

PROMOTING PROCESS-ORIENTED APPROACH IN TEACHING READING AND WRITING SKILLS TO ESP LEARNERS AT BACHELOR'S LEVEL IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The existing system for teaching ESP at Bachelor's level in universities of Pakistan is not promoting Process-Oriented teaching. The Product-Oriented teaching practiced in various universities and institutes of Pakistan is hindering the abilities of students to learn reading and writing skills in an effective and independent way. The students remain bound to teachers for guidance in each step for writing documents used in professional, practical and social life. They learn to write by rote and are unable to be discrete and creative while writing for various professional, practical and social needs. The reading skills in this regard serve merely for practice of Backwash¹ to these students. Thus preparing them only for examination and gaining no actual skill and insight about what they are being taught and how it will be implemented in real life when they will need to do so.

The purpose of this study is to point out stale and ineffective strategies for teaching reading and writing skills to ESL learners at Bachelor's level in Pakistan. This study would suggest effective methodologies for teaching reading and writing skills to ESP learners at Bachelor's level after analysis of the current practices via Holistic Research i.e. including both Qualitative and Quantitative data gathered from Observation, Literature Review, Interviews and Survey conducted on both teachers and students linked with teaching and learning of English language respectively.

Key Words: Process-oriented approach, Product-oriented approach, Backwash, Holistic

1. Introduction

The practice of Product-Oriented Approach² is very common in ESL teaching in our country both at beginner and advanced levels of ESL teaching in annual and semester systems alike. At both schools and universities lockstep is the method commonly used for ESL teaching. The students are bound to do rote learning due to practice of Backwash in examination System. The Product-Oriented Approach suppresses the potential of writing in an ESL student. It blocks the eagerness to learn and apply writing skills creatively in practical life.³

¹ Backwash technique is used widely in Pakistan for making students memorize selective material in class or as homework for exams.

² Product-Oriented Approach is the conventional technique used in which student has to write an essay, paragraph or any other technical document like letter after listening to a lecture or reading or memorizing a sample and then reproducing a somehow similar written piece in their own words usually in one attempt.

³ Kirkpatrick, R., & Zang, Y., (2011). The Negative Influences of Exam-Oriented Education on Chinese High School Students: Backwash from Classroom too Child. *Language Testing in Asia*, 1(3), doi: 10.1186/2229-0443-1-3-36

The research on Process-Oriented ESL teaching emphasizes the fact that it generates better results for teaching receptive skills.⁴ The students exposed to Product-Oriented ESL teaching find it complicated to adapt to the Process-Oriented Approach⁵ of ESL teaching although this phenomenon was found to be more applicable in input skills i.e. reading and listening as compared to output skills i.e. writing and speaking.

An important observation about Meaning or Process-Oriented Approach is the application of Task-Based teaching⁶ into the ESL classrooms while teaching writing and reading skills. L2 can only be learned with the presence of adequate conditions for learning; clear input and little emotional filter in the learner which can only be acquired with the practice of Meaning or Process-Oriented Approach towards teaching of ESL skills.

Attitude is the most difficult thing to change in teaching environment and yet it is the attitude that needs to change the most if improvement is needed in the teaching scenario.⁷ The most important factor is the support a teacher is given at all stages of implementing change and innovation in classroom teaching. If a teacher is supported at all stages then structural and environmental constraints can be overcome. Moreover, the public examination pressure and cultural resistance can also be dealt with positively by the teacher to implement innovation if support is given. Another important aspect of reading and writing skills in an ESL classroom is the effect of peer evaluation on the learning capacity of individual students. The students who receive some kind of criticism from the peers termed as “peer evaluation” become “alert writers”.⁸ They learn to be more specific in their response to writing, thus, create better documents with improvements in phrases or vocabulary or other weak areas.

