

Product Approach and Process Approach and Their Significance to Teaching Writing in TESOL and How They are Utilized in ELT Classes

Bashayer Jassim Al Bloushi

E-mail: Bshaier.albuloshi@ku.edu.kw

Anwar Al Shuraiaan

E-mail: anwar.alshriaan@ku.edu.kw

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ABSTRACT:*The main aim of this article is to focus on the two different kinds of writing approaches in ELT classes and exhibit the differences between the two approaches. The article embarks on identifying both approaches, the product approach and the process approach. The author explains when they became popular besides which approach is currently more fashionable. Besides the author explains what a typical product/process approach writing lesson looks like. It shows a clear diagram of how a process writing is conducted in class with eight different stages. It also explains the four stages of the product approach. This Article also elaborates on how these two approaches are used in class and what each of these approaches focuses on while working on them. The two methods are different than each other the author shows the pros and cons of both approaches and how they are effective in classrooms. In addition, this article shows how other teachers adapted the approaches to fit their teaching conditions. The article later mentions several cognitives and what real writers do, how the real writers compose in real situations and it also shows at what stage of the writing process can teachers help writers. The article also clearly states the aims of both approaches and provides examples of how each approach is used. The author suggests harnessing the needed approach depending on the student's level in class.*

KEYWORDS: product approach, process approach, ELT classes, TESOL, writing process approach

INTRODUCTION

Writing is an important skill in learning a foreign language. L2 learners are required to learn how to write when studying a foreign language. They have to conceptualize the grammar of the language and how to brainstorm while thinking. It is important to write accurately because “writing accuracy is an important concern in EFL writing classrooms. Students' writing performance is usually evaluated based on how accurate they are in lexico-grammatical areas, spelling and punctuation.” (Pasand and Haghi, 2013: 75) Teaching writing in ELT classes is considered one of the most challenging duties in class. Writing is a solid lecture to teach and for students to learn as well, especially for feeble students. For students to be able to write a sentence there are prerequisites; they have to learn sentence structure along with the different kinds of sentences like simple, compound, and complex and those prerequisites are essential for teachers to teach. As Checa, Mercedes & Cando-Guanoluisa, Fabiola & Vargas, Patricia. (2017: 111) puts it,

“Writing is a fundamental skill to be developed in EFL students; however, it is quite challenging for both teachers and students because it requires much practice and effort to make intelligible written texts. Many teachers agree that developing writing skill in students who study English as a foreign Language is quite difficult due to many factors such as: limited time, large classes, individual learning styles, and student’s lack of vocabulary, students’ motivation, and students’ poor writing skill in their first language.”

Students ought to learn how to compose a proper paragraph and it depends on the student’s educational level for the teacher to decide what to choose as a proper approach that suits the students. When deciding on what level the students are in, hence it will be easier for the teacher to decide which approach to harness in class. Some students are weak in writing they need guidance they lack vocabulary words, they may become out of ideas, and they may misuse the English grammar when writing. At that point, these students may need guidance when composing a paragraph. So, when students are about to compose a text they ought to bear in mind what are they writing about. The process to initiate composing a text includes notions students need to think of ideas and brainstorm on the given topic. In addition, students have to keep in mind how well are they going to write and this includes how well they know the grammar. There are two different kinds of approaches to teaching writing in TESOL which are the product approach and the process approach. They are two approaches are completely differed from each other and each of them focuses on a different aim. The product approach dominated the teaching of writing in ELT until the 1980s. It contains using the model sentences or texts that the students copy when writing. As Khan and Bontha, 2015, p. 96 puts it, “the product approach is an oriented-class due to the teachers supply students with standardized texts so that they can follow the model to write their own piece of writing”. The product approach focuses mostly on grammar and cohesive devices, like (e.g. However, nevertheless, therefore, etc.) it also focuses on a specific type of language like the past simple or the present simple. When students use the product approach they read the displayed

model and conduct exercises that focus on the language in the model text for example focusing on the past tense or the present tense. Then the students are asked to transform the displayed text into the past or present tense the model text will help them it is considered a guide. The aim and focus of the product approach are on grammar accuracy. “They are actually required to copy the sample text's organizational characteristics. This is what is done in product-based approaches.” (Pasand and Haghi, 2013: 75)

In contrast, the process approach overtook the product approach as the leading writing methodology in the 1980s. The process approach commenced in 1990 and it continues to lead until today. The process approach is considered to be the popular methodology. It includes writing a paragraph focusing on fluency rather than the accuracy of grammar and permit learners to come up with new ideas and thoughts as Tribble, 1996 p. 37 puts it, “a cycle writing activities which move learners from the generation of ideas and the collection of data through to the ‘publication’ of a finished text”. It also includes progressive stages to produce good conduct of a process paper. As Camps (2005: 130) puts it, “a sequence of a series of cyclical, recursive, and progressive stages with the purpose of producing a final piece of written work”.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are numerous research studies related to the significance and distinctions between the two approaches and what each approach focuses on. Sarala, Abdul and Fauziah (2014) claimed that when students use the product process they imitate the sentences in order to get familiar with the content and they also transform the model they wrote into a new essay while focusing on the correct language simultaneously, but these students are guided and instructed by their teacher. In addition, they also claimed that the product approach is one of the most common methods used by teachers around the world (p.790).

Earlier in this article mentioned that product writing is focused on cohesive devices and harnessing vocabulary words while conducting a product approach, as Pinca cited in (Badger and White, 2002) believed that “writing as being primarily about linguistic knowledge, with attention focused on the appropriate use of vocabulary, syntax, and cohesive devices.” (p. 153).

Other researchers described product writing as a “one- shot effort by the teacher to evaluate the students’ attempts” (Pennington and Cheung 1995:20) and a “one-shot correct writing for the purpose of language practice” (Cheung 1999).

In contrast, the process approach is more about the stages of the writing as Leki (1991) stated that the process approach emphasizes on the stages of the writing process rather than on the final product (as cited in Belinda 2006, p.23).

Belinda's study (2006) that took place in primary schools in Hong Kong showed that both upper and lower-level classes showed positive results in using a process approach in class. The study interviewed six teachers, three of them taught at the lower primary level, and the other three taught at the upper primary level. The study also conducted a questionnaire for the students. In another relevant study Mahon and Yau (1992) implemented a process approach in the classroom for a primary class consisting of thirty-five students the study showed positive results where the students' writing ability has improved gradually.

One of the relevant studies, Banat (2007) stated that it is significant for learners to conceptualize how parts of the language go together. The more the learners write the more they become familiar with the process of writing whether they are dealing with a process or product approach Conley (1995) clearly explained that writing makes the learners' thoughts and experiences vivid. Research Hasan, and Akhand, (2010) utilized the process writing in a class and then utilized the product approach in another class. They also utilized both approaches combined in a third class. The study was conducted at the University of Bangladesh it was applied to university-level students, as Hasan and Akhand (2010) put it, "Two ESL classes of United International University in Bangladesh participated in the study; initially one class was instructed to follow the method of writing of product approach, and the other received instruction on the process approach. Later a collaborative approach was adopted in both classes."(p.77) The researchers claimed that there are four different stages for a product approach for students to utilize in class. The first stage is where the students study the model of the texts given. The features of the text provided to the students were highlighted to show how this specific writing is written. As the researchers Hasan, and Akhand, (2010) put it,

"Students study model texts and then the features of the genre are highlighted. For example, if studying a formal letter, students' attention may be drawn to the importance of paragraphing and the language used to make formal requests. If a student reads a story, the focus may be on the techniques used to make the story interesting, and students focus on where and how the writer employs these techniques. Stage two: This stage consists of controlled practice of the highlighted features, usually in isolation. So if students are studying a formal letter, they may be asked to practise the language used to make formal requests, for example, practising the 'I would be grateful if you would...' structure.

Stage three: This is the most important stage where the ideas are organized. Those who favour this approach believe that the organization of ideas is more important than the ideas themselves and as important as the control of language.

Stage four: This is the end product of the learning process. Students choose from the choice of comparable writing tasks. To show what they can be as fluent and competent users of the language, students individually use the skills, structures and vocabulary they have been taught to produce the product." (p.78)

After collecting the data, the researchers found out that the class that combined both approaches has "outperformed the presentation of the learners. There was corroborating evidence to support the view that the blend of both approaches tends to facilitate the learners to undertake a writing

task to be developed” (p.77) The researchers found out that on one hand under the product approach, the students were imitating the model some of them reproduced the original one as the researchers mentioned in their research,

“Under the product approach, we found that the maximum number of students tried to recall their previous knowledge and some of them imitated model writing and some reproduced the original. This approach did not help them in producing a good composition given in the exam hall as they failed to showcase their ability to write effectively the structure of the composition in their answer scripts.” (p.83)

