

**TEACHER'S PERCEPTIONS OF PROCESS VS PRODUCT APPROACH TO  
SCAFFOLD ESSAY WRITING SKILLS OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to explore the perceptions of teachers of the Product versus Process approach of writing to scaffold the essay writing skills of undergraduate students. Previous researches have shown that there exists a controversy among teachers and researchers when it comes to deciding which approach of teaching is better either the process approach or the product method to teach writing skills (Sun & Feng, 2009). The significance of the study is that it tends to help the teachers to adapt the teaching method to teach essay writing skills to undergraduate students. This study has employed the qualitative method under the constructive paradigm of research to interpret the underlying perceptions of teachers to adopt the product vs process approach of teaching. Interviews have been conducted through structured interview protocol from twenty university teachers to ascertain which approach of teaching writing should be adopted to teach writing skills at the undergraduate level. The sampling of the study is done through the snowball technique. Data collected through interviews was analyzed by Braun and Clark model of thematic analysis. It has been found that teachers, despite the availability of the resources, find it difficult to improve the writing skills of learners at the undergraduate level because most of the learners coming from traditional teaching setup need to put more effort and time on part of teachers. Teachers believed that the Product approach of teaching at school level has made students habitual to cram and reproduce. Therefore, they are not able to write on their own. Teachers need to adopt the process approach of teaching writing at the undergraduate level to make them creative writers. Based on the analysis of teacher's perceptions, this study suggests that the process approach is a more effective technique to teach essay writing skills to students at the undergraduate level.

**KEYWORDS**

Scaffolding, Process approach, Product approach.

**INTRODUCTION**

Scaffolding academic writing skills is one of the arduous tasks in English language teaching to second language learners. Essay writing is a critical talent in academic writing that serves both developmental and pedagogical purposes. It enables you to practise and

build transferrable abilities that will be useful not only while you are a student, but also when you graduate and need to write professionally. Essays are extremely important for students at all academic levels. Essay writing is a useful method for teachers to assess their pupils' knowledge. Additionally, as part of their course or degree, students are required to write an essay. Hence for students, it is mandatory to score well in their academic *writing* tasks.

The students at the undergraduate level opt for various fields of learning but the academic results of written exams of undergraduate level show that difficulty central to the majority are related to essay writing skills. The majority of the students fail in English paper in Punjab university annual examination as well as competitive exams of federal and public service commission. Annual report of federal public service commission of previous years has shown that the majority of students fail in essay writing due to the reproduction of bookish knowledge and unable to express their opinion in an essay writing exam. Most of the scholars and language teachers have expressed their views on this topic that students are exposed to the traditional method of teaching at educational institutes which has made them habitual of cramming and this cause great hindrance in developing writing skills (Rizvi, 2019).

It is the time for students of the new generation to start thinking about the advantages of writing because they are having problems with this talent, particularly in understanding how to approach this activity. Because writing is encountered in various situations, this could aid them in producing a well-written result. We couldn't dispute that writing is obvious in teachers' instruction, particularly in pedagogy and research, and that this is one of the changes that needs to be embraced when considering global dimensions. As a result, writing plays an important part in students' learning since it serves as a bridge for them to absorb concepts and ideas more easily (Agustiana, 2016).

There are numerous methods for teaching writing that have been known since the early years and can be beneficial to instructors. Teachers are already using some of these approaches, such as the product approach and the process approach. The distinction between these two, on the other hand, has become a hot topic among educators. The product approach, according to Rusinovci (2015), focuses more on the development of students' writing output that is based on their mastery of language structures through imitation as inputs are provided only by teachers. Similarly, he stated that the major goal of this technique is to focus on the students' product rather than how they approach the writing process.

There remains a conflict among academia to utilize process and product approach of writing in teaching academic writing to second language learners. In contrast to the traditional product-oriented technique of teaching writing, the process approach to teaching English writing has been recommended. "Traditionally, English teachers have embraced and used the product approach in their classroom teaching of English writing, while there is some debate among scholars over which Process is better, the process approach or the product technique" (Sun & Feng, 2009).

The dilemma is the difference in perceptions of teachers to use process vs product approach to teaching academic writing at the undergraduate level. The product-based approach to writing is a traditional teaching method in which students imitate the material

provided by the teachers and the teachers are concerned with grammatical structures. In the Pakistani context, the education policy of 2007 also recommends adopting critical thinking and skill-oriented methods of teaching thus enhancing the effectiveness of education. The final product is given importance so the teacher corrects the mistakes of students to accomplish the goal of error-free text. Students are taught to write accurately and they are not trained on how to organize their thoughts and improve their writing skills. They do not use language and the only use of language is the management of fixed patterns, these patterns are educated by imitation.

