

# The Application of the Process-Genre Approach to English Writing Teaching

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## Abstract

This paper explores the application of the Process-Genre Approach in English writing teaching. After introducing three writing approaches—the Product Approach, the Process Approach, and the Genre Approach, the paper highlights the limitations of each and make a brief introduction of the Process-Genre Approach. It further discusses the practical implementation of this approach in English writing teaching, aiming to enhance learners' writing ability.

## Keywords

The Process-Genre Approach, English writing teaching, writing ability.

## 1. Introduction

In the realm of English writing teaching, various approaches have been employed to enhance learners' writing ability. Among these, the Product Approach, the Process Approach, and the Genre Approach have garnered significant attention. The Product Approach, focusing on the final written product, emphasizes linguistic knowledge and the proper usage of vocabulary, syntax, and cohesive devices. It involves a series of controlled writing exercises where learners imitate model essays. However, this approach often neglects the writing process and the existing skills of learners. The Process Approach, on the other hand, views writing as a dynamic and iterative process. It emphasizes the importance of multiple drafts, revisions, and teacher-learner interaction. However, this approach sometimes lacks sufficient input, especially in terms of linguistic knowledge and the genre of articles. The Genre Approach highlights the communicative purpose of language and the importance of adhering to the structure of different genres. It aims to make learners aware of the communicative purposes and textual structures of various discourse genres. However, it may constrain learners' creativity and insufficiently emphasize writing skills.

To address the limitations of these approaches and fully harness their advantages, Badger and White (2000) proposed the Process-Genre Approach. This approach integrates the strengths of the Product, Process, and Genre Approaches, focusing on both the writing process and the structural and linguistic features of different genres. By guiding learners through situation analysis, planning, drafting, revising, publishing, and producing a final text, the Process-Genre Approach aims to enhance learners' writing abilities while considering social contextual factors and communicative purposes.

## 2. Introduction to Relevant Writing Approach

### 2.1. The Product Approach

The product approach focuses on the final written product, which maintains that writing is linked to linguistic knowledge, emphasizing the proper usage of vocabulary, syntax, and cohesive devices.(Picas, 1982). It embodies that language learning is a progressive process of stimulation-response-reinforcement. Teachers typically begin by being familiar a model text, highlighting its rhetorical devices, structure, and language features with the aim of making

learners familiar with the rhetorical and linguistic characteristics of a particular discourse. Next, controlled writing exercises will be conducted. Teachers will train learners on commonly used sentence patterns for specific types of articles and guide them in writing. Following that, guided writing sessions will take place. learners will be required to imitate a model essay on a given topic and produce their best possible composition, which will then be corrected and graded by the teacher. Lastly, learners will engage in free writing. Through these learning and training processes, learners will be able to express themselves freely, integrating their writing skills into practical activities such as letter writing, storytelling, essay writing, and more. When giving feedback to the compositions, teachers will treat the learners' essays as final products, revising and scoring them mainly based on rhetorical forms and linguistic accuracy.

## **2.2. The Process Approach**

The process approach views writing as a process, rather than merely focusing on the final written product. It reflects the notion that language learning is a complex activity involving psychological cognition and linguistic communication. Consequently, the teaching steps emphasize the multiple drafts and revisions, and stress the importance of teacher-learner interaction during the review phase. The process approach has attracted numerous researchers, yet researchers have not reached a consensus on the description of the writing process. Nevertheless, the fundamental principles of the process approach are shared: it focuses on all writing activities, such as planning, gathering materials, composing, revising, and finalizing the draft (Tribble, 1996: 37). Instead of placing emphasis on linguistic knowledge such as grammar and text structure, the process approach focuses on the writing process and skills, including planning, sourcing materials, drafting, and reviewing. Tribble's (1996) four-stage teaching model is typical among the description of process approach. These four stages are: (1) Pre-writing. It is an input stage, involving reading relevant materials, investigating events related to the writing topic, engaging in group discussions, and brainstorming. These activities enable learners to obtain as much material as possible on a particular topic, with brainstorming being the most crucial step, allowing learners to have a clear idea of the content they will write about. (2) Composing/Drafting. At this stage, learners select and organize their ideas from the pre-writing stage into an outline and then produce a first draft based on this outline. (3) Revising. After completing the first draft, learners engage in group discussions under the guidance of the teacher and then revise the first draft independently or with other group members based on feedback from the teacher and classmates. (4) Editing. During the editing stage, learners read through the entire text and make necessary additions or deletions. According to the process approach, teachers primarily play an auxiliary role in the writing process. The process approach views writing as a language skill practice assisted by teachers, during which learners do not learn but develop writing skills unconsciously and gradually.

