aims:
• To find out the improvement in students' business letter writing achievement with the help of process-genre approach.
• To investigate students' and teachers' responses and perception of the introduction and implementation of the process-genre approach to teach business writing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bhatia (1993) asserts that it is over-simplified to treat genre approach as either a product or process approach, because genre approach needs to integrate not only product and process, but purpose and participants. Hyland (2003) claims process approach can be combined with genre approach, enabling learners to understand and control the processes and purposes of text creation, and contexts where the texts are composed and read. An attempt is made to integrate the input and linguistic knowledge (product and genre approaches), context and purpose of writing (genre approach), and writing skill and creativity (process approach) (Badger & White 2000). Named as "process genre approach" (PGA), it enables learners to do planning/drafting/publishing within a product-oriented framework, which is characterized by real-world concerns of purpose and audience (Badger & White 2000: 159, see Figure 2). In PGA, grammar is treated as dynamic meaning-making resources. Learners are scaffolded to develop their autonomy, and receive meaningful feedback from peers and teachers (Kim & Kim 2005).

According to Badger and White (2000) the process genre approach consists of six steps:

1. Preparation

One of the central insights of genre analysis is that writing is embedded in a social situation, so that a piece of writing is meant to achieve a particular purpose which comes out of a particular situation. In this vein, the teacher begins preparing the students to write by defining a situation that will require a written text and placing it within a specific genre, such as a persuasive essay arguing for or against an issue of current interest. This activates the schemata and allows students to anticipate the structural features of this genre.

2. Modeling and reinforcing

In this step the teacher introduces a model of the genre and gives the students the opportunity to consider the social purpose of the text s to raise the students' consciousness of the contextual features of the genre in terms of the social context (rhetorical situation including purpose, audience, and occasion) in which the genre is used and the purpose it serves. For example, the purpose of an argumentative essay is to persuade the reader to act on something. Next, the teacher discusses how the text is structured and how its organization develops to accomplish its purpose. That is, the genre is introduced through a model text that exemplifies the genre. The emphasis at this stage is on the text's social purpose (functions), how the information in the genre is organized (schematic structure), and aspects of the way the text speaks (lexico-grammatical features). Finally, the students may do some comparisons with other texts to reinforce what they have learned about the particular genre.

3. Planning

In this step many meaningful activities activate the students' schemata about the topic, including brainstorming, discussing, and reading associated material. The aim is to help the students develop an interest in the topic by relating it to their experience.

4. Joint constructing

During this step which will facilitate later independent composing, the teacher and students work together to begin writing a text. While doing so, the teacher uses the writing processes of brainstorming, drafting, and revising. The students contribute information and ideas, and the teacher writes the generated text on the blackboard or computer. The final draft provides a model for students to refer to when they work on their individual compositions.

5. *Independent constructing*

The cognitive process involved here is exploiting generic knowledge of a repertoire of specialist genres by becoming informed users of the discourse of their chosen field (Bhatia, 1997). At this point students have examined model texts and have jointly constructed a text in the genre. They now undertake the task of composing their own texts on a related topic. Class time can be set aside for students to compose independently so that the teacher is available to help, clarify, or consult about the process. The writing task can be continued as a homework assignment.

6. *Revising*

Students eventually will have a draft that will undergo final revision and editing. This does not necessarily mean that teachers have to collect all the papers and mark them one by one. Students may check, discuss, and evaluate their work with fellow students, as the teacher again guides and facilitates. The teacher may make an effort to publish the students' work, which will impart a sense of achievement and motivate the students to become better writers.

In figure 1 below Badger and White (2000), illustrates how these six steps interact in a recursive way with themselves and with other writing skills. A short description of what occurs during the six steps will also illustrate how elements of the process and genre approaches work in unison.