On the other hand, the researchers saw that the students faced complications in brainstorming because “they were not familiar with the method” (p.83) the results of the research also showed that students took a long time to gather information in the process writing approach. Some students “failed even after their several attempts as they could not extract the important points necessary for the topic. The researchers found that the students retreated back to their old fashioned paragraph writing without providing the structure of a paragraph, namely topic sentence, supporting details and a conclusion.” (p.83)

According to (Steele, 2004) the process approach contains eight stages. The below eight stages are adapted from (Steele, 2004)The first stage is the brainstorming stage. students generate brainstorming through discussions they discuss the topic group individually or in pairs and launch the generation of brainstorming.

The second stage is planning and structuring. Students share their ideas and judge them together. They view each other’s papers and exchange their ideas to start structuring their papers. The third stage is the mind mapping stage where students conduct their ideas into a mind map. A mind map could be like a spiderweb diagram to show how ideas are coherent and linked together. This stage helps students to structure their text.

The fourth stage is writing the first draft which is considered an important stage. In this stage, students are required to combine their ideas and make them into sentences. This stage could be done in groups or pairs.

The fifth stage is the peer feedback stage. students read each other drafts by exchanging their papers. They can comment on each other drafts to improve each other’s papers and to learn how to avoid mistakes in writing.

The sixth stage is where students return each other’s papers and improve their papers by correcting the provided mistakes. Based on the returned feedback from their colleagues they modify their papers and write a better version of it.

The seventh stage is writing the final draft carefully and vividly making sure that the paper is ready to be handed. Bearing in mind that this paper is the final copy.

Last but not least the eighth stage is the evaluation and teacher’s feedback. The teacher evaluates the students' feedback and also marks the students' final paper and provides her personal feedback. There is a diagram in figure one that shows the eight steps adapted from (White and Arndt’s1991:43) Below is a diagram of process writing that clarifies the eight stages in one diagram for teachers to follow in class.

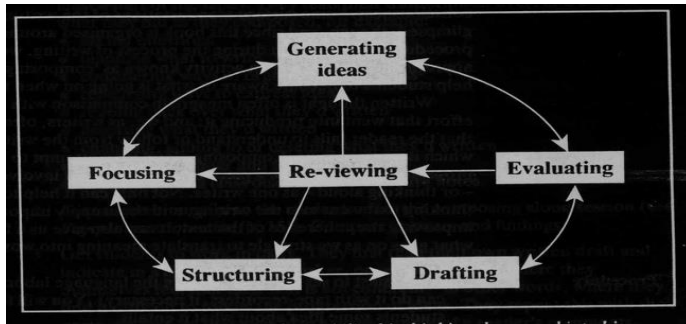


Figure 1: (White and Arndt’s1991:43) A diagram of process writing)

Steele, 2004 p.1 presented a table showing the differences of the two approaches. Below is table1 presenting the differences of the product and process approach.

Process Writing	Product Writing
Text as a resource for comparison	Imitate model text
Ideas as starting point More than one draft Individual	Organization of ideas are more important than ideas themselves One draft Collaborative
More global, focused on purpose, theme, text type i.e. reader is emphasized	Features highlighted including controlled practice of those features
Emphasis on creative process	Emphasis on end product

Table 1: Product and process writing: A comparison (Steele 2004 p. 1)

One study (Pasand and Hagher, 2013) combined both approaches. The students were given a text and “instead of copying it they are asked to continue the text based on their own ideas. We believed that in this way the sample will act as a guide rather than as a means to an end. Our main issue in this regard is whether writing in this way has any effect on the students' writing accuracy or not.”

(p.75) The study took place in Iran and students were twelve EFL learners, half of them were males and the other half were females. The participants ages were between 13-15 years old. The Iranian students took six sessions of writing classes. The first four sessions “were conducted in order to familiarize the learners with the processes involved in the process- approach to writing, and the final two sessions aimed at investigating the effect of completing an incomplete model text on their writing accuracy.” (p.76) The students were required to complete two tasks. The first task is writing a paper utilizing a process approach and the students choose a topic according to their interest. After brainstorming and discussing their ideas together, they write their paper and enter the different stages of writing which are drafting, revising, redrafting, and editing. In the second task “which was done based on process-product approach, the students were asked to write about the same topic after a model text was explained and discussed in terms of its organization, structure, etc. They were required to complete the model text on their own way.” (p.76) The results of this study came out as positive. The researchers’ hypothesis was correct. The researchers Pasand and Haghi, (2013; 79) stated that “using a model text in process-product approach in which the students were asked to continue it, positively influence their writing accuracy.”