According to Nordin (2017), the Product/Traditional Approach focuses on the form. It's a text-based strategy that's still prevalent in many materials today. The teacher often gives certain texts for students to replicate or adapt in this method. Errors are seen as something that should be corrected, or avoided if feasible. The primary function of the instructor is to instil concepts of correctness and conformance.

Moreover, Hyland (2013) claims that the process method is useful to students since it focuses more on getting students to grasp the process of learning the essence of writing rather than how it is given by professors. However, the positive aspect of these two approaches was confirmed: they have had a substantial impact in the field of teaching writing, notably in EFL/ESL classes (Hasan, 2010). As a result, teachers examined both approaches in their teaching, understanding that both offer advantages and disadvantages for students. That is why, in today's world, teachers must pay close attention to their teaching strategies in order to help students improve their writing skills in a written composition by emphasising how students can effectively learn and master this skill and be prepared for globalisation concerns in the workplace. Thus, the researchers are faced with the task of determining the efficacy of both the process and product approaches in the training and development of writing abilities.

### **1.1 Statement of Problem**

This study has tried to explore the problem which is a conflict among academia to utilize process and product approach of writing in teaching academic writing to second language learners. Previous researches have shown that “there occurs a controversy occasionally among researchers concerning which P is better, the process approach or the product method” (Sun & Feng, 2009). In the Pakistani context, the education policy of 2007 recommends adopting critical thinking and skill-oriented methods of teaching thus enhancing the effectiveness of education. The challenge of teaching academic writing at the undergraduate level is that teachers observe a lot of challenges faced by students at undergraduate level such as anxiety and the most challenging aspect to come up with new ideas (Widyaningsih et al., 2021). As a result, there is disagreement about which method is most effective for teaching academic writing. This study aims to find out which method leads to best results when it comes to improving students' essay writing.

### **1.2 Research objectives**

The objective of the study is:

- To explore the perceptions of teachers about the Product and Process technique of writing to teach essay writing skills.

**Research Question**

- What are the perceptions of teachers about the process and product approach of writing to scaffold essay writing skills of students at the undergraduate level in Pakistan?

**1.3 Delimitation of study**

This study is only focusing on the perceptions of teachers. It is entirely a qualitative study of a thematic analysis of interviews of university teachers. It has not utilized any quantitative instrument and statistical analysis. It has solely emphasized the opinion of teachers regarding the Product and process approach of teaching academic writing.

**2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to Ramos, Minoza & Alieto (2019), because of the students poor knowledge of how to produce acceptable written output, they today plainly demonstrated difficulty in expressing themselves through writing. They said that the majority of students lacked the necessary abilities, which hampered their ability to communicate constructively through writing, which is an important component of their success after graduation.

Ilanga et al. (2009) provided an experimental study of the process compared with the product method of teaching English writing to ESL students in his study "The Teaching Process Used by Different Teaching Models". Based on a review of relevant literature from other scholars and a summary of the Chunling Sun experimental study, the author of this study attempted to explain the writing process, compare product and procedures in teaching writing, and make recommendations about the basic principles of teaching writing using methodology. The test results show that all subjects have improved their writing skills significantly. This research helps to understand the writing process and output. However, this study did not discuss teachers' views on both methods of writing but provided insight into well-known experts on the use of both methods.

Moreover, Frede et al., (2012) have analyzed the discernment about composition and the act of showing the expertise among English language instructors at private academies in Jimma Zone (Agaro, Asendabo, Jimma, Limu Genet, Sekoru and Toba). The review exhibited that educators' impression of composing and their act of showing the expertise are approximately related. In view of these discoveries, it is suggested that: 1) private academy English language instructors need to focus on writing in their guidance, 2) they ought to likewise foster viable abilities and set in motion their convictions with respect to composing and its instructing, and 3) the Ministry of Education and other dependable bodies need to offer preparation to private academy English language educators on the execution of the interaction way to deal with composing. This study has provided perceptions of teachers about teaching writing.

Sam et al., (2014) conducted a comparative analysis of the impact of process and product writing on the development of writing skills of language learners in Malaysian schools. This paper explores the reasons why the product method was adopted in Malaysian classes at the expense of the process. The results showed that teachers prefer to use the

product method because of its ease of use and avoid the process because it is time consuming. However, Samsudin (2015) has determined, through his research, Comparing the Process and Process of Production in Teaching Writing for undergraduate students, whether the process or product / traditional approach is better for teaching undergraduates. write academic texts. This study has proven that the process not only greatly improved students' writing skills in general but also improved their ability to write textbooks because it is more similar to the natural writing process. This research sought the effectiveness of both the process and the product method and concluded in favor of the methodological process.

