УДК 37.016:811.111'271.1
ББК Ш143.21-9-6 ГСНТИ 14.35.09 Код ВАК 13.00.02

Надточева Елена Сергеевна,
кандидат педагогических наук, доцент кафедры английского языка, методики и переводоведения Института иностранных языков Уральского государственного педагогического университета; 620017, г. Екатеринбург, пр-т Космонавтов, д. 26, к. 459; e-mail: enadtocheva@gmail.com

Овешкова Анна Николаевна,
кандидат филологических наук, доцент кафедры иностранных языков Института философии и права Уральского Отделения РАН; доцент кафедры иностранных языков и перевода Института фундаментального образования Уральского федерального университета; 620990, г. Екатеринбург, ул. Первомайская, д. 91, к. 410; e-mail: oveshkova-anna@yandex.ru

ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТНЫЙ ПОДХОД К ПИСЬМУ КАК СРЕДСТВО ПРЕОДОЛЕНИЯ ГЛОБАЛЬНЫХ ПРОБЛЕМ ОБУЧЕНИЯ

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: обучение письму, ориентированное на конечный продукт; деятельностный подход к письму; академическое письмо; умения письменной речи; письмо как средство общения.

АННОТАЦИЯ. Обучение письму как умению всегда было дискуссионным вопросом в методике обучения английскому языку. Несмотря на наличие всевозможных подходов и методов развития умений и навыков письма, вопрос о наиболее эффективных методах обучения письменной речи до сих пор остается открытым. В последнее время значительное внимание уделяется обучению письму, ориентированному на конечный продукт, и деятельностному подходу к обучению письму. Однако, как показал проведенный обзор, в современной российской школе до сих пор доминирует подход, основанный на конечном продукте. Проблема такого подхода состоит в том, что он традиционно ориентирован на языковые аспекты письма и уделяет мало внимания развитию письменной коммуникации. В данной статье описывается проведенный авторами эксперимент и анализируются его результаты. Двадцать студентов первого курса английского отделения, обучающихся по программе бакалавриата «Устный и письменный перевод», участвовали в двухэтапном эксперименте. На первом этапе использовался подход к обучению письму, ориентированный на конечный продукт. На втором этапе применялся деятельностный подход. Авторы заявляют, что деятельностный подход или сочетание деятельностного и абзацного подходов наиболее эффективны при обучении академическому письму студентов вузов. В заключении авторы предлагают советы по преодолению недостатков обучения академическому письму студентов вузов. Эти советы могут оказаться полезными преподпвателям иностранных языков.

Nadtocheva Elena Sergeevna,
Candidate of Pedagogy, Associate Professor of Department of English, Teaching Methods and Translation Theory, Institute of Foreign Languages, Ural State Pedagogical University, Ekaterinburg, Russia.

Oveshkova Anna Nikolayevna,
Candidate of Philology, Associate Professor of Department of Foreign Languages, Institute of Philosophy and Law, Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences; Associate Professor of Department of Foreign Languages and Translation, Institute of Fundamental Education, Ural Federal University named after the First President of Russia B.N. Yeltsin, Ekaterinburg, Russia.

PROCESS WRITING APPROACH TO OVERCOME GLOBAL WRITING CONCERNS

KEYWORDS: product writing; process writing; academic writing; writing skills, communicative writing.

ABSTRACT. Teaching writing as a skill has always been a controversial issue in the field of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). Numerous approaches and methods that are used to develop students' writing skills still leave the question about the most effective ones open for discussion. Recently considerable attention has been paid to product and process-focused approaches. Nevertheless, the results of a survey conducted among TEFL instructors allowed us to arrive at the conclusion that product-oriented approach still dominates in the ELT classrooms in Russia. The problem with this approach is that it is traditionally language-focused and gives little attention to developing writing fluency. The paper describes and analyses the results of an experiment conducted by the authors. Twenty first-year students majoring in English and doing their BA degrees in Interpreting and Translation participated in a two-stage experiment. In the course of the first stage, product-oriented approach to teaching writing was implemented. During the second stage students explored writing as a process. The authors claim that process-oriented writing or a combination of process and paragraph-first approaches are more efficient when teaching academic writing to students at tertiary level. Finally, the paper provides some guidelines for overcoming barriers to teaching academic writing to university students that might be helpful for TEFL practitioners.

In today's world when globalisation processes penetrate all spheres of life, education is no exception. University graduates entering the labour market cannot become successful global citizens and have good career prospects unless their writing skills are developed.