The development of multiple drafts to achieve meaningful communication as well as focus on the problem-solving aspects of recognizing and working on discourse conventions occupies teachers and L2 students in ESL writing classes. In the classroom context, Process-Oriented Approach calls for providing and maintaining a positive, encouraging and cooperative workshop environment, and for providing sufficient time and minimal interference so as to allow students to work through their composing processes. The objective is to help students develop feasible tactics for getting started, drafting, revising and editing. From the process perspective, then, writing is a complex and creative process at the same time.⁹

There are various phases of Communicative Teaching up to 1960s and since the beginning of 1970s.¹⁰ The Traditional Approach which is Form-Oriented in nature was in the first phase. This approach was followed by classic Communicative Language Teaching which was more inclined towards other ways of teaching than Form-Oriented. It focused on informal teaching and new syllabus designs such as Skill-based syllabus and Functional

⁴ Montague, N. (1995). The Process Oriented Approach to Teaching Writing to Second Language Learners. *New York Association for Bilingual Education Journal*, 10, 13-24. Retrieved from http://www.ncele.us/files/rcd/be020613/the_process_oriented_approach.pdf

⁵ Process-Oriented Approach is the latest trend which focuses on gradual development of a written piece of work by making multiple drafts giving more space to the writer to put original ideas and do self correction of mistakes which overall improves the written document by revisions and editing of the first draft.

⁶ Seyyedi, K. (2012). Task-based Instruction. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 4(3). doi: 10.5296/ijl.v4i3.2203

⁷ Brock, M. N. (1994). Reflections on Change: Implementing the Process Approach in Hong Kong. *ERIC*. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED370372.pdf>

⁸ Lam, R. (2010). A Peer Review Workshop: Coaching Students to Give and Evaluate Peer Feedback. *TESL Canada Journal/Revue TESL du Canada*, 27(2), 114-127. Retrieved from <http://www.teslcanadajournal.ca/index.php/tesl/article/viewFile/1052/871>

⁹ Matsuda, P. K. (2003). Basic Writing and Second Language Writers: Toward an Inclusive Definition. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 22(2), 67-89. Retrieved from <http://wac.colostate.edu/jbw/v22n2/matsuda.pdf>

¹⁰ Richards. J.C. (2006). *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 27-45.

syllabus. The third phase comprises of practices since 1990s to date. The modern day trend, however, is not to follow one approach or methodology strictly, rather a combination of various techniques is practiced according to the context and situation by the language teachers. The characteristics of Communicative Teaching in this third phase are more inclined towards Process-Oriented Teaching.

Last but not the least; grammar teaching has been an argumentative issue.¹¹ All views, no matter how divergent, share one crucial characteristic that the interference in the natural learning process should be stopped; instead the natural learning process should be facilitated.

2. Background and Methodology

The purpose of this study is to point out stale and ineffective strategies for teaching reading and writing skills to ESL learners at Bachelor’s level in Pakistan. This study also suggests some guidelines for teaching reading and writing skills to ESL learners at Bachelor’s level after the analysis of the current practices via Holistic Research. A survey was conducted on teachers and students of ESL at Bachelor’s level via a questionnaire from reputed universities. The questionnaire contained closed end questions with one open end question at the end for suggestions and comments. All the respondents had been involved in both Process and Product Oriented Approaches in the ESL classroom. Interviews were also conducted randomly from both teachers and students in casual environment to get maximum possible natural and genuine responses. In addition, an online blog was conducted in which ESL teachers from all over the world contributed their opinions based on the experience from their classrooms.

3. Data and Findings

The data collected from both teachers and students involved in ESL teaching and learning respectively at bachelor’s level is summarized under a few categories. These categories were divided into various direct and indirect questions in the survey questionnaire to get real responses.

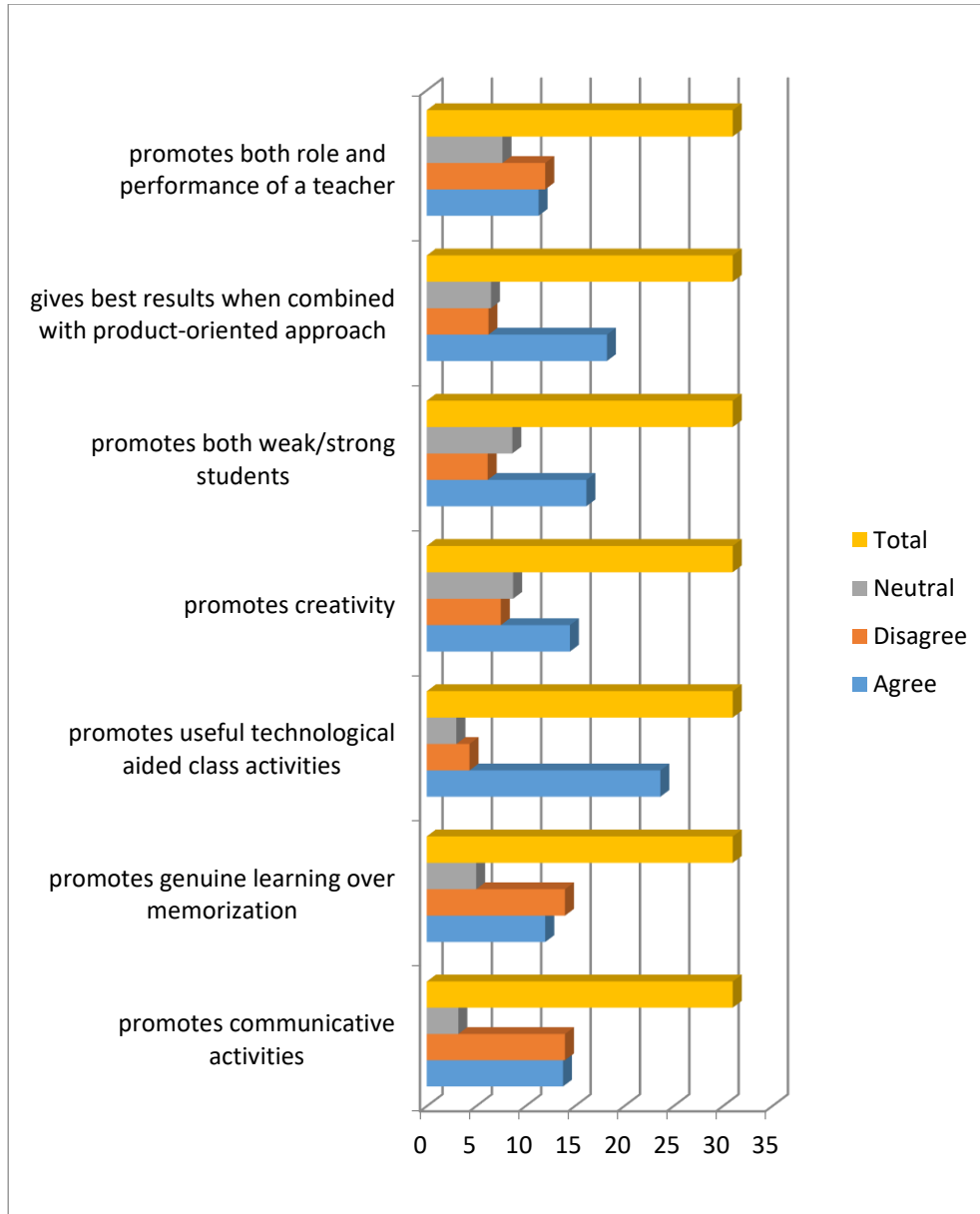
The following table shows the responses of ELT teachers going prominently in favor of the process- oriented approach in teaching reading and writing skills to ESL learners at bachelor’s level.

Table 1: Responses about Process-Oriented Approach from ELT teachers teaching reading and writing skills at Bachelor’s level:

Role of Process-Oriented Approach	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total
promotes communicative activities	13.8	14	3.2	31
promotes genuine learning over memorization	12	14	5	31
promotes useful technological aided class activities	23.67	4.33	3	31
promotes creativity	14.5	7.5	8.75	31
promotes both weak and strong students	16.17	6.17	8.67	31
gives best results when combined with Product-Oriented Approach	18.25	6.25	6.5	31
promotes both role and performance of a teacher	11.33	12	7.67	31
Grand average total	15.67	9.18	6.11	30.96

¹¹ Larsen-Freeman. D. (n. d.). Teaching Grammar. *Language Skills/Grammar and Vocabulary*, Unit II E, 251-266. Retrieved from https://www.uibk.ac.at/anglistik/staff/freeman/course-documents/tesfl_-_teaching_grammar.pdf

Figure.1: Responses about Process-Oriented Approach from ELT teachers teaching reading and writing skills at Bachelor’s level



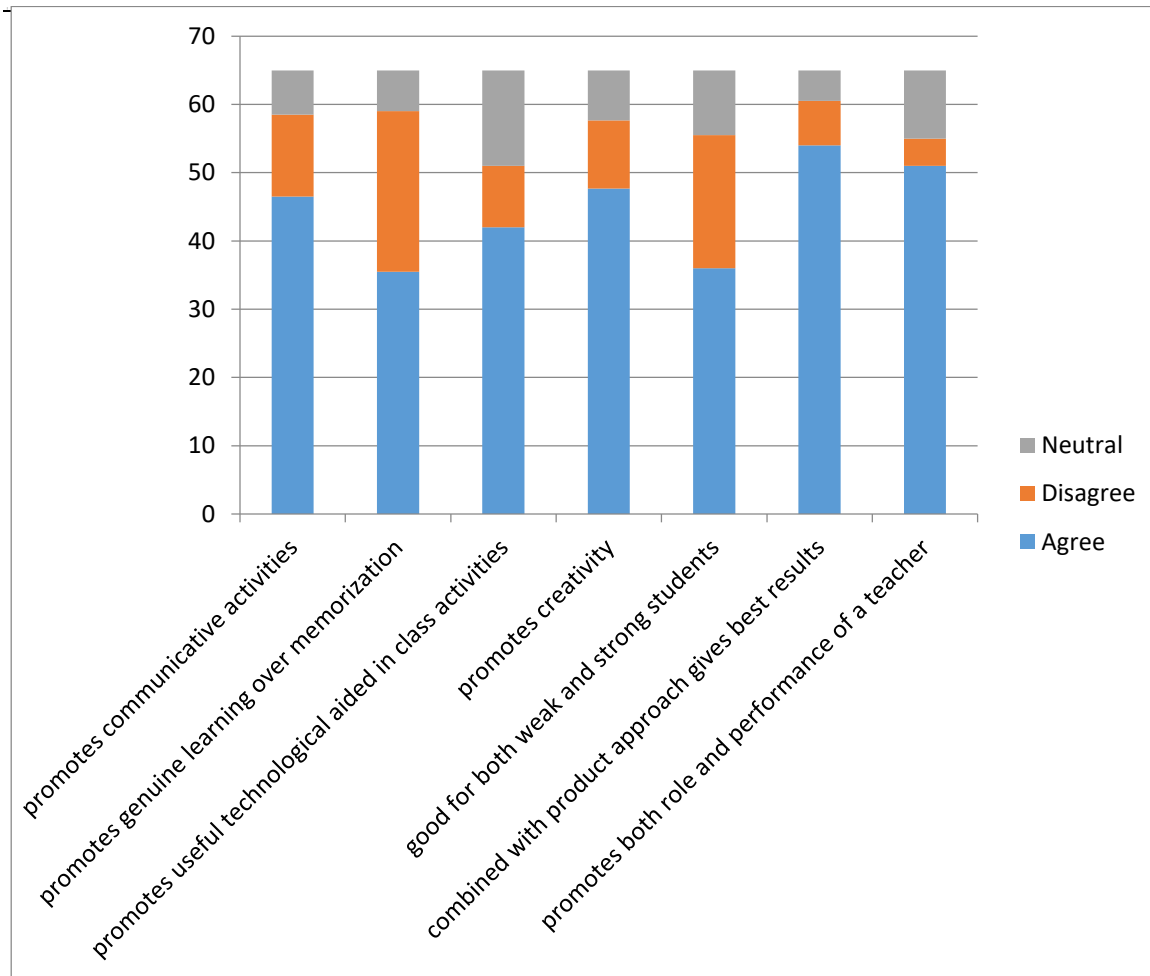
The following table shows responses from Bachelor’s level ESL students who also clearly favored the Process-Oriented Approach more than the Product-Oriented Approach.

Table 2: Responses about Process-Oriented Approach from students studying reading and writing skills at Bachelor's level

Process-Oriented Approach from student's perspective	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total
promotes communicative activities	46.5	12	6.5	65
promotes genuine learning over memorization	35.5	23.5	6	65
promotes useful technological aided in class activities	42	9	14	65
promotes creativity	47.67	10	7.33	65
good for both weak and strong students	36	19.5	9.5	65
combined with Product-Oriented Approach gives best results	54	6.5	4.5	65
promotes both role and performance of a teacher	51	4	10	65
Grand average total	44.67	12.07	8.26	65

Figure.2: 65 Responses about Process-Oriented Approach from students studying reading and writing skills at Bachelor's level





4. Discussion and Conclusion

The study so far suggests that the Process-Oriented Approach supports overall meaning and expressiveness of a document¹² written by an ESL student learning writing skills. It promotes fluency and clarity. The teacher teaches with the goal of making students more expressive and developing their potential for writing. However, the Product-oriented Approach, in contrast, demands a student to write on a given or specific time with no rough drafts and revisions and also to write according to particular instructions. Process-Oriented Approach focuses on correcting the student in writing skills from the very beginning so that with time the mistakes or errors are minimized (although the research of various linguists proves otherwise). The Product-Oriented Approach limits the actual potential of a student and only prepares him or her for an exam or specific assignment or, on a larger level, a course. It does not create any long term change or impact on the writing skills of a student.

The following recommendations if implemented can help ESL teachers and learners while learning reading and writing skills;

- i) The specific “Time or Stage” when the Product/Form oriented Approach should be introduced is in the beginning of a course while teaching writing in an ESL classroom. Then gradually Process or Meaning-Oriented Approach should be introduced to give students some margin in developing their own potentials. Later, in the teaching course Product or Form-Focused Approach should be reintroduced to the students by asking them to write something meaningful and substantial as they have gained exposure to the language, reasonable time to try and make errors for learning writing skills.

¹² Any of the documents like letter, memo, email, report, proposal, essay, article, story, etc.etc.

- ii) The leniency Process-Oriented Approach gives may not stimulate such absolute results as the Product-Oriented Approach gives. However, the Process-Oriented Approach itself is more enjoyable but may leave students with too much of the materials with little sense to use them for documenting in a concrete way. In contrast, the Product-Oriented Approach can stifle writing. This characteristic can be used as a tool to create some blockage first which later on opens up with interaction or imagination or sudden realization to achieve good performance just like many great scientists and their great inventions.
- iii) The stereotypical attitude of the teaching environment needs to be changed which compels a teacher to be always in a corrective mode instead of a motivator or facilitator who encourages natural learning process of the students.
- iv) Reading aloud with simultaneous discussions by the teacher should be introduced as a regular activity in the classroom. It creates confidence in students, motivates them to study at their own too, makes the subject and class sessions interesting for them, and prepares them for exams and relevant activities ahead for writing tasks.
- v) Involving students in writing games(like word games, vocabulary games and many more available on internet) individually, outside the classroom makes them interested in getting started with the writing which can later help them in writing with a clearer style or improved vocabulary. They can be used as a prewriting technique too by the teacher to promote Process-Oriented Approach.
- vi) Writing activities in groups in the classroom promotes interest of students in writing and reading alike. Specifically it promotes interest in writing via Process-Oriented Approach and improvising writing in both content and expression with each revised draft.
- vii) Other factors effecting learning (in addition to Product Oriented Approach) which an English language teacher should be concerned about are; syllabus followed properly or not, and, bilingual mode in teaching creating positive or negative effects on students.

It is worth mentioning here that teaching of reading and writing skills with Process-Oriented Approach is gradually becoming more popular in Pakistan at Bachelor's level. However, to reassure that it is truly fruitful can be made possible by ESL teachers when the approach is applied in the time sequence along with other recommendations as discussed in this paper.



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