## **2.3. The Genre Approach**

The genre approach emphasizes that language serves a communicative purpose, and to achieve this purpose, it is necessary to adhere to the structure of the genre. Its objectives are: (1) to make learners aware of the different communicative purposes and textual structures of discourse belonging to different genres; (2) to help learners recognize that discourse is not only a linguistic construct but also a socially meaningful construct; and (3) to enable learners to grasp both the schematic structures of texts and the process of text construction, thereby assisting them in understanding or creating discourse within a particular genre. (Han, Qin, 2000)

The three teaching approaches have their own advantages and disadvantages. See Table1.

**Table 1.** Three Scheme comparing: Pros and Cons of the three teaching approaches

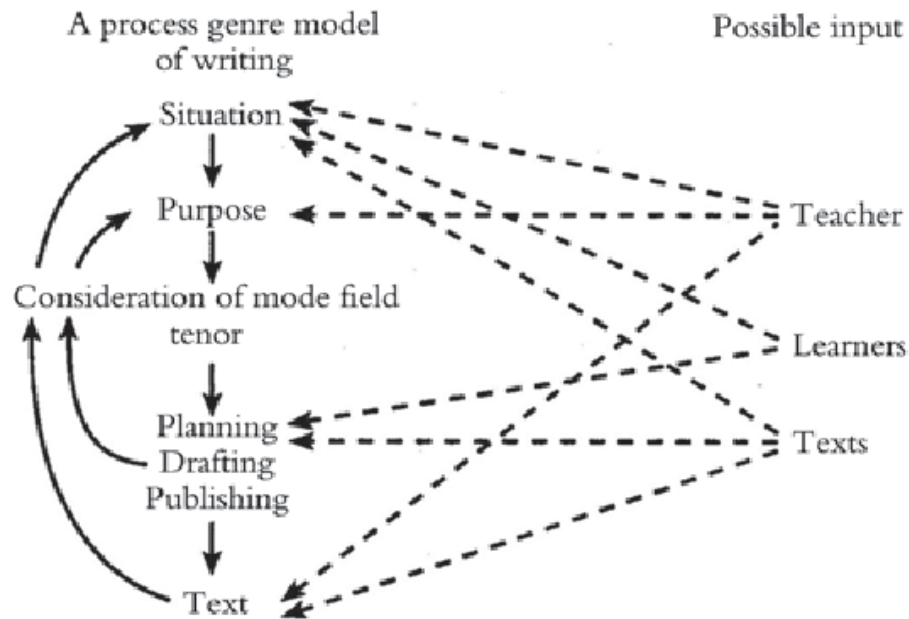
	the product approach	the process approach	the genre approach
pros	Focus on the essence of model essays, having a standard for imitation in writing. Provide systematic writing training. Teachers offer Explicit guidance and promptly correct errors.	Focus on writing skills and the learners’ cognitive process during writing. Writing activities are diverse and filled with teacher-learner interaction.	Focus on the analysis and imitation of model essays to enable learners to be familiar with the writing features of a particular genre. Emphasizes that writing is constrained by specific contexts and serve particular purposes.
cons	Insufficient attention to writing skills(planning). The existing knowledge and skills of learners themselves are not valued enough.	Without paying attention to the genre of articles. Insufficient input, especially linguistic knowledge.	Insufficient emphasis on writing skills. learners are easily constrained.

**3. Introduction to the Process-Genre Approach**

To fully utilize the advantages of three teaching methods, Badger & White (2000) proposed the “Process-Genre Approach.” See Figure1. Firstly, teachers create Situation to help learners clarify their communicative purpose. They guide learners consider mode, field, and tenor, and master the structural and linguistic features of relevant genres. Then, learners engage in planning, drafting, revising, publishing, and finally producing a final text. This is the basic process of process-genre writing instruction, but these steps are not entirely linear. When drafting and finalizing their texts, learners need to reconsider social contextual factors, revisit their communicative purposes, or recall specific social situations to enhance the relevance of their writing. During the writing process, learners at different proficiency levels require different inputs, which may come from teachers (during the situation, purpose, and text steps), peers (during the situation and planning steps), or texts (during the situation, planning, and text steps).