Object of Study

During our careers as university professors teaching students majoring in EFL, we have found that writing is a skill that our students struggle with most and writing assignments have always been the most challenging

for them. Therefore, in this article we describe how shifting the focus from the product-based to the process-oriented approach can make writing classes more beneficial for EFL learners at tertiary level. In the course of the experiment, we aimed at increasing our students' motivation and improving their academic performance. We also outline some benefits and problems connected with implementing different approaches to developing writing skills of university students. For this reason, we provide the information obtained from a survey conducted among EFL teachers and the data we collected in the process of a short-term experiment launched among first year university students.

Background

Teaching writing has seen a great number of approaches with a focus shifting from accuracy to fluency. According to the survey conducted among school teachers and university instructors from across the Ural region of Russia, product-oriented approach in teaching writing dominates at present on educational premises at all levels. We assume that it is true for the majority of educational institutions all over Russia. The results obtained indicate a traditional approach to teaching writing that is a language-focused one. Writing is often underscored and viewed as secondary and in some way inferior to the spoken language and is used as a means of reinforcing language, which had already been practised in spoken language. The emphasis in this approach is "on correctness and the adherence to and copying of models, both of language and text" [18, p. 5].

In the product-oriented approach it is essential to provide students with a model text which they analyse (form, content, organisation, language patterns), and then use to create a parallel text. Despite the fact that this approach can be successfully applied when teaching students to create pieces of certain genres and types such as a postcard or a formal request, it is not considered to be empowering and liberating [1]. More than that, it is believed to be inappropriate and unhelpful when teaching writing for academic purposes at tertiary level since it does not provide any insight in the process of writing, thus not contributing in any way to developing students' writing fluency.

G. Parson [11] outlined several reasons for the failure of the traditional approach:

1. Emphasis on form and mechanics before, and often at the expense of, ideas and meaning;
2. Focus on the product rather than the process;
3. Serious neglect of the earliest stages of the writing process;
4. Offer of too many artificial contexts for writing;
5. Isolation of mechanical skills from the context of writing;
6. Rather than being an outgrowth of research and experimentation, the traditional approaches are based on sheer historical momentum of outmoded theoretical assumptions [11, p. 9].

So we consider it vital to shift from product to process approach in teaching writing at tertiary level. Such a shift will make university students aware of the stages of the writing process thus helping them to overcome a blank page syndrome. In addition to these gains learners' fluency will develop rapidly since the focus in process writing is not on the language but on the message conveyed.

We do not teach our students rules demonstrated by static models; we teach our students to write by allowing them to experience the process of writing. That is a process of discovery, of using written language to find out what we have to say [7, p. 20].

The roles of a teacher and a student change too. A teacher acquires the role of a facilitator while students collaborate and peer-teach each other by means of a feedback given at all stages of the writing process. Moreover, students get more freedom. They no longer feel product-bound. It makes the process of writing enjoyable for them as writing becomes communication [6; 15]. In the long term, this is more likely to ensure that students' learning is a successful and worthwhile experience.

We argue that a shift from product to process writing approach can help university students cope with difficulties they encounter when writing. This statement is supported by the data gathered from the experiment the authors conducted.

Method

In our research experiment is considered to be the primary instrument. The experiment consisted of two stages: at Stage 1 (September – October, 2015) we implemented the product approach while teaching writing to twenty university students at the Institute of Fundamental Education (IFE), Ural Federal University (Yekaterinburg). It is worth noting that the undergraduates major in English, doing their BA degrees in Interpreting and Translation. The students in the experimental group were enrolled in the course based on their scores of the Unified State Exam / USE (Yediniy gosudarstvenniy ekzamen / EGE). The average result in the group was 77 points (out of the maximum 100). Eight students had the result above average. The course of study at the IFE includes such subjects as Grammar, Writing, Phonetics, etc. taught concurrently by a number of instructors. We were given carte-blanche as far as the Writing syllabus was concerned. As the only approach the instructors had util-

ized for over fourteen years was the product approach, it was implemented again. Within this framework teachers traditionally focus on the finished paper / product (formal and informal letters, stories, essays, etc.). The instructors started with personal writing, which was followed by creative writing since such tasks were assumed to serve as revision of skills and habits the undergraduates acquired at secondary school. To assess personal and creative writing we used a rubric with three descriptors (accuracy, diction and content). The tasks also provided an introduction to formal writing as the necessary instruction in spelling, mechanics, punctuation, grammar variation and style was given. Logically, at the end of Stage 1 the students had to write a formal essay. To assess formal papers another rubric with 6 criteria was developed. Such descriptors as organisation or global structure, linking elements and style were added.