Eliwati et al. (2017) have conducted a study on "Perceptions of the Strategies in the Process Approach by Students." The major goal of this study was to find out how students felt about the Process Approach's techniques. The results of the interviews corroborated the results of the questionnaire, which demonstrated that students had positive attitudes toward the Process Approach. In light of these findings, it's possible that the Process Approach may be employed as an alternate teaching technique to help students enhance their writing skills. This study has emphasized on learners perceptions of the process approach of writing. It is helpful for incumbent research as it helps to develop questionnaires and criteria for investigating teachers perceptions of product and process approach of writing.

EFL teachers are encouraged to use process-oriented writing teaching in their classes. Outlining, drafting, replying, revising, editing, and reviewing are examples of useful problem-solving techniques. Teachers could also consider engaging post-writing activities to make classroom writing assignments more relevant (Kadmiry, 2021). Similarly, another study found that study participants who used the process approach were able to cultivate and energize the recursive nature of natural writing to produce better essays. Students should be encouraged to revise and refine their ideas at every stage of their writing, from the first draft to the final draft, in order to sustain a high level of quality. Undergraduates must create thorough academic texts within their respective areas in order to improve their CGPAs. As a result, there is no better approach to begin teaching undergraduates how to write a full academic work than to educate them how to conduct thorough research on their topic (Samsudin, 2015).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Constructivism as a philosophy rose to popularity in the field of education in the early 1990s. Constructivism is a teaching and learning theory that considers important factors such as culture, context, literacy, language, students' interests and needs, knowledge, fact interpretation, and knowledge application, all of which can be examined by the researcher to see how they affect teaching and learning policies. This theory entails that knowledge can be constructed through opinion, perception and approach of people regarding any issue. Therefore, there is need to construct information by collecting the perception of people regarding various methods and techniques for learning and teaching.

### **3. METHODOLOGY OF STUDY**

This study has employed a qualitative method of research as it needs to explore the perceptions of twenty teachers (lecturers & assistant professors from private and public universities & colleges of Lahore) about the product and process approach to scaffold the essay writing skills of undergraduate students in Pakistan.

#### **3.1 Data Collection & Sampling**

To collect the data of perceptions of teachers, a semi-structured interview protocol consisting of eight questions was utilized. Jacob, S.A. & Furgerson, S.P. (2012) emphasized that one should use seven to ten well-structured questions using prompts to seek perception of audience. A snowball sample method also known as chain referral sampling was used - it is considered a type of targeted sample. In this way, participants or those who have already developed experience use social media to refer the researcher to other people who may be able to (Pop & Mays, 2000). Snowball sampling is often used to locate and employ "hidden communities," that is, teams that are not easily accessible to researchers using other sampling techniques. Due to the pandemic situation, the data (voice recordings) of forty university and college teachers has been collected through voice notes using electronic communication gadgets and social contacts.

#### **3.2 Data Analysis and Data validation**

Firstly, the data collected through voice recordings of forty university & college undergraduate teachers was transcribed. And then Braun and Clarke six steps of thematic analysis i.e.: familiarize yourself with your data, assign preliminary codes to data to describe the content, search for patterns or themes in codes across the different interviews, review themes, define and name themes and produce report were utilized for data analysis. All of these six steps were followed manually and step by step. To validate the data collected low inference descriptor method of validation of qualitative data has been utilized. In which "verbatim" direct quotes from data used as low inference descriptors (Jhonson, 2015).

### **4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The data collected from interview voice notes of university teachers was transcribed and four major themes were analyzed manually utilizing Braun and Clarke model of six points of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. On process and product approach of writing teachers viewed that process approach is better because it makes students independent writers and helps them to acquire writing skills. The following are a few themes of perceptions of teachers utilizing the Product or Process approach of teaching writing to scaffold the essay writing skills of students.

#### **4.1 Perceptions on Product Approach**

The first question of interview protocol was what is your perception of product approach for teaching essay writing skills to undergraduate students? Product approach of writing is traditional approach of teaching writing skills like allowing students to imitate

the given text that's how he comes to know the pattern of writing to follow. What is your perception of product approach of teaching essay writing skills to undergraduate students? Teachers opined that in this system of education, which is based on exam based strategy of teaching, product approach is better to produce good results as "Students find it difficult to develop writing skills because the type of examinations that are conducted create a competitive mindset among learners which entails memorization"

Another teacher said that English teacher suffers from huge stress to produce results because students come from different backgrounds and a weak base. Thus it requires a huge effort to make them independent writers, thus, the product technique of writing is better in the incumbent system of education. Another teacher responded that due to scarcity of time and huge strength in classrooms it is unable to adopt the process approach of writing. Thus to manage all things product approach seems to be a blessing in disguise. It helps to cope with the pressure of results however, in the long run, it doesn't make the student an equipped writer.

