The Effect of Process-genre Approach on EFL Students’ Writing Performance

Eliwarti1* and Nooreiny Maarof2

1Universitas Riau, Indonesia
2University Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia

*Corresponding Author
Received: 10 October 2016, Accepted: 4 November 2016
Published online: 14 February 2017

Abstract: The main objective of this study was to examine the effect of Process-Genre Approach (PGA) on EFL students’ writing performance. This study also investigated students’ and lecturer’s perceptions of the strategies in PGA. The subjects were 67 second year undergraduate students taking a writing course at a public university in Riau, Indonesia. The PGA group was exposed to 4 hours of PGA strategies over twelve weeks whereas the comparison group was given Product Traditional Approach (PTA) of teaching writing. Both groups were given an expository writing post-test. The results of the t-test (t=4.48; p=0.00) showed that the PGA group (M=71.125; SD=20.60) outperformed the PTA group (M=62.485; SD=26.09) on the writing test. The findings from the questionnaires reveal that both students and lecturer had highly favorable perceptions of the PGA. The findings suggest that PGA has potential to be used as an instructional tool in enhancing second-year university students’ EFL writing skills.

Keywords: Process-Genre Approach; EFL students; Writing Performance.

1. Introduction

Writing is considered to be a difficult and complex skill to acquire, particularly for EFL students. The complexity of writing skill is specified by Peha (2002) and Myles (2002). They believe that writing skill development involves much more than the accurate use of grammar and a good range of vocabulary, it is about the way that ideas are ordered into sentences and paragraphs to communicate to the reader of each particular piece of writing (Creme and Lea 2008). Therefore, it is quite reasonable that EFL students’ writing performance is unsatisfactory.

There are several ways to cope with students’ problems in essay writing. Al-Khasawneh (2009) claims that teachers should employ multiple teaching techniques in order to improve students’ writing performance. Morgan, et.al (2007) suggests to provide teachers with strategies for promoting generalization of writing skills in each stage of the writing process: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. These ideas are mostly concerned with the teaching strategies, teaching methods and teaching techniques used by the teacher. Therefore, the students’ writing problems can be minimized and solved by professional English teachers that employ multiple teaching strategies and the appropriate teaching method in their writing instruction. This study focuses on the method used by the lecturer in writing instruction.

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of Process Genre Approach on EFL students’ writing performance. Specifically, the study examined the use of Process-Genre Approach and Product Traditional Approach on the students’ essay writing performance. In addition, the study also aimed to
describe the university students’ and the lecturer’s perceptions of the approach incorporated in the learning and the teaching of EFL writing.

2. Literature Review: Approaches to Teaching Writing

Tribble (2009) identifies three main approaches of the teaching of writing: focusing on form, on the writer, and on the reader. In addition to the three approaches, there is another approach which synthesizes the focus on the writer and the reader, which is called Process-Genre Approach (Badger and White 2000).

2.1 Product/Traditional Approach (PTA)

Product/Traditional Approach (PTA) is grounded on behaviorist principles and relates language teaching to linguistic forms, separate linguistics skills and habit formation. Tribble (2009) claims that in PTA the focus is on form. PTA is a traditional, text-based approach which is still used in many materials today. In this approach, the teacher often presents some texts for students to imitate or adapt. Errors are considered as something that should be corrected, or if possible, eliminated. The teacher’s main role is to instill notions of correctness and conformity.

2.2 Process Approach (PA)

Process Approach is an approach where students focus on the process of how they produce their writing rather than on the product. By focusing on the writing process, students understand more about themselves and are expected to find out how to work through their writing. Applebee (1986) explains that the Process Approach provides a way to think about writing in terms of what the writer does, such as planning, revising, and editing instead of what the final product looks like. Therefore, students are considered as central in learning. Through the writing process, students need to maximize their writing abilities in both knowledge and skills. This can be done with help and cooperation from the teacher/lecturer and other students. It also encourages students to feel free to express thoughts or feelings by providing them with enough time and opportunity to reconsider and revise their writing. At each step, students are encouraged to get assistance from lecturers.

2.3 Genre Approach (GA)

A Genre Approach is grounded on the systemic functional model that refers to the theory of genre as a theory of language use, which describes the relationship between the context and the language used (Gee 2005). Halliday (1994) explains that genre draws on systemic functional linguistics (SFL) which uses language as a resource for making meaning in a certain context of use, not as a set of fixed rules and structures: the important aspect being the social aspect of the uses of language based on context. In addition, language is the primary tool teachers use to communicate with their students.

In the same vein, Tribble (2009) explains that GA is more socially oriented and focuses on how writers and texts interact with readers. In this approach, writing is seen as a social activity; therefore, if readers are not able to recognize the purpose of a text, communication will fail.

2.4 Process-Genre Approach (PGA)

The Process-Genre approach (PGA) is the combination of the Process and the Genre approaches. PGA thus encompasses the process where writers decide what aspects should be highlighted as well as the knowledge of the appropriate language (Badger and White 2000). PGA integrates both the strengths of the Process Approach and the Genre Approach. Therefore, planning, drafting, conferencing, editing and peer review are components of the Process Approach to the teaching of writing. Whereas, understanding and considering the purpose, audience and context are elements in the Genre Approach.
The Effect of Process-genre Approach on EFL Students’ Writing Performance

3. Material & Methodology

This quasi-experimental research design was based on the non-equivalent control group pretest/posttest design where at least two nonequivalent groups are given pretest, then a treatment and then a posttest measure (Jackson 2012). In this study, there are two groups of which two types of writing approaches (PGA and PTA) are used in the teaching and learning of EFL writing.

