

**The Effectiveness of Process Writing Approach
in Developing EFL Writing Performance
of ESP College Students**

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Introduction:

Writing in a foreign language is one of the most challenging skills for almost all learners. Developing the writing skill is thought to be highly complex if not the most complex in comparison to listening, speaking and reading. What makes writing a very troublesome task for EFL learners is the fact that it requires some criteria of acceptability relative to different aspects of writing which include content, organization, vocabulary, language use, spelling, punctuation and accurate capitalization and paragraphing (Hamadouche, 2010). Writing has increasing significance for university students as it represents the main medium they use to do assignments in the different subject areas and answer examination questions. In fact, writing failure for students is more likely to result in educational failure, because of lacking the means to communicate their knowledge, students will find it difficult to write properly the assigned essays (Elachachi, 2006 and 2010).

Most of university students in Egypt feel overwhelmed when they were required to write on a certain topic. They do not know how to start, how to develop their ideas or how to conclude the essay. They also lack the technical skills of writing acceptable compositions in English. They often

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repeat their ideas, report few if any valid points, make serious mistakes in grammar and punctuation, and include irrelevant information (Salem, 2007). For students to succeed in a foreign language generally, and writing skills specifically, they need practice. Students need to brainstorm and pre-write before they set pen to paper to compose their ideas. The process writing approach (PWA) shifted the attention from the traditional view of looking at writing purely as a product to emphasize the process of writing. Students need to realize that what is first written down on paper is not the final product, it is only the beginning. The process approach depends on giving students time to work on what they want to write, going from pre-writing activities to the final draft (Mostafe, 2002; Atwell, 2003; Mogahed, 2007).

According to Nemouchi (2008), the major aim of this approach is to train students how to generate ideas for writing, plan these ideas, take into account the type of audience, draft and redraft in order to produce a final written paper that is likely to communicate their ideas. Writing will be more manageable if it is taken as a multi-step process. The students will be able to write well if they think of writing as being composed of many short-term goals rather than one long-term goal. The PWA views writing as a recursive process involving more than just the finished product. Students are involved in choosing their own topics, defining their purpose and audience, drafting and redrafting based on feedback and publishing their writing (Lim, 2002; Lin, 2002; Pratt, 2005). The practice whereby students are told to choose a topic and get on with does not do justice towards the development of writing skills. Thus, teachers will have to take more notice of what their students actually do when they write and take a far more active role in structuring writing activities in their classrooms.

The Context of the Problem

Elachachi (2006), Salem (2007) and Sharif (2010) assure that technical writing is considered to be very important for engineering students. Unfortunately, the writing skill has been totally ignored in the university curriculum. They prove that there are problems in university students' writing performance. They note that ESP university students showed little use of strategies when writing an essay. Moreover, they add that many students did not use essay writing strategies such as brainstorming, key words, planning and revision. Thus, the lack of use or ineffective use of strategies affected the content, organization and coherence of their essays. They also note an overuse of translation (from Arabic to English) which impeded students' writing process and resulted in fragmentary compositions.

Statement of the problem

Engineering students' levels in writing performance is weak. Due to the increasing awareness of engineering students' needs to write for academic success and global communication, teaching writing in its own right has been an issue in our engineering classrooms. A good mastery of the writing skill will pave the way to students for their academic success. Thus, the researcher investigates the effectiveness of PWA on students' writing performance.

Questions of the study

The problem of this study can be addressed in the following major question: What is the effectiveness of using process writing approach in developing engineering students' writing performance? This question can be subdivided into the following sub questions:

1. What are the writing skills appropriate to engineering students?

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2. What are the characteristics of programme based on process writing approach for developing writing performance of engineering students?
3. What is the effectiveness of using process writing approach in developing engineering students' writing performance?

Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses have been formulated:

1. There are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and control one on the writing performance pre-test.
2. There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and that of the control one on the writing performance post test favoring the post-test scores of the experimental group.
3. There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group students on the writing performance pre-post test favoring the post-test scores.