Teachers have also informed about several problems which teachers are facing to teach academic writing and to use the product approach of teaching unwillingly. The first problem is to produce result thus teachers have to adopt an exam based strategy to teach students. Moreover, the method of selective study is also in vogue. Students easily cram a few essays and reproduce in the exam. However, a teacher responded that in early classes up to secondary level product approach is constructive to adopt because students are weak at grammar and sentence making. Thus they cannot practice the process technique of writing but at a higher level like at undergraduate level process approach should be adopted.

#### **4.2 Perceptions on Process Approach**

Teachers opined that it is important to teach students about basic writing sub-skills like brainstorming, coherence, cohesion, organization for essay writing skills. One teacher informed that he makes his students practice study maps and brainstorming before writing. In a response to another question i.e. As a language teacher which approach is more effective to teach essay writing at the undergraduate level? And why? Teachers viewed that students come from product-based teaching methodology at the secondary level. They lack in independent writing and mostly unable to express their views in written discourse. Therefore, they adopt the process writing approach of teaching and help them to practice free writing and then to compose academic writing script draft by draft. Most of the teachers believed that the process approach of writing makes students able to express their views and opinions and essay writing is all about constructing one's view in writing.

Could you share your teaching experiences of utilizing any of the approach i.e.: product approach and process approach to teach essay writing skills? Which technique has brought fruitful results in your experience? And how? An interviewee has shared his experience of scaffolding essay writing of students that he asked his students to write an essay step by step. Firstly, he asked them to brainstorm and then to organize their points in most relevant to least relevant hierarchy. Thirdly, he asked them to write an introductory paragraph and ask them to read aloud one by one. A fourth step he told that he asks them to write another draft of the introductory paragraph by improving the composition of ideas. Likewise, he

moves on to the body of the essay and then to the conclusion step by step. On the second day, he ask their students to write another draft of their essay in class. He told that he accepted the fourth draft of the essay from every student. He emphasized that some students get frustrated by this rigorous practice of essay writing but later on they realize that they are equipped with writing skills. To develop good writing skills, students need to follow up on a certain process because when they start to write several ideas are jumbled up in their minds. They don't know how to organize their ideas in a logical order that's the most difficult phase for the majority of students.

In your opinion which approach is more suited to the Pakistani classroom Pakistani context which method can be adopted to teach English essay writing at the undergraduate level? And why? A teacher replied, "The educational authorities need to first realize whether their focus is on process or product. It takes time for the students to develop good writing skills and if the focus is on the product then most of the work would be done by teachers. If the process approach is followed then in most of the educational sectors classes are overcrowded and most of the students and teachers find this approach time-consuming". Another participant recommended, "the classroom discussions need to be included in exams in the form of analytical questions and other various forms that enable the learners to develop reasoning and help them refine their writing skills".

#### **4.3 Perception on Blend Approach**

Surprisingly few participants shared views deviating from the objectives of this study that both the process and the product approach to writing should be combined to teach writing skills to the students. As they viewed that students need to see and follow a correct version of writing which will help them to make a sample of the model of writing in their mind. They will try to imitate its structure, organization, and pattern and it will help them to improve their writing skills. Hence this technique is framed according to the product approach of writing skills. However, students should be made to practice essay writing skills by process approach of writing afterward by pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing. This idea is also supported by (Swales, 1986) process and the product approach to writing should be combined to make the relationship between the writer, the writing environment and the intended readership better. In the product approach, the focus is on the input provided by teachers that is imitated by students. Whereas in process approach ownership and voice of the writer is given importance.

### **CONCLUSION**

In the light of the previous discussion and findings, it can be concluded that academic writing is crucial in language acquisition. Participants considered essay writing as one of the important skills to perform well in academic and professional careers. On process and product approach of writing teachers viewed that process approach is better at the undergraduate level because it makes students independent writer and help them to practice editing, drafting to acquire writing skills. The process writing approach develops an effective filter in the cognition of student which makes him aware of the kind of mistakes he commits in writing. Therefore he becomes good at critical thinking and reflection by practicing brainstorming and constructing essays on his own without

cramming material from any source. However, few teachers, who teach in colleges, opined that the incumbent system of education product approach is better up to the secondary level to produce good results because the outcome-based education system demands high scores rather than equipped writers for critical thinking and reflection. Nevertheless, they also believe that at undergraduate level Process approach of teaching writing is useful because students need to provide opinion and reflection in exams in descriptive form. Thus, it needs to make them independent writers so that they can express on given queries.

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