At Stage 2 (November – December, 2015) the same cohort of undergraduates was working in the framework of process pedagogy, i.e. the process approach to teaching writing was employed. The shift in perspective was necessary because the learners were not demonstrating much progress. The tasks and activities done at this stage ranged logically from writing outlines to creating formal essays. The undergraduates were given 2-3 opportunities to revise their papers, make changes and corrections. The process of writing was comprised of a number of steps (cf. to [4]): in Step 1 (prewriting) the students brainstormed ideas for their future writing tasks; in Step 2 (focus on ideas) the undergraduates strove to organise their ideas (the aim was to get them thinking more about content, not form); in Step 3 they created their rough drafts and perfected the papers through self-editing, peer-review and proof-reading. This stage passed through, the average of the results each student obtained during Stage 1 was compared to the average of the grades they got during Stage 2.

Results

Unfortunately, the USE results didn't reflect the real knowledge of English especially if we speak about writing. Not only spelling, but also grammar variations posed enormous difficulty for the learners. The brief survey conducted by the instructors revealed that most of the undergraduates had not been taught writing in the full meaning of the term. They were taught to follow models. As a result, they had a vague idea of the paragraph structure's fundamentals, let alone rhetoric, diction and style. Hence, when the students were faced with the task of writing their first academic essay (at the end of Stage 1) and submitting it in a week, problems arose. For a detailed description of the challenges academic writing can pose see [17, p. 12-13]. It is common knowledge that personal and creative writing with its focus on content and fluency of student self-expression is less problematic. All the same, writing even informal letters the students made a lot of errors – from diction and style to grammar and punctuation. In addition, some learners suffered from writer's block and confessed they had no ideas as far as creative writing was concerned. Following the product approach to teaching, we set the students a writing topic and corrected all the mistakes when we received their papers for grading in one week's time. We soon noticed that the approach did not motivate and, what is more, discouraged the undergraduates when they got back their marked papers. Furthermore, their grammatical accuracy and writing fluency were not improving. In Table 1 the average results of the experimental group at the end of Stage 1 are presented.

Table 1

Stage 1 Results

September – October 2015	**Average Grades**			
	Excellent / 5	Good / 4	Satisfactory / 3	Poor / 2
Number of Students	0	6	10	4

With the idea expressed by A. Oshima and A. Hogue [8, p. 15] that 'Writing is never a one-step action; it is an ongoing creative act' in mind, we shifted our attention to process pedagogy. Combining theory and practice in the framework of the product approach did not give the learners enough opportunity to polish the papers; this drawback was perfectly compensated for by process writing (see [10, p. 31]). Studying the ways of organizing academic essays and typical features of paragraphs in English [12], learning to make a good thesis statement and use linkers appropriately, reviewing their peers' works, the undergraduates were involved in reorganizing or / and rewriting essays. The final exit essay was written at the end of Stage 2; similarly to Stage 1 the learners were given one week to complete their papers. Table 2 shows the average results of the experimental group at the end of Stage 2.

Table 2

Stage 2 Results

November – December 2015	**Average Grades**			
	Excellent / 5	Good / 4	Satisfactory / 3	Poor / 2
Number of Students	1	17	2	0

Though the students did more challenging tasks in Stage 2 than in Stage 2 (i.e. wrote academic essays), they showed improvement. A careful analysis of the essays shows that the undergraduates at the end of Stage 2 had a better idea of essay organization, argument, paragraph structure and managed to put to use what they had learnt. Likewise, their grammar and vocabulary scores increased as well. Additionally, we kept a Writing Journal, where the students could make entries expressing their views on the course, the ways to improve it, asking questions, etc. Coupled with the feedback they got from the instructor and the peers, the Writing Journal became an important educational tool in our classroom.

Discussion

Writing, like speaking, is a productive skill. At any educational institution in Russia speaking is taught gradually – no instructor expects his / her students to start speaking fluently after following a model once or twice. Only practice makes perfect. Writing is supposed to be part of the course designed to develop all areas of English ability, i.e. enhance both the receptive and productive skills. In reality writing micro and macro skills are the mostly undeveloped, and students being trained to concentrate on accuracy pay no attention to the structure, rhetoric and style of their papers. Teachers too as a rule only focus on accuracy. For example at the Institute of Foreign Languages (Ural State Pedagogical University), where one of the authors works, all papers are graded mainly according to the number of mistakes a student made (errors of different types are considered together: factual, logical, grammar, vocabulary, etcetera). That means the rubric used for assessment contains just one criterion. Another problem is that punctuation is not taught even at university level. To sum up, the survey of 27 EFL teachers from across the region we carried out in March, 2016 proves that a lot of emphasis is put on the other skills (speaking, reading and even listening), while academic writing remains the black sheep to put in figuratively. Most instructors set their students the task of composing an academic essay 1-4 times a year. None of the respondents mentioned the process approach. Tasks are set and finished products are received for grading.