Delimitations:

The study is delimited to:

1. There are many genres of writing, the study is delimited to two genres which are; descriptive and cause and effect.
2. The study is delimited to a sample of engineering students from Delta University for Science and Technology at Dakahlia Governorate.
3. The study is delimited to the first semester of the academic year 2014/ 2015.

Definitions of Terms:

Process Approach

Nunan (1999: p. 312) defines the process writing approach as “an approach to writing pedagogy that focuses on the steps involved in drafting and redrafting a piece of work. Learners are taught to produce, reflect on, discuss

and rework successive drafts of a text”.

For the purpose of this study, process approach is operationally defined as an approach for teaching writing that stresses students' creativity and consists of the following steps: pre-writing to generate ideas, writing drafts, revising, editing for grammatical accuracy and publishing.

Review of Literature:

The PWA:

Many researchers like (Totten, 2003; Harmer, 2004) acknowledged that writing is a recursive rather than a linear process, that writers rarely write to a preconceived plan or model and that the process of writing creates its own form and meaning. When talking about writing as a process, it is understood that ideas are generated, put in first draft, organized and arranged in a whole, revised and corrected, and finally written in a final draft. It would be more accurate to characterize writing as recursive activity in which the writer moves backwards and forwards between drafting and revising with stages of re-planning and between. Belinda (2006) investigated how effective process writing helped about 200 students improving their writing skills and their attitudes towards writing. Six primary school teachers, three in the lower primary school level and three in the upper primary school level, each implemented an innovative two-month process writing programme in their schools. The effectiveness of the programme was investigated through post-interviews and the comparison of a pre- and post-questionnaire, a pre-test and a post-test, and pre- and post- observations of the strategies used by the students in both their pre-tests and post-tests. It was found that the programme brought about positive results across all classes and in both the upper and lower levels, though the results in each classroom differed slightly. Process writing

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seemed to be a feasible solution to heightening the writing abilities and confidence of students. The process approach in writing is best learned through a work process, which includes brainstorming, group writing, peer editing, publishing products.

Process writing begins with experimentation. It is wrong to believe that students are supposed to know their ideas before they begin, but in reality, one must write, explore, read and write some more before ideas emerge. The stages are heuristic a process of exploration and gradual discovery. It is also a very personal act of generating something from chaotic bundles of thought and experience. Gradually, as learners write and reflect upon their words and ideas, they begin to sharpen their purpose. Thus, the PWA is referred to as a process of trial and error, of writing and reading, of rewriting and rereading. It is wrong to believe that good writers know exactly what they are going to say, that they do not have to go through the process of trial and error, that they do not have difficulties in writing. The fact is the writer must resign her/himself to the idea of process of multiple drafts, if s/he wants to be a successful writer (Shafer, 2003; Holmes, 2003; Moony, 2004).

Bae (2011) showed how process writing in English writing classroom has become an essential way to improve students' writing abilities and how to implement process writing in EFL writing classrooms. The study provided descriptions of process writing and other writing approaches. Furthermore, it explained the features of process writing and compared it to the product writing approach. The study also compared L1 (first language) with L2 (second language) writing processes and skilled with unskilled writers' writing processes. The researcher examined the recursive nature of the writing process and introduced the stages of the writing process and classroom activities for each stage. In addition, he investigated how to

give feedback on students' writing and how to use portfolios in process writing classrooms. The researcher introduced a pedagogical application of process writing for an EFL classes. He indicated that giving feedback is not a simple issue, but requires teachers to decide many things such as when and how to respond to students' writing in advance. He assured that revising and giving feedback process on students' writing is deeply related to the recursive nature of writing.