Badger and White did not provide specific writing steps. In China, Han (2001) believes that the writing based on the process-genre approach should encompass the following four stages:

(1) Model text analysis. Writing is a tool for authors to respond to specific social situations. Teachers should select typical model texts of specific genres and explain to learners the social contexts and communicative purposes associated with these genres, enabling learners to fully understand the context of situation of the genre. On this basis, analyze and summarize the structure and linguistic features of the genre, so that learners have a comprehensive understanding of the form and content of the genre.



**Figure 1.** Process-Genre Approach

(2) Imitative writing/collective paraphrasing. The imitation here does not involve simply copying the model text but rather consciously applying the knowledge acquired in the previous step about a specific genre, including genre structure, linguistic features, etc. Through imitation, learners will gain a better understanding of the genre and simultaneously internalize these structural and linguistic characteristics into their knowledge framework, ensuring that they can write articles of the same genre with ease in the future.

(3) Independent writing. learners engage in actual creation based on given topics/situations and their knowledge of the genre, including processes such as outlining, drafting, and finalizing the composition.

(4) Editing and revision. This stage involves self-revision by the writer, peer review within groups, and teacher feedback. Teachers can flexibly apply these teaching steps according to specific circumstances during the teaching process to achieve optimal teaching outcomes.

## 4. The Practice of Writing Teaching Based on Process-Genre Approach

### 4.1. Analysis of Model Texts

In this step, two sub-steps are included, that is, Teachers' Model Analysis and learners' Imitation Analysis. This section will take U8: Have you read *Treasure Island* yet? as an example. Teachers' Model Analysis. See Table 2. The teaching is carried out in two steps: understanding the situational context and summarizing the genre structure. The situational context includes three aspects: field, tenor, and mode, where field refers to the actual events occurring, tenor refers to the relationship between participants, and mode refers to the medium of linguistic communication, such as spoken or written language (Hu, 1989). learners first read the text to understand the situational context. Teachers can set questions focusing on field, tenor, and mode to help learners initially understand the formation of the relevant genre's structure. learners then re-read the text to summarize the genre structure.

learners' Imitation Analysis, See Table 3. in the second sub-step--- learners' Imitation Analysis, the teacher selects another typical text of the same genre and asks learners to analyze it by following the above procedures.

Table 2. Step of Teachers’ Model Analysis

Writing topic:	The topic of this unit is literature and music. learners are required to talk about recent events and experiences in English. According to the topic of this unit, this writing lesson is to introduce a favorite singer or writer. The composition style belongs to narrative writing.																	
Text	<p>My Favorite Writer</p> <p>J. K. Rowling is my favorite writer. Her first book about Harry Potter came out in 1997, and she became famous right after that. Now she has become one of the most successful writers in the world. I read the first book about Harry Potter three years ago. The story was so amazing that I couldn't put it down until I finished reading it. So far, I have read all the seven books about Harry Potter and watched all the movies. If you haven't read any of the books yet, pick one now. You will find a wonderful world in it.</p>																	
Genre structure analysis:	<p>Learners quickly read the article, and had a group discussion (divided into groups of 6 learners according to their English level), then answered the following questions:</p> <p>Q1: What's the purpose of this writing?</p> <p>Q2: Who is the author and target reader of this article?</p> <p>After completing the chart, learners summarized the genre of the article (narrative), and showed the learners relevant knowledge about narrative:</p> <p>"Narrative is a form of expression that mainly describes people, events, scenery and objects, and also a form to describe the experience of people and the development and change of things. In writing, the first person and the third person are generally used. The tense is mainly the simple past tense, supplemented by other tenses."</p> <p>Then teacher guided the learners to discuss the specific structure of this article:</p> <table><tr><td>J. K. Rowling is my favorite writer.</td><td>Beginning</td></tr><tr><td>Her first book about Harry Potter came out in 1997, and she became famous right after that. Now she has become one of the most successful writers in the world. I read the first book about Harry Potter three years ago. The story was so amazing that I couldn't put it down until I finished reading it. So far, I have read all the seven books about Harry Potter and watched all the movies.</td><td>Body</td></tr><tr><td>If you haven't read any of the books yet, pick one now. You will find a wonderful world in it.</td><td>Ending</td></tr></table>		J. K. Rowling is my favorite writer.	Beginning	Her first book about Harry Potter came out in 1997, and she became famous right after that. Now she has become one of the most successful writers in the world. I read the first book about Harry Potter three years ago. The story was so amazing that I couldn't put it down until I finished reading it. So far, I have read all the seven books about Harry Potter and watched all the movies.	Body	If you haven't read any of the books yet, pick one now. You will find a wonderful world in it.	Ending										
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Linguistic features	<p>The teacher led the learners to analyze the language features in this article. Teachers mainly guided learners to think through the following questions:</p> <p>Q1: What information did the author introduce about this person?</p> <p>Q2: What do you think are the good expressions in the text?</p> <p>Q3: What tenses are used in this article?</p> <p>Q4: What is the language of this article, formal or informal? Subjective or objective?</p> <p>After that, the teacher explained the good expressions (e.g. one of + the + superlative + plural nouns, so... that...), and helped the learners practice how to use them in the form of a dialogue.</p>																	
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**Table 3.** Step of Teachers' Model Analysis