Some relevant researchers showed that the process writing is significant to use in class because it showed that “during the implementation of the process approach to the experimental group, the students were able to make use of the pre-writing stage to explore, link and generate new ideas, a fact that highly affected their writing.” (Alodwan and Ibnian P.152). In addition to other relevant studies that showed the importance of process writing in class (Alsouqi, 2001), (Darayseh, 2003), (El Said, 2004), and (Ibnian, 2011). According to Nunan (1999), in the product-based approach, the focus is more on the final product of the paper which should be text free from errors. Students provide a transformed text imitating a model text the teachers had provided them.

Process Writing: A Classroom Example

This is a process writing example that could be utilized by teachers to use in the classroom. It contains five different phases of how a process of writing could be conducted in class. each phase is explained clearly of how the teacher could utilize the provided phases

1. The Prewriting phase:

The prewriting phase is a phase where students are prepped and equipped before they start writing. The teacher in that stage introduces the text to the students and permits them to brainstorm their notions and think about the topic. The teacher’s role is to introduce the topic by writing down the topic title on the board asking the students to initiate the process of writing by starting to come up with new ideas and arguments. In the prewriting phase, teachers could do the following steps,

- Provide the class with a topic and ask them to think about it (e.g. smoking in public places). Write the topic down on the board
- Then ask the students to start to generate lots of ideas and arguments that they can include in their writing.
Do this by using Peter Elbow's (1973) technique of 'Freewriting'. Elbow describes how freewriting works below:
'The idea is simply to write for ten minutes (later on, perhaps fifteen or twenty). Don't stop for anything. Go quickly without rushing. Never stop to look back, to cross something out, to wonder how to spell something, to wonder what word or thought to use, or to think about what you are doing. If you can't think of a word or a spelling, just use a squiggle or else write, "I can't think of it." Just put down something. The easiest thing is just to put down whatever is in your mind. If you get stuck it's fine to write "I can't think of what to say, I can't think of what to say" as many times as you want: Or repeat the last word you wrote over and over again; or anything else. The only requirement is that you never stop.' (p.3, cited in Ferris & Hedgcock 1998: 103)
- Afterward, tell the students to write freely about the given topic
- Next, ask the students to pair up and read each other's work
Then allow them to pick the best ideas from each other and put them in a list
ex. SMOKING IN PUBLIC PLACES
 - freedom to do what we want
 - Bad for children
 - breathing in smoke
 - etc.

The Drafting Phase

This stage is considered a significant phase because students start to compose the text and write down their ideas on paper. They will start to write down an introduction, the topic sentence, and the supporting sentences and then conclude by composing a paragraph that caps off all their ideas. Students afterward have to discuss their papers and combine their work in groups or pairs. After sharing their work and combining it they ought to compose a better draft. The teacher provides scaffolding by going around the class making sure they are on the right track. In addition, the teacher supports the students by providing related texts from different sources. The drafting phase is summarized into steps as follows:

- Each pair who read each other's papers discuss their papers and write a better draft by combining each other's work.

- The class then discusses the topics in class. The teacher also brings in some readings from the Internet, magazines, and newspapers about the same topic for students to become savvy and gather information. The class then debates about the given text.
- The students then utilize the notions that have come from the class discussions and the texts to modify their drafts.

The Rewriting & Redrafting Phase

In that particular phase pair work is significant because it requires students to swap their writings with other colleagues. They discuss their work together and try to come up with a better draft. Rewriting and redrafting make students stronger in writing because through work collaboration students can develop and become better students achieving a better understanding of the topic. Students could ask for the teacher's help if they felt they needed it. The rewriting and redrafting phase is as recapped through the following steps:

- The students then swap their writing with other different pairs of students. The students read the texts, and comment on the ideas. After numerous discussions like this with different people in the class, each pair of students modifies their drafts again as a result of their colleagues' feedback.
- Throughout the drafting and redrafting phases, the teacher sits at their desk. Students can come and ask for advice if they want it.