Nevertheless, things are changing. At some educational institutions in Russia academic writing is taught at least as an optional course. However, another problem arises: learners coming to such a course lack the basic micro skills. Thus, instructors have to combine teaching academic writing and the basics to deal with it. To cope with this difficulty, we used a number of online resources, for example the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) [13] and Using English for Academic Purposes [2]. Doing various classroom activities, such as brainstorming, cubing, group prewriting, fast writing and others (for more see [16]) also enabled us to hone micro writing skills. At the same time, the problem of writer's block was successfully solved as the undergraduates explored how to generate ideas (cf. to [5, p. 39]).

Conclusion

At Russian educational institutions teaching speaking, reading and listening is prioritized over teaching writing. Teachers cite lack of time as the main barrier to enhancing writing micro and macro skills. The product approach to teaching writing is less time-consuming. Instructors advocating it focus more on the finished work, not the process. But as we have shown, placing all the emphasis on the product teachers neglect a number of very important aspects. For example, product-based teaching impedes learner autonomy [9]. The process approach, in its turn, should not be abused. The aim is to find a happy medium between the two approaches. Among possible options might be the model advocated by David Gugin [3] or the genre-based approach implemented by Lestari Setyowati and Utami Widiati [14].

Another problem – as the abovementioned survey suggests – is a deficit of hands-on experience; consequently, 75% of the respondents admit they would like to take a refresher course in teaching writing. A solution could be online courses taught by EFL professionals or a Writing Centre offering face to face courses in writing and academic writing to English language instructors from our region.

REFERENCES

1. Escholz P. The Prose Models Approach: Using Products in the Process / Eight Approaches to Teaching Composition. Donovan T. R., McClelland D. C. (eds.). National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, Illinois, 1980. P. 21-35.

2. Gillett A. Using English for Academic Purposes. URL: http://www.uefap.com.

3. Gugin D. A Paragraph-First Approach to the Teaching of Academic Writing / Anderson D., Chinnery G., Fay D. et al. // English Teaching Forum. 2014. Vol. 52. № 3. P. 24-29, 36.

4. Implementing the Writing Process: Strategy Guide. URL: http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/implementing-writing-process-30386.html.

5. Johari S. K. Building Vocabulary and Improving Writing while Developing a Tourist Brochure / Anderson D., Boyum R., et al. (eds.) // English Teaching Forum. 2008. Vol. 46. № 2. P. 38-41.

6. Krashen S. D. The Composing Process // Research Journal: Ecolint Institute of Teaching and Learning. International School of Geneva. 2014. Vol. 2. P. 20-30.

7. Murrey D. Writing as Process: How Writing Finds Its Own Meaning / Eight Approaches to Teaching Composition. Donovan T. R., McClelland (eds.). National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, Illinois, 1980. P. 3-20.

8. Oshima A., Hogue A. Introduction to Academic Writing. 3rd edition. New York : Pearson Longman, 2007. 221 p.

9. Oveshkova A. N. Fostering learner autonomy in a process writing lesson / The Evolving Roles of the Modern Language Teacher // Conference Proceedings of XXII NATE-Russia International Conference. Smolensk : Smolensk University for Humanities, 2016.

10. Ożarska M. Some suggestions for academic writing instruction at English teacher training colleges / Anderson D., Boyum R. et al. // English Teaching Forum. 2008. Vol. 46. № 1. P. 30-33.

11. Parson G. Hand in hand: the writing process and the microcomputer. Juneau, AK : Alaska State Department of Education, 1985. 143 p.

12. Peterson P. W. Developing Writing. Writing Skills Practice Book for ELT. – Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State / Office of English Language Programs, 2003. 144 [xii] p.

13. Purdue University, Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL). URL: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/.

14. Setyowati L., Widiati U. Integrating Environmental Education into a Genre-Based EFL Writing Class / Chinnery G., Chiverton S. et al.) // English Teaching Forum. 2014. Vol. 52. № 4. P. 20-27.

15. Stanley G. Approaches to Process Writing. URL: http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/approaches-process-writing .

16. Steele V. Product and process writing: A Comparison. URL: http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/product-process-writing-a-comparison.

17. Tardy C. M. Writing for the World: Wikipedia as an Introduction to Academic Writing / Anderson D., Boyum R. et al. // English Teaching Forum. 2010. Vol. 48. № 1. P. 12-19.

18. White R. V. Academic Writing: Process and product / Robinson P. C. (ed.) // Academic Writing: Process and Product. London : Modern English Publications: British Council, 1988. P. 5-16.

Статью рекомендует д-р пед. наук, проф. С. А. Минюрова.