Moreover, Hamadouche (2010) investigated developing writing skill through increasing learners' awareness of the writing process. The study attempted to provide the university teachers and students with an understanding of an effective way that led to improve writing. The researcher aimed to make students aware about the fact that the development of the writing skill involves dealing with writing as a process that entails different stages and not as a product of accurate use of grammar and vocabulary. He assured that students should be made aware of the writing process through the intensive practice of writing which leads to the effective use of writing techniques that allow them to decide about what to write, how to write, and how to evaluate what they write. The results of the study confirmed that awareness about the writing process led to better compositions and proved that students lack the necessary awareness about the recursive nature of writing and the importance of proceeding through the different writing stages for more effective writing. The findings gathered in the study confirmed that the problems students face in writing can be avoided and effective production can be achieved if they are made aware of the importance of the writing process and the stages it entails.

Steps of PWA

Although writing specialists have agreed that writers go

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through several stages while writing, they have not reached an agreement on labeling the stages. For the purpose of this study, Hyland's (2003) five-stage writing process is adopted: pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. The following is an in-depth look at each of these stages and strategies for writing teachers to employ them in the EFL classroom.

1-Prewriting

The writer gathers, generates information and plays with ideas during the prewriting stage. Prewriting techniques may include brainstorming, free writing, clustering, mapping or listing. The writer can also use graphic organizers like charts, story maps, diagrams or clusters. Prewriting is an important phase in the writing process because as stated by Flowerdew (2000: p.371) "...students who are encouraged to engage in an array of prewriting experiences have a greater chance for writing achievement than those enjoined to 'get to work' on their writing without this kind of preparation". According to Murray and Hughes (2008: p.16), prewriting exercises do not only help students to find something to write about a specific topic, they also help them improve their writing skills in that they provide them with opportunities to generate ideas and write with confidence. They state "practice in writing, no matter how short the exercise is to make yourself confident about your writing and to improve your skills". Usually, the activity of generating ideas ends up by making a plan or an outline. The pre-writing stage focuses on stimulating students' creativity and letting them think about what to write and how to approach the chosen topic. To implement this stage effectively, Hedge (2005) suggests that teachers remind students of two important questions: the purpose of their writing and its audiences. That is, students should keep in mind the intended readers and content of the text when they make a global outline for

their writing.

2-Drafting

Drafting is the “physical act of writing” Richards and Rodgers (2001: p.43). It is the real writing stage where the writer develops his/her topic on paper. Hedge (2005: p.89) defines drafting as the stage where the writer “puts together the pieces of the text through developing ideas into sentences and paragraphs within an overall structure”. When writing the first draft, the student should focus on content only and forget about language and mechanical aspects such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation. S/he must write freely and try to find the best way to communicate his/her ideas. Muncie (2000) points out that drafting consists of creating rough draft without concern for mechanics. It means that the writer should not be concerned about grammar or spelling at this stage. The focus is on the content, not the mechanics. Everything about writing is open to change. The ideas should flow easily and the words be written quickly. If students do not know what to write then they should be encouraged to go back to the prewriting stage.

The objective of this stage is to have students from their prewriting in order to develop and structure them into a more formal draft. Schorn (2002) argues that careful attention to the order and structure of ideas at this stage will save the writer from having to make extensive revisions later on. The writer begins by looking for structure already existing in the graphic organizer. At this point, the writer may be able to come up with a working introduction to the paper based on the structure emerging from the draft. Next, the writer starts thinking of ways to translate the new draft into coherent and complete sentences on a new piece of paper. It is not easy for students to move from planning to actual writing. However, students need to transform plans

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into temporary text at some point. Equally important, all writing drafts should be kept, not only while the writing is being developed, but also after it is completed. These drafts are valuable to the students as a collection of thoughts, writing projects, and sources for new directions (Chelsa, 2006).