FIGURE 1: APPLICATION OF THE PROCESS GENRE APPROACH
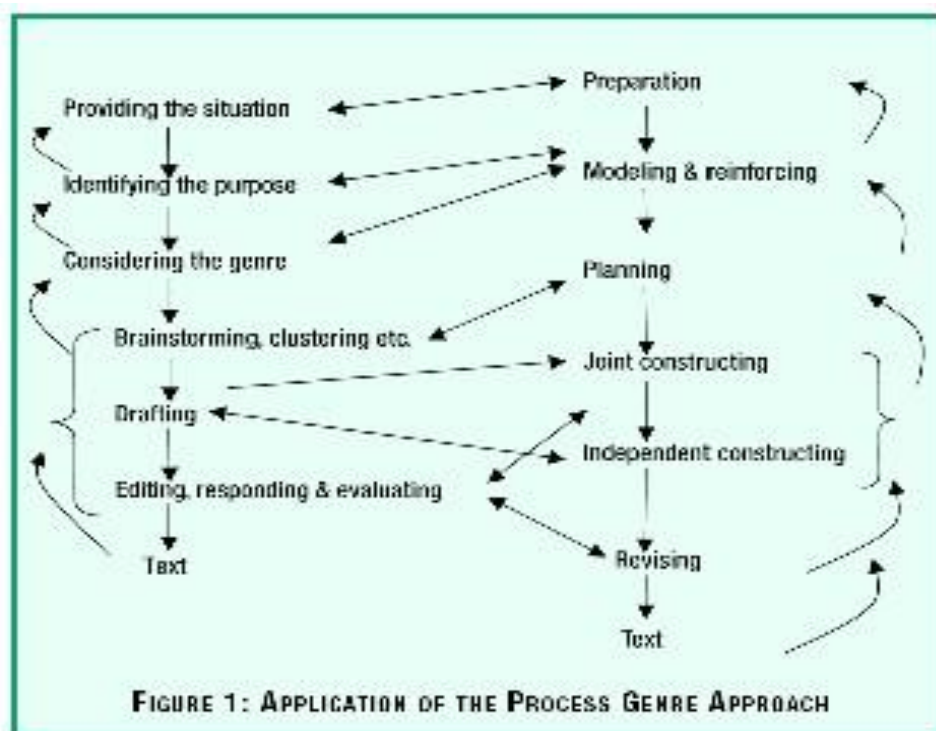
METHODOLOGY

In the present study, a classroom action research (CAR) was carried out to investigate whether incorporating features of process approach such as formative feedback into genre-based instruction make the students improve better their business writing skills. The participants involved 28 Algerian Management students from Djillali Liabès University.

To collect the data, three instruments such as observation sheet, writing test and questionnaire were employed. Observation sheet was used during the implementation of the process-genre approach. Meanwhile, writing test and questionnaire were distributed at the end of each cycle. The data were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative data were gathered from the observation sheet and students' answers to open ended questions in the questionnaire while quantitative data were gathered from students' writing scores and students' answers to close-ended questions in the questionnaire. The data from observation sheet were analyzed and interpreted to describe the activities during the implementation of the process-genre approach. The results of students' writing test were analyzed using scoring rubric developed by Rose (2007, as cited in Emilia, 2011). Meanwhile, the data from questionnaire were analyzed using percentage formula and some procedures determined in the study.

RESULTS

In the first term spanning two months, the process-genre approach of teaching writing was introduced and implemented. At the end of the first term mean score of writing tests was 55, with 72.5 as the highest score and 44 as the lowest score. It means 54% students got B grade and above. In the second term, test results reflected at the end of term as 78% students got B grade and above.

In the final term, the mean score was 83.6 with 91 as the highest and 73 as the lowest score and 84% students got B grade and above. It means that there was a continuous improvement in students' writing scores in writing tests with the help of process- genre approach. There is statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the students writing tests over three terms. The results of this study demonstrate that there was an improvement in students' writing scores after conducting process-genre approach. This is proven by the students' scores and students' mean score were increase. It is also similar to the results of the studies conducted by Kim & Kim (2005), Gao (2007), Noviantoro (2011) and Babalola (2012).

Moreover, students' responses to the implementation of process genre approach to teaching writing business letter are mostly positive. For most of the students, the implementation of the process-genre approach to teaching writing business letter can help them in comprehending what an enquiry letter is, how to write it, what its purpose and what the forms of language that are found in the target letter. It is relevant to the studies of Gibbons (2002) and Derewianka (2004) that in modelling stage, students are explained about what the purposes of the text are, how the text is structured, what the function of each stage of the schematic structure is as well as what linguistic features of the text are.

The results of the study also demonstrate that feedback given by the teacher during writing process is helpful. In this case, type of feedback given was teacher-student conferencing. This is in line with the study of Hyland (2000; as cited in Hyland, 2003) that teacher-student conferencing can assist the students not only in giving them a clearer idea of their strengths and weaknesses but also allowing them to raise questions on their written feedback as well as helping them construct their revisions.

Furthermore, peer feedback helps the students in writing business letters since such feedback is useful for them both to assist them about what they do not understand in writing the target genre and to recall them if there are mistakes in their writing. This is relevant to the study

conducted by Gao (2007) that through peer feedback, the students are helped to enhance their writing skill by peer.

CONCLUSION

This study is concerned with the implementation of process-genre approach to teaching writing business letter. The findings of this study show improvement in students' writing scores after they were involved in the teaching program using the process-genre approach. Moreover, students' responses to the implementation of process genre approach to teaching writing business letter are mostly positive. Furthermore, having finished conducting the research, there are several suggestions that might be useful for teachers and next researchers in implementing the process-genre approach to teaching writing. However, further studies employing a variety of research methods are suggested to investigate the impact of the process/genre-based approach as an instructional tool in ESP writing classrooms.

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