The Feedback & Revision Phase

Students at this phase are exposed to a draft from a student of another class. The teacher asks them to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the essay this allows the students to shed light and focus and how a proper essay is written. Moreover, students are allowed to add their comments on the sheet they are assessing. Allowing students to assess each other will make them aware of their own mistakes later on. The feedback and revision phase is recapped as follows:

- At this phase, the teacher then provides the class an anonymous student's essay (who belongs to a different class). Then the class is asked to assess the essay's strengths and weaknesses. The teacher afterward shows the class her/his feedback and provides it to the students to have an idea of what proper writing looks like.
- Then it's the students' turn to read everyone else's work, writing (polite and positive) comments to each writer about their writing

The Editing & Revision Phase

The final phase is the editing and revision it is the last step in the writing process. The students are asked to read their colleague's comments on their essays and try to edit their drafts according to what comments they have on their sheets. The following is the final step summarized in one point:

- At this phase, students modify their drafts for the final time based on their colleagues' comments

Product Writing: Classroom Examples

Product Writing is different when conducting a paper in class. There are a couple of examples on how teachers could utilize a Product Approach to get their students to practice the past simple tense. Below is an example that shows how to start the exercise. Example one:

Instructions: The paragraph below is written in the present tense change it into past tense. The first sentence is done for you.

My wife gets up early in the morning. She hates to get up in the morning. She has to get dressed quickly to catch an early bus to work. I go to work later, and I drive my car. She doesn't have much time for breakfast, so she just has a cup of coffee when she gets to work. I have a bowl of cereal and fruit before I go to work. I understand why my wife doesn't like mornings. [...]

Example of the beginning of past tense paragraph: *My wife got up earlier in the morning than I did.*

Guided Writing Exercise.

Then the students use a guided writing exercise by answering a couple of questions to aid them with

Instructions: You just read a paragraph about a man and his wife getting ready for work in the morning. Now write a paragraph about what you did this morning. Answer the questions to get ideas for your paragraph.

- Did you get up early or late?
- Did you have a lot of time or did you have to hurry?
- How did you get to school? Did you walk, ride a bike, or ride a bus?
- Did you eat breakfast? Where (at home or at school)?
- What did you eat for breakfast?
- Do you usually enjoy mornings?

Follow-up: Now change your paragraph about this morning into one about your usual morning. (Ferris & Hedgcock 1998: 211)

Example Two:

Model Sentence:

The boys in the class speak English correctly.

Now make a similar sentence using *players; team; play; football; roughly* (Adapted from Pincas 1962)

Pros and Cons of Product and Process Writing

One of the major pros of product writing is that it bestows confidence in students because they are guided through their paragraphs. Another significant advantage is that students make fewer grammatical mistakes during writing. It is a good focused writing practice where students focus on specific grammatical rules throughout the paper. To recap, students focus on what the teacher wanted them to learn and acknowledge. The cons of a product approach are way too peril. One of the cons is that students lose their creativity, they have no say in the provided paragraph. Some words might be repetitive and their writing might be unrealistic. Students with this approach will not write for a purpose they will write to practice their grammar. The product approach shows the students that there is only one way to write a paragraph which is the model-based approach, having a model in front of them and imitating it to construct another paragraph.

There is the danger that students will believe that ‘writing is a unitary, context-free activity, in which the same patterns and rules apply to all writing, independent of text type’ (Ivanič 2004: 227). Ivanič argues that the product approach is only concerned with grammar and ignores the context. When students use cohesive devices like nevertheless, therefore to join their texts they might think these cohesive devices are used in all types of writing even in an informal text. Whereas different types of writing utilize different types of language. The major con of the product approach is that it does not reflect what real writers write in the real world.

Real writers write down several different drafts and keep changing their drafts when it is necessary. They organize, plan, and rewrite throughout their writing process. Real writers also read their drafts multiple times to make sure the image of their words is clear and understandable. As (Hairston 1982: 85) puts it,

‘[writing] is messy, recursive, convoluted, and uneven. Writers write, plan, revise, anticipate, and review throughout the writing process, moving back and forth among the different operations involved in writing without any apparent plan.’

Some researchers were the first to research how writers wrote were Flower & Hayes (e.g., 1981a) they got writers to write down their thoughts while they were composing a text and they recorded these results.

The process approach allows students to write multiple drafts, revise, plan throughout the writing process, and make the text more reader-friendly. Teachers must help their students to write while writing not just provide them feedback afterwards. Flower & Hayes (1981b) urge teachers to

‘...intervene at points in the writing process that could do writers the most good—as they are actually engaged in the act of writing. Thus, teachers could help writers to *write*, not just learn to *repair the damage*.’ (p.55).

Ferris & Hedgcock (1998) recaps what a standard Process Approach writing lesson looked like: ‘...prewriting tasks..., drafting multiple versions of writing assignments, abundant text-level (as opposed to sentence-level) revision, collaborative writing, feedback sessions..., and the postponement of editing until the end of a composing cycle. Thus, cognitivist rhetoricians focus principally on developing writers’ mental processes, particularly strategies used to create and revise text on their own...’ (p.4)

The process approach con is that students are less focused on grammar. They may not know what good writing looks like. There are many genres and they all look different in writing but the process approach does not show the students how to compose any of these genres. The process approach could take a longer time to correct and students may make many grammatical mistakes as Tusu (1996) talks about Julie, a Hong Kong teacher, who faced two issues in writing process as she claims ‘...it took much longer to complete a writing task using the process approach...’; and ‘...her students were making far more grammatical mistakes than before’ (pp.110-11). What Julie did is that she ‘retain[ing] the essential elements of process writing but [reducing] the amount of time needed to complete one writing task’ (p.112) Julie decided to reduce the number of drafts the students were supposed to write, she also explained clearly the product approach tasks to make sure that students are also focused on grammar accuracy. In the end, Julie taught both approaches in her class allowing students to learn both to reach sufficiency.

Research Implications

1. Pedagogical Significance: The comparison and analysis of the Product Approach and Process Approach in teaching writing in TESOL can offer valuable insights for language educators in designing their writing curricula. Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of each approach can help teachers make informed decisions about which approach to adopt based on their students' needs and learning objectives (Harmer, 2004; Hedge, 2005).

2. Student Learning Outcomes: By exploring how these two approaches are utilized in ELT classes, this research can contribute to enhancing students' writing skills and fostering their creativity and critical thinking abilities. Understanding how students respond to different writing approaches can inform classroom practices and assessment strategies to optimize learning outcomes (Hyland, 2003; Flower & Hayes, 1981).

3. Professional Development: The findings of this study can also have implications for teacher training programs in TESOL. Educators can benefit from learning about the various writing approaches and how to effectively implement them in their teaching practices. This research can guide professional development initiatives aimed at improving instructors' pedagogical skills and enriching their teaching repertoire (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Nunan, 2003).

4. Curriculum Design: The identification of the benefits and challenges associated with the Product Approach and Process Approach can inform curriculum developers in TESOL about the best practices for structuring writing courses. Insights from this study can guide the alignment of writing instruction with language learning standards and educational objectives, ultimately enhancing the quality of writing programs in ELT settings (Raimes, 1983; Byrd & Reid, 2018).

5. Future Research Directions: This research sets the stage for further investigation into the effectiveness of different writing approaches in TESOL. Future studies could delve deeper into specific aspects of the Product Approach and Process Approach, such as the impact on language acquisition, student motivation, and classroom dynamics. Researchers can explore innovative strategies for integrating these approaches and assess their long-term effects on student writing proficiency (Swales, 2004; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996).

CONCLUSION

To cap it all, both approaches work in ESL classes perfectly well it just depends on what the teacher is attempting to teach her/his students. If students are at a foundation level, teachers could utilize the product approach to teach them how to use, for example, the tenses or any grammatical lesson they are learning. When students learn their grammar and become capable of how to use English grammar then they can commence composing a process paragraph. Hence, they can free-write at the process approach while using the correct grammar they have learned in class when they were taught the product approach. The two approaches can be taught together starting with the product and then moving on to the process approach. Learning both approaches may avoid any erroneous sentence and grammar structures.

Many teachers utilize both approaches or even combine the elements of both approaches in their writing classes. On one hand, they could allow students to think and brainstorm, this is considered a process approach. On the other hand, they also provide them with a model text to guide them and help them with their writing. Balancing between the approaches is necessary. Teachers should mix between “the careful control of language for learner (as in product), and the creative use of language by the learner (as in process)” (Kim and Kim, 2005, pp.7-8). Scaffolding is also a significant role for the teacher to conduct in class. Students need scaffolding all the time it helps them develop in their learning. Provide students a model text to follow as a guide and then ask them to continue it by adding on their generated ideas helps students to achieve writing fluency as (Pasand and Haghi, 2013:77) stated, “we can conclude that using a model text and asking the students to continue it can improve the students’ writing accuracy in some aspects of their writing but not all the aspects.”

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