3.1 Participants
The study took place at one public university in Riau, Indonesia. The population of this research comprised all the third year English Department students at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education who met the predetermined inclusion criterion. They consist of three classes, class A, class B and class C. The researcher used purposive sampling to identify the research site with the target population. The criterion for inclusion in the study was students who joined Writing III subject. Therefore, the sample of this research was the second grade in which essay writing materials were discussed.

3.2 Data and Instruments
The first quantitative data were composed of 134 expository essays of participants – half were gathered before the intervention and the remaining half (67) after the intervention. The second quantitative data were from student and lecturer questionnaire. Therefore, two instruments were constructed: essay writing test (for pretest and posttest) and questionnaire in order to assess the students’ and the lecturer’s perceptions of the strategies in the PGA.

3.3 Data Analysis
To provide the answers to the questions posed in the study, the students’ essay writing performance was analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics independent sample t-test. The second quantitative data, the students’ perceptions of the strategies in PGA in the learning of EFL writing and the lecturer’s perceptions of the strategies in PGA in the teaching of EFL writing were analyzed through percentage. They were differentiated into three different categories: Highly Positive, Positive, and Negative. The criteria applied to decide the students’ and the lecturer’s level of perception was ≥ 70%. Therefore, the level of perception was considered to be negative if the score was below 70%.

4. Results and Discussion
4.1 Descriptive Statistics
Descriptive statistics related to the pretest and posttest measures were calculated for the two groups. The students’ essays were graded based on Hyland (2008) and the aspects are format and content, organization and coherence, and sentence construction and vocabulary. The students’s pretest and posttest mean scores were illustrated in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approaches</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Process-Genre Approach (PGA)</td>
<td>46.135</td>
<td>71.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product/Traditional Approach (PTA)</td>
<td>47.171</td>
<td>62.4854</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pretest results showed that the students in the PGA group had slightly lower essay writing performance prior to the treatment strategy compared to that of PTA group. After the intervention, the PTA group posttest mean score was lower than that of PGA. In other words, the students in the PGA class showed better improvement in essay writing performance compared to that of in PTA class. To summarize, the treatment approach of PGA appeared to have a substantial and positive effects on the students’ essay writing performance.
4.2 Inferential Statistics: Independent samples t-test
The post-test scores of the two groups were taken for comparative purposes and the Independent sample t-test was executed to statistically examine whether there was a significant difference between PGA and PTA groups’ writing performance. From the table below, it is seen that there was a statistically significant difference of students’ writing performance (t=4.483; df= 65; p=.000) between those who were exposed to Process-Genre approach than those to Traditional Product Approach. The implication is, therefore, the Process-Genre approach can enhance students’ writing performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test</td>
<td>Eksperiment (PGA)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>213.37</td>
<td>20.60</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>4.483</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Control (PTA)</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>187.45</td>
<td>26.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 Student Questionnaire
The second objective of the study was to identify the students’ perception of the strategies used in the Process-Genre Approach in EFL writing classroom. The students’ perception was assessed through distributing questionnaire to all students. There were 32 participating students and the number of items in the questionnaire was 24. Accordingly, the highest score of students’ questionnaire was 120. The criteria applied to decide the students’ level of perception was ≥ 70%. The students’ level of perception was presented in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The students’ Level of Perception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of Perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the table, the majority of the students in the PGA class (84.38 %) were highly positive of the strategies employed in the writing instruction class. A few (15.63%) show a positive perception, while none are negative about the incorporation of the strategies in the PGA in their writing class.

4.4 The Lecturer Questionnaire
The third objective of the study was to investigate the writing lecturer’s perception of the strategies in the Process-Genre Approach in the teaching of EFL writing. The lecturer’s perception was also assessed through distributing questionnaire. The lecturer was Highly Positive on the strategies in PGA in the teaching of writing in the EFL classroom as presented in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Lecturer Perception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGA Lecturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5 Discussion
The findings of this study revealed that Process-Genre Approach to the teaching of writing had significant effect on the students’ writing performance. The post-test scores of the students in the experimental group were significantly higher than that of the students in the control group which implied that students in the
The Effect of Process-genre Approach on EFL Students’ Writing Performance

experimental group benefited significantly from the treatment. The finding is consistent with the results of previous studies (Bababola 2012, Bababola 2011, Cheng 2008, Voon Foo 2007 and Ming 2006) where students’ writing performance in PGA class outperformed that of in PTA class.

The approach as stated earlier is a combination of two approaches; Process and Genre. Teachers/lecturers provided situations for students to identify the purpose, mode, field and tenor of the writing and students developed and used appropriate writing skills with support from teachers/lecturers. Process-Genre Approach provides opportunities for students to develop their individual creativity and that it helps them understand the features of target genres (Kim & Kim 2005).

5. Conclusion

Findings from this study has shown that students’ writing performance improved significantly as a result of the treatment with the PGA. The effect was significant in the overall performance. In addition, the findings from the questionnaires reveal that both students and the lecturer had highly favorable perceptions of PGA. Therefore, if it is applied effectively such as developing and using appropriate writing skills, effective use of student/student feedback, teacher/student conferencing and real interest in the students’ writing development, PGA is able to ensure that students acquire required writing skills. However, serious effort of lecturers in terms of class control, effective feedback is required in order that students would have sufficient information on their progress. Further exploration is still the crucial question, but the writer believes that in the Indonesian EFL context where students’ failure in writing English is frequently pronounced, the Process-Genre Approach to the teaching of writing is worth considering.

References

The Effect of Process-genre Approach on EFL Students' Writing Performance