3-Revising

The reviewing stage is the process of looking again and discovering a new vision of the writing produced in drafting. It is the stage during which the writer corrects mechanical errors and realizes substantial changes in his/her writing (Grenville, 2001). Badger and White (2000) see that revising is the stage where writers check that they have said what they wanted to say in a clear and appropriate way. Moreover, they stress that revising includes more than only checking spelling, grammar and punctuation, it also includes checking that content and purpose are clear and appropriate for the reader in the particular writing situation. According to Johnson (2008), revising is the heart of the writing, and it could be more productive of advanced final products if it includes input from teachers and/or peers. Indeed, peer review is a key classroom activity that enhances the students' ability to organize texts and increases their awareness of the importance of readership and that of purpose. Muncie (2000: p.49) states that students have the chance to refine their work during the revision stage and describes the features of revising as: "revision is not just polishing writing; it is meeting the needs of readers through adding, substituting, deleting, and rearranging material".

4-Editing

Editing is the stage where the draft is polished; it is the final step before handing out the final draft. The writer gives attention to mechanics such as punctuation, spelling and grammar. Editing involves the careful checking of the

text to ensure that there are no errors of spelling, punctuation, word choice and word order (Johnson, 2008). In the editing stage, students proofread their own writing or peer's writing carefully to correct mechanics and grammatical errors. Muncie (2000: p.51) defines editing as "putting the piece of writing into its final form". Prior to this stage, the students' main concern has not been local grammar errors or mechanics but content. Going into this stage, however, students eventually have time to polish their writing by the correction of local errors and spelling. Atkinson (2003: p.11) presents what writers should check in the final stage of their drafts as follows: "the order in which the information is presented, the layout, the spelling, punctuation, handwriting, choice of words and grammar". In the final stages, students should get distance from their composition and read it checking grammatical and mechanical errors. They can use not only grammar books and dictionaries but also peers and the teacher as resources in this stage. Brown (2001) also suggests that teachers should indicate grammatical mechanical errors without correcting them by themselves and they can suggest further word choices and transitional words to improve clarity and coherence of writing.

5- Publishing

Buhrke (2002) illustrates that having students publish their completed works with audiences such as peers, friends, families, or community, teachers can promote real communication between writers and readers in the process writing classrooms since students can have real audiences who can meaningfully respond to their writing and develop confidence as authors. Also, displaying students' writing on a classroom bulletin board and making a classroom newspaper can give students the sense of professional authorship. In addition, Brown (2001) highlights the

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importance of providing authenticity of writing for students and asserts that sharing writing with peers is one of the important ways to improve authenticity. Hence, teachers should encourage students to read each other's work and comment on others' final products. Johnson (2008) confirms that a cooperative and caring environment that invites students to share and respond is the type of supportive environment in which students' writing can flourish. Equally important, how teachers choose to make students' writing public may not be as significant as the attitude instilled in students during the writing. Students need to feel support and acceptance from teachers and peers to take the kind of risks involved in the process of producing good writing.

Method of the Study

Design

Adopting the quasi-experimental design, the control and the experimental groups were pre-tested on their writing skills. Then the treatment was administrated by the researcher. The experimental group students received training and taught writing sub-skills through process writing approach. On the other hand, the control group students taught writing sub-skills through the traditional method.

Participants

Sample of engineering students from "Delta University" in Dakahlia Governorate were purposefully selected then assigned to a control group (33 students) and an experimental group(33 students).

Instruments

1. **A writing skills checklist** was designed in order to determine the most appropriate skills for the engineering students.
2. **Pre-post test**the researcher applied the pre-test in order to establish the equality of the groups in their writing

skills. While, the post-test was used to investigate the effectiveness of the proposed programme that based on PWA in developing the selected writing skills.

3. **An analytic scoring rubric** was used as a scoring scale for assessing students' writing skills including four components: organization, content and writing conventions.

Material of the Study:

The programme consisted of four writing topics based on process writing approach steps: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing. Teaching to the experimental group took place over a period of 12 weeks. Each topic took (two sessions) 120 minutes. Two genres of writing (descriptive and cause and effect) were taught to students. According to the training programme, the students assigned to do the pre-test during the first week of the first semester. The experimental group received the writing training programme which based on process approach while the control group taught through the traditional method. After that, the researcher applied the post-test on both groups to investigate the effectiveness of the programme in developing the students' writing skills.

Results and Interpretation:

Results of the First Hypