Writing Skill Teaching: A New Perspective

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Pedro Luis Luchini. 2003. Writing Skill Teaching: A New Perspective. *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal, 11*(3), 123-143. Writing effectively and efficiently for natives writers who use their native language and for those who are second language learners is undoubtedly one of the most difficult skills to foster. This paper will explore why writing is such an intricate task by focusing on the writers´ thinking process and the strategies involved in the production of written texts. The most influential methodologies for writing sill teaching will be briefly described and a new perspective – which conflates both the process and genre approaches – will be finally proposed. The purpose of this paper is to critically analyse the effectiveness of adopting this new approach to writing skill teaching in a language improvement course for trainees attending year four at a teacher training programme at the Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata, Argentina. In the light of the results obtained, some debatable issues will be discussed and some recommendations will be given.

Key words: writing skills, evaluation, effectiveness

1. Introduction

Writing effectively and appropriately for writers who use their native language and for those who are learning a second language is unquestionably one of the most difficult linguistic abilities to develop. To comprehend how these difficulties operate, we need to examine the writers and their writing processes as they write and the strategies and stages they need to go through in order to produce a coherent and cohesive written piece.

Although writing can sometimes occur in isolation, it is a social

activity in which readers and writers are involved in constant interaction. To be able to understand the implications and impact of written texts on society, it is necessary to analyse their social role both inside and outside the classroom setting.

For a long time now, many language teachers, particularly in Argentina, have avoided the explicit teaching of writing skills from language programmes. Yet innovative pedagogical approaches to the teaching of writing have recently emerged in an attempt to revert this situation providing writing teachers with the necessary tools to make of the writing class a rewarding experience. Some of these recent methodologies based their foundations and principles on the influence that first language writers had on the teaching of writing to second language learners.

The purpose of this paper is to critically analyse the usefulness of adopting a process-genre oriented approach to writing skill teaching in a language development class for student teachers attending year four at a teacher training programme in Argentina (Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata). In the first part of this paper, I will deal with the reasons why writing is such a complex task and I will emphasise on the writers´ thinking process and the strategies involved in the elaboration of a piece of writing. I will also comment on the social implications of writing skills and the emergent need for their inclusion in language learning programmes. Following this section, I will discuss how ESL (English as a second language) methodologies for teaching writing have been shaped by research into first language writers´ composing processes. In the next section, I will briefly describe the main different views to teaching writing and will propose the implementation of an innovative methodology in which the process and genre approaches work in combination. The rest of the paper will be devoted to showing how my proposal to teaching writing was realised in the classroom setting and to evaluate the effectiveness of its implementation.

2. Writing: A Difficult Task

The majority of language learners consider the writing skill as one of the most challenging linguistic abilities to foster; indeed, teachers of writing often hear their students complain of uncertainty about how to express themselves in writing. There are many reasons involved in the writing process that contribute to make of this skill an arduous one: planning and selection of ideas, establishing a point of view, focusing, organisation of ideas, structuring of the text, evaluating, and management of linguistic competence, are some of them. In order to understand how these *reasons* operate and interrelate among one another within the writing process, we would need to consider what happens in the writers´ minds and their context as they write.

Writing is about engaging in a challenging task that calls for a constant making of decisions and choices at the level of ideas, planning, organisation, and expression, among others. The making of these decisions and choices needs to be interconnected in order to establish meaningful associations and links leading on to a coherent linear text. Worded differently, the writing process functions as a huge and complicated problem-solving situation in which much more than linguistic rules is involved (White and Arndt 1991).

To unravel this challenging problem-solving situation, we should identify what happens with the writer as he writes. Writing involves a lot of high mental processing which calls for an intellectual effort in which cognitive skills other than linguistic competence are required. Along this same line of thought, Jacobs (1982), quite contentiously, asserts that linguistic competence does not affect composing competence (in Krapels 1990:40).

In my particular context, this assertion is partly supported by the results obtained coming from those students who, having acquired English as their mother tongue (L1), cope with similar difficulties to the ones posed by those average second language learners (L2) when engaged in the elaboration of a written text. This finding supports what Zamel (1982 in Krapels 1990) points out when she says that competence

in the composing process is more significant than the linguistic competence in the ability to write accurately in English. She also establishes a similarity between the writing processes of writers who used their native language and those used by second language learners. By observing Zamel´s (1982 in Krapels 1990) appreciation, it can be true to say that when people write in their native language they face similar, if not the same kind of writing problems as people writing in a foreign or second language.

This comparison of L1 and L2 writers has given rise to the question of how much L1 research into writing processes has contributed to the development of theories for L2 writing processes. According to Silva (1990) the developments in ESL composition have been influenced considerably by developments in the teaching of writing to native speakers. Indeed, Zamel (1984, p.198) had gone so far as to suggest that research into second language composition processes seems to corroborate much of what we have learned from research in first language writing. (in Krapels 1990, p.39)

However, this is not Silva´s view (1990), and he goes on to argue, somewhat polemically, that ESL necessitates different perspectives, models and practices from those presented in L1. He also adds that there are no comprehensive theories of L2 writing at present, and considers that it should not be prudent to say that theories of first language writing alone will be enough.

Linguistic competence is not and should not be the only concern writers, whether writing in L1 or L2, should focus on when they write. In fact, through writing we can communicate and convey meaning which naturally prevails over form. The written text transcends through time and space and it gives our thoughts permanence and authority. Although writing can be a lonely activity that requires exploring, opposing, making connections, and establishing differences and similarities (White and Arndt, 1991), it is associated with specialised social roles since learning to write requires a set of cognitive and social relationships. By mastering the writing skills you enter a sophisticated cognitive, conceptual, social and political arena that in our technology–

driven society, those who commands both spoken and written skills enjoy a superior social position if compared to someone who only handles the forms of speech. (Tribble, 1996)

Considering the essential role and impact of writing on society, the reasons for teaching and incorporating such a skill in learning programmes are more than compelling. Yet for a long time now, many language teachers, including myself, in an attempt to use class time doing more communicative activities, have relegated written tasks as homework leaving students unsupported and unattended to perform the tasks on their own. Fortunately, the teaching of writing as well as other skills has evolved giving rise to many insights into the nature of language and learning. Since 1945, methodologies for the teaching and learning of writing have emerged revolving around different central ideas: product, process, reader, writer, context, audience, among others. Hedge (2000) affirms that around the 1990´s, methodology for the teaching of writing in ELT classroom began to set apart from the prevailing traditional approaches to focus on new approaches founded on research into how a piece of writing comes into existence through protocols and composing-aloud techniques- leading to the process writing approach, in which writers and their writing processes are regarded as focal points. These latest trends in methodology have aimed at reflecting communicative criteria influencing the development of teaching materials as well. However, at present, the teaching of writing, when not neglected in many language classes, centres only upon the educational function it has (writing essays, compositions, examination answers, etc.) leaving aside its communicative aspect. (McDonough and Shaw, 1993).

It should now be clear that language teachers need to be aware of the broad range of difficulties involved in the teaching and learning of writing. By analysing L1 writers´ composing processes, we learnt that as they write they go through a set of recursive strategies and phases in order to come up with a unified piece of work. We also know that writing is a challenging and complex task that requires the making of decisions and choices at different cognitive levels involving a lot of

intellectual effort other than the accurate use of linguistic competence. Indeed, in order to overcome these difficulties, it seems to be that teachers should adopt an approach to writing that provides useful support for student writers contemplating the teaching of those cognitive strategies and stages involved in composing a written text.

3. Different Approaches to Teaching Writing Skills

In the previous section I mentioned the complexity of writing skills and the emergence of new methodologies for the teaching and learning of writing.   In this part, after exploring and analysing the most influential approaches to teaching writing: the product, the process and the genre, I will devise the most suitable methodology according to my context and particular situation which will be used as criteria against which the evaluation of this writing project will be done.

The product approach, also called controlled composition or guided composition approach to writing, is rooted in the principles underlying the notion that mastering a language equals mastering speech and learning is synonymous for habit formation. Considering this, writing plays a secondary role in the learning process, most of the times, acting as reinforcement for oral activities. The writer is simply a manipulator of previously learned language structures and the reader is the teacher in the role of editor or proof-reader, not particularly interested in the transmission of messages but rather in the accuracy of the use of the linguistic rules of the language. The text becomes the setting for language practice comprised of a storage of sentence patterns and vocabulary lists whereas the writing context is the ESL classroom itself since there is no conception neither of audience nor of purpose. Tasks typical of this approach are filling in blanks in sentences, constructing sentences following a model or pattern, writing sentences with information gathered from a chart or graphic, translating and free compositions. Although some writing teachers suggest that this approach no longer exists, it can be said that it is still well alive and

functioning in many language contexts.

Around the 1960´s, the still current-traditional rhetoric approach originated as a bridge between the controlled composition methodology and the need for producing a more extended written discourse. The objective of this approach is to surpass the surface level structure and to focus on the composed product always aiming at the logical construction of discourse forms. The emphasis is put on the construction of the paragraph and its constituent elements (topic sentence, supporting ideas and conclusion) and the development of the essay contemplating its different modes (narration, description, argumentation, and so on). Within the classroom setting, the primary concern lies again in form rather than on meaning. Students are given a model which they have to read and analyse and apply their previous structural knowledge to create a parallel piece of writing. On looking at this description, Silva (1990, p.14) would say that all that writers need to do to come up with a piece of written discourse is then fill in a pre-existing form with provided or self-generated content.

According to Tribble´s (1996) view, in the traditional or text-based approach to teaching writing, both the controlled composition and the current-traditional rhetoric approaches seem to be conflated. Under this perception teachers who pursue this methodology present their students with authoritative texts for them to imitate and adapt. Teachers in their role of instilling correctness and conformity, see errors as something they have to correct and eliminate. Extending on this same view, McDonough and Shaw (1993), through their Traditional Writing Activities, discriminate among: a) controlled sentence construction b) free composition and c) the homework function. Again, their reaction to these same approaches centres around the emphasis on accuracy over meaning, the focus of attention on the finished product, the teacher acting as a judge of the finished work and writing as having an overall consolidating function.

These structural approaches to writing, however orthodox today, provided important pedagogical and practical implications for the development of future and later methodologies. So from considering

writing as a reinforcement activity that aims mainly at the storage of surface structural knowledge, focusing on the final product in itself, I will now move on to the process writing approach whose principal goal resides in the writers and their processes to obtain such product. The main aim of the process writing approach, as espoused by Hedge (2000) is to help learners to gain greater control over the cognitive strategies involved in composing. This means that a number of principles centred on the development of these strategies should be incorporated into the language classroom to help students cope with the writing process. A typical set of activities aiming at fostering these strategies would be to start out by:

- Discussing the topic: this can be done as a whole class or group activity.
- Getting or generating ideas: learners can either work individually, in groups or together with the teacher to generate ideas.
- Planning: teacher provides practice in planning through different activities such as brainstorming, note-taking, asking questions, mind maps, spidergrams, using visuals and charts, dramatizations, role plays and/or simulations.
- Selecting ideas: teacher guides learners to select ideas, establish a focal point and a purpose for their texts. This can be achieved by means of the fastwriting and/or the loopwriting techniques (White and Arndt, 1991), questions, charts or checklists designed exclusively to focus on these specific aims.
- Identifying audience: teacher guides learners through questions or charts to identify type of audience in order to contextualise their texts.
- Organising and structuring of texts: once learners have focused upon a central idea, they may start organising and structuring their texts by filling in charts, responding to questions and/or summarising information.
- Drafting: learners prepare an outline of their texts.
- Using revision strategies: learners, working individually or in groups,

are encouraged to review their outcomes. They may resort to peer editing using checklists or a set of questions provided by the teacher.

- Conferencing Checklists Reformulation: teacher supports revision in class using the conferencing procedure in which teacher and students meet face-to-face to revise their productions. Another procedure could be the use of checklists or the reformulation technique through which learners have the possibility of looking at different ways of improvement by comparing a target model with their own texts. It is expected that all these reviewing techniques provide learners with feedback which will allow them to improve their pieces.

- Second draft: following their teacher´s response, learners work on their second drafts. The teacher collects their second drafts and using a code system previously negotiated with the students, indicates areas for further improvement.

- Proof-reading: learners check their use of grammar, punctuation, spelling and also consider the overall presentation of their written tasks.

- Marking: teacher assigns a final mark for the final work. In the case of teachers using a portfolio-approach, the teacher may choose to gradually mark the students´ overall performance in class.

   The process writing approach arises in the 1990´s, and it centres around a non-linear and exploratory process through which ESL writers can express their ideas and feelings and convey genuine meaning. Transferred to classroom settings, writing teachers encourage collaborative community tasks within which learners, in a low-anxiety environment, no longer burdened with such tight time constraints and interference as in previous times, work through their composing processes. The writer becomes the centre of attention while the reader is mainly concerned with content, ideas and the negotiation of meaning, disregarding form unless it impairs effective communication. Considering that the writing process is an individual act in which writers establish purpose, meaning and form, and in doing so, create

their own audience, the notions of context and socio-cultural setting lie in their hands as their own responsibility.

The appropriateness of adopting a process approach as opposed to the other approaches has been widely criticised by advocates of the genre, social or English for Academic Purposes (EAP) approach. This criticism revolves around the fact that the process approach leaves some aspects of academic discourse unattended questioning whether its orientation really trains students for academic work. Another aspect strongly criticised by the social constructionist viewers (Johns in Kroll 1990, p.27) is the overemphasis placed on the writer and the total disregard for the socio-cultural context. One of the primary concerns of the EAP approach is to help to socialise the writing student to the academic context. Under this approach, writing aims at the production of discourse within the requirements of an academic community. The text is considered successful inasmuch as it meets the standards and realities of academia. Carrell (1983 in John, 1990) explains that the reader who possesses formal as well as content schemata, is a member of that academic community. To this concept, Tribble (1996) adds that when a reader fails to recognise the purpose of a text, communication will not have taken place. The context then, is both the academic setting and the task itself which should respond to a specific recognisable genre.

In the previous section, I referred to the social impact of the written text in a given community. At this point, the genre approach as presented by Tribble (1996) will be useful to expand on the notion of social status in relation to writing, thus supporting one of the main principles of academic writing. According to Tribble (1996), a text is a product of the categories of social interactions which are realised by genres. The text should be representative of the specific genres with which the students are working and it should be employed as models for discussion and scrutiny, but not for mere imitation. This assertion reaffirms the absence of the notion of socio-culture in the process writing approach.

However, whereas the product and process approaches are not

compatible, the process and the genre approaches could benefit from each other in the setting up of an ESL writing programme. The recursive composing process orientation could be complemented with a set of activities or tasks designed in such a way that students become aware and, thus, recognise the contextual and textual features of genres as part of the lesson. Following this trend, not only would learners be engaged in a process–driven instruction but also they would be pushed to analyse and draw their own conclusions about aspects and implications of text and context fulfilling the principles of both approaches.

In this section I referred to the difficulties involved in the composing process and suggested that, in my particular context, the process approach combined with the genre approach to teaching writing could provide student writers with some recourse to overcome these problems. Therefore, it is important for teachers of writing to challenge their learners to engage in the recursive (Hedge 2000, p.304) process of writing and to provide them with models for analysis and discussion in the hope that students will be able to recognise the different elements that constitute the schematic structure of the written discourse and identify the audience and purpose of each written piece, essential requisites necessary to operate successfully in academic settings. The chief aim of this recognition stage is that learners develop awareness as to how these elements operate within the written discourse, a skill that, eventually, it might be argued, will enable them to transfer this knowledge to the production of their own written texts.

4. A New Perspective to Teaching Writing in Practice

4.1. The Context

I have been teaching writing at the teacher training programme offered at the Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata, Argentina, for about eight years now. In order to enrol in this programme, student teachers need to master a level of English competence equivalent or

superior to that required by the First Certificate Examination, University of Cambridge Local Syndicate. When these trainees come into my English language class (Comunicacion Avanzada II CAII), which is in year four of this programme, they bring along with them a considerable high level of language proficiency considering they have already taken all the subjects related to language development prior to taking my course. CAII is a four-month course which aims at developing the trainees´ written and oral communicative language skills at advanced level.

4.2. The Implementation

For a long time, I considered writing as a consolidation activity in which learners had the possibility of bringing out all their stored linguistic knowledge from previous lessons. Under this perception, class time was never devoted to performing writing tasks which were, indeed, relegated to be done at home saving, in this way, class time for more communicative activities. The marking of written assignments was done arbitrarily by underlining and rewriting the students´ grammatical errors and mistakes (McDonough and Shaw 1993, p.190). Corrected assignments, then, were handed in to students who immediately put them inside their folders to eternal sleep bringing about frustration and de-motivation for both teachers and learners alike.

On looking back at my past personal experience, I felt the need of effecting a change that would eventually and hopefully provide me with some insight into how to deal with my writing classes. After reading some influential literature, I decided to adopt a process-oriented methodology which, although it combined some notions belonging to the genre approach, was founded on very distinct principles to the ones I had been adhering so far (see section 3). The understanding of the nature of writing and its composing process (see section 2), then, endowed me with many valuable resources and tools which enabled me to effect the desired change. The sequence of activities below, which were developed following some of the principles and notions pertaining

mainly to both the process and genre approaches, will help to illustrate how this approach to teaching writing was implemented in practice. The aim of these activities was to guide learners through a series of steps, stages and strategies involved in the writing process so that they, in due course, would be able to come up with a unified piece of non-fiction narrative:

ORGANISATIONAL OUTLINE: learners, in groups, were put to work on two tasks: A & B.   Task A: student teachers had to read a three-paragraph narration text and identify in it the different segments that constitute a piece of narrative: Situation, Conflict and Resolution (SCR).   Task B: learners had to read and order a three-paragraph scrambled narrative text to come up with a coherent and cohesive piece. White and Arndt (1991, p.79), on looking at these activities, would claim that they belong to a preliminary structuring stage at which student writers´ creativity and freedom is, to a degree, threatened.   However, from my experience and, at least in my particular context, learners need to be provided with a preliminary structural scheme of the texts they will later on have to produce, as this, they claim, enables them to generate, plan, select and organise their ideas and thoughts before they start out crafting their own texts.

STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF TEXTS: Once the paragraphs were ordered, learners were asked to discussed in groups how they had managed to complete the tasks.   The aim of this activity was to raise students´ awareness of the structure and organization of a narrative text by focusing mainly on cohesive devices and coherence and on how these elements operate within the written discourse.   As some learners were not able to complete the second task (B) successfully, I decided to turn to sentence-level instruction and start by breaking and isolating sentences and asking students to join them by using connectives.   These types of activities, which call for teacher intervention and explicit instruction, support Tribble´s (1996) notion of the rhetoric or intellectual approach to teaching writing whereby he

upholds the view that once learners can control the exponents at sentence level, they may move on to paragraph-level and then to full text-length exercises.   Therefore, after working with connectives at sentence and paragraph levels, learners went back to the full text and thus were able to complete the task effectively.

SITUATION CONFLICT RESOLUTION: Once students were able to come up with a unified narrative text, they transferred the information contained in each segment (Situation, Conflict, and Resolution) to a chart (Table 1).

Table 1- Schematic Framework for Writing Narrative Texts

Paragraph 1	Situation	(information as entered by the students: characters, setting, and anticipation of the problem.)
Paragraph 2	Conflict	(details, development of the problem and climax)
Paragraph 3	Resolution	(anticlimax: ending of the story)

   The aim of this activity was twofold: first, to help students identify the schematic structure of narrative texts, and, second, to enable learners to recognise the sort of information contained in each segment, a fact, which, hopefully, would help them organise their own ideas before producing their own texts.

PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE: In order to determine the purpose of the texts and their intended audience, a plausible context, as McDonough and Shaw would define it (1993, p.183), was created whereby students were asked a set of questions such as: *What point is the writer trying to convey?, What was the writers attitude when writing the story?, How effective was the story at achieving its purpose?, What audience is the text aimed at?,* among others.   The main objective of this task

was to help students to gain knowledge and awareness of the purpose of texts and their situational contexts so that trainees would be able to transfer these notions to their settings as they wrote.

LEAD AND RESOLUSION: The importance of establishing proper links between the beginnings and endings of stories was emphasised by agreeing that a good start would push readers to go on and a satisfying ending would send them away invigorated. With regard to this, White and Arndt (1991, p.102) point out It is said that the two most critical and exciting manoeuvres in flying are taking off and landing, and the same is true of writing. Therefore, students, through questioning, analysed thoroughly the first and third segments in their narration text – situation (S) and resolution (R) in order to determine their connection and thus its relevance.

GETTING IDEAS: Learners began crafting (Hedge 2000, p.326) their texts. Students read a poem and answered a set of questions revolving around its purpose and audience as a trigger to help them generate ideas (Hedge 2000, p.308). First, students worked individually gathering ideas by relating the content of the poem to their personal experiences using the brainstorming technique as presented by White and Arndt (1991, p.20). Then , students paired to share their thoughts and, finally, they joined in groups of four to exchange old ideas and generate new ones.

PLANNING: Each group prepared an outline following the SCR framework by organising and sequencing the ideas gathered in the previous stages. As learners were writing, I walked around the class assisting individually to those in need by prompting some questions in order to clarify meaning, organization, purpose, audience and/or ideas.

FIRST DRAFT: All the groups set about with their first drafts. Even though students had already been working with the organisation and structure of their texts in previous stages, some felt the need of altering

the order in which they had arranged their ideas. That meant reorganising the whole text, re-considering focus, point of view, purpose, language use and/or audience. On looking back at this, Hedge (2000) would argue that the linear sequencing of planning, drafting and reviewing should not be taken as such if the general recursiveness of the process and the individual strategies of writers are taken into account, a fact which was born in mind throughout the development and implementation of this writing project.

FEEDBACK: Students were given a checklist, similar in format to the one suggested by White and Arndt (1991, p.123) which focused mainly on content, management of the topic discussed, and organisation of ideas to help student writers further develop their works.   Each group then exchanged their drafts, got involved in peer editing, completed their checklists on the basis of their partners´ works and wrote some comments and suggestions to help their mates improve their written texts.   Finally, each group reviewed their works by responding to the suggestions made by their partners.   Although one cannot deny the numerous advantages underlying the use of peer assessment, as probably was this case, it is true to say that, this technique, at least in this particular context and situation, proved to be extremely time-consuming and by some means impractical.

RESPONDING: While reviewing the students´ first drafts together with the checklists filled out by their peers, I noted some inconsistencies that called into question the practicality and thus usefulness of the assessment technique employed.   When re-writing their works, some students took no notice of some of their partners´ comments and suggestions.   This could have been the result of students having distrusted their partners´ comments or else students might not have known how to respond to their partners´ suggestions and, as a consequence, chose to leave those areas which needed   further improvement untouched.

  As I read the first drafts, I could also observe that many aspects

related to content and organisation of ideas, which, indeed, needed further development, had not been considered in the checklists filled in by those students working as assessors. On looking back at this, it could be assumed that those students in the role of assessors might have preferred not to make any comments for improvement to their mates for fear of looking superior to them or, else, they might have failed to notice those faulty areas that needed more revision. Consequently, these flawed areas remained unchanged in the drafts. This evidence again reinforces the assumption posed earlier that, for this particular context, this assessment technique turned out to be neither effective nor practical. To respond to the students´ faulty areas in their works, I wrote in pencil a set of questions and comments aiming at raising their awareness as to what type of modifications they should make in order to improve their pieces. This *modus operandi*, indeed, turned out to be more effective and efficient than using the peer assessment technique. Below there are some questions and comments which will partly illustrate the new assessment procedure adopted: *What about if you use this quotation as part of your lead?, How far does this relate to your focal point?, Would the effect of this sentence be the same if you had used it at the beginning of your essay?, How does this sentence relate to the previous idea?, Is this tense properly used here?, Is this the right word for this context?, Check the collocation of these two words,* among others.