learner analysis text	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>My Favorite Writer</b></p> <p>Mark Twain was an American writer. He wrote many famous novels. Mark Twain was born in Florida in 1835. He moved to a town with his family at the age of four. His father died when he was young. To support his life, he did different jobs. The Adventures of Tom Sawyer is one of his most famous novels. I think he is a very creative and great writer. And I'm a fan of his works.</p>								
Group Work	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Summary of Narrative Writing for Characters</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Writing Elements</td><td>Content</td></tr> <tr> <td>Structure</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Something that can be described</td><td></td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Summary of Narrative Writing for Characters		Writing Elements	Content	Structure		Something that can be described	
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#### 4.2. Independent Writing

In this step, each learner will create a composition independently. This includes three sub-steps--- choosing a topic, planning and writing the first draft.

Of the three sub-steps, the stage of choosing a topic is very important. choosing a suitable topic will increase the writers' interest in their writing tasks, ensuring that they have a lot of things to say while writing. According to Ammon (1985), if a writer is very interested in some topic, he will have a high motivation of writing. Therefore, the teacher should give learners as much freedom as possible in choosing a topic. Even if the topic is provided by the teacher, the teacher should make it be close to learners' life, interest and so on. Then comes the time of planning.

Next, learners plan their compositions, considering writing situations, contexts, and generating content, organization, and language. In these aspects, the generating of content is not very easy. If learners have not enough topic knowledge, they will not know what to write. At this time, learners should read the articles which are relevant to the topic from the Internet, newspapers, journals and so on to explore the topic that they choose.

After the planning, learners may begin writing the first draft, focusing on content and style while ignoring grammar and mechanical errors.

#### 4.3. Revising

This step involves revising the overall structure and content. It emphasizes interaction among learners and between teachers and learners. During peer revision, learners evaluate, and edit other's compositions in groups, shifting the focus from the writer to the reader and increasing learners' interest. Afterward, learners revise their own drafts based on their peers' feedback. The teacher then provides written comments with learners to offer feedback. Based on this input, learners create their final drafts.

#### 4.4. Editing and Proofreading

In this step, learners focus on refining the sentence and paragraph of their compositions by ensuring unity, logic, and cohesion. They then proofread for grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors. This process requires learners to shift their attention from the writing process to the



final written product. Ultimately, the written product is the goal, justifying the process of analysis, planning, drafting, revising, and editing.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Process-Genre Approach to English writing teaching represents a comprehensive and effective framework that combines the best practices of the Product, Process, and Genre Approaches. By emphasizing the importance of situation analysis, planning, drafting, revising, and producing a final text, this approach not only focuses on the linguistic accuracy and the structure of the written product but also on the writing process and skills.

Through the analysis of model texts, imitative writing, independent writing, and editing and revision stages, learners are able to develop a deep understanding of different genres, their structural and linguistic features, and how to effectively communicate in various contexts. The Process-Genre Approach also promotes teacher-learner interaction and peer collaboration, fostering a dynamic and engaging learning environment.

Ultimately, the Process-Genre Approach aims to empower learners to become proficient and confident writers who can produce well-structured, coherent, and purposeful written texts. As such, it represents a valuable addition to the toolkit of English writing teachers, offering a holistic and effective approach to enhancing learners' writing abilities.

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