REVISING AND EDITING: Revision took place in the classroom by adopting the technique of conferencing. Students immersed in collaborative group work were encouraged to respond to the comments and suggestions I had made on their first drafts. As students interacted, I walked around the class and held brief face-to-face meetings with the groups in an attempt to guide them throughout the process of composing their texts. However, in order to teach revising strategies and thus develop students´ autonomy and independence, the reformulation technique could also have been used. In reference to this technique, Allwright (1988) explains that reformulation is an attempt by

a native speaker to understand what a non-native speaker writer is trying to say and then to re-write it in a form more natural to the native writer.   After students revised their works and responded to my comments and suggestions, they engaged in proof-reading (White and Arndt 1991, p.174) in order to tidy up their presentations by checking spelling, punctuation, and the use of other written conventions.   Later on, students submitted their second drafts which I marked according to a marking scheme and system for assessing written work.

MARKING: I designed a marking scheme and a marking system for assessing written work which was discussed and agreed with the students before its implementation.   One of the advantages of negotiating   a   making   scheme   with   the   students   before   its implementation was that they knew before hand what features they would have to look at and what aspects to focus on when producing their own texts.   Table 2 below shows the items we agreed on and the percentages allotted for each one of them for assessing written works.

Table 2   Marking Scheme for assessing Written Works.

ITEMS	PERCENTILE ALLOTTED
Content (management of topic discussed)	30%
Organization of ideas (paragraphs development, clarity, cohesion, coherence)	25%
Grammar (tenses, agreement, structure, word order)	25%
Use of vocabulary (sophisticated, appropriate, inappropriate, too simple)	10%
Mechanics (spelling, punctuation, overall presentation)	10%
TOTAL	100%

   The percentile finally obtained was then transferred onto this other scale   Table 3 – which shows the final marks awarded to the written works.

Table 3- Raw Scores and Final Marks.

RAW SCORE	FINAL MARKS
100% - 97%	10
96% - 92%	9
91% - 87%	8
86% - 81%	7
80% - 76%	6
75% - 69%	5
68% - 60%	4
59% - below	FAIL

   In this section I have described the steps and stages involved in the recursive process of composing a narrative text and have also critically analysed the implementation of this methodology for writing skill teaching which conflates both the process and genre approaches. In the light of the findings obtained, it could be true to say that this innovative approach to teaching writing was, at least partially, effective. By the end of the writing project, most of the students managed the topic discussed adequately, were able to organise their ideas in a logical sequence using appropriate linkers, made reasonably good use of grammar and vocabulary and came up with a neat overall presentation.
 However, the findings presented here raise a number of issues that may challenge the effectiveness of the implementation of this writing project. For instance, was it worth the effort engaging students in doing peer assessment considering it turned out to be excessively time-consuming? Will students be able to transfer the strategies and knowledge, which presumably have gained throughout this writing experience, to a timed-essay written test? As I could notice throughout the development of these writing tasks, students seemed to take

pleasure in working in groups as this, they said, provided them with a sense of reliance, self-confidence and strong support.   However, at this stage, I wonder what will happen when they will have to write on their own without their peers´ assistance.

   Nevertheless, not all is doom and gloom.   Despite all these critical observations, after interpreting the results obtained, it is fair to say that the implementation of this new approach to teaching writing is, at least reasonably, effective. Yet, in order to be able to answer the above questions and then assert that this methodology for teaching writing is really effective, much more research is required.

5. Conclusion

   At the beginning of this paper, I mentioned the difficulties underlying the process of composing a written text. So as to find an answer to these difficulties, I explored some of the most significant methodologies for teaching writing at present. However, after evaluating their principles and implications in classroom settings, I concluded that adopting a process-genre oriented approach to ESL writing provides both learners and teachers with the necessary resources to make of the writing process an enriching experience whereby students learn to write by writing, and this, it might be argued, leads on to a direct boost in their motivation, self-esteem, creativity, autonomy and overall effectiveness. This small-scale investigation is in its developmental stage, further research is needed in order to claim that this approach to teaching writing is truly beneficial for both teachers and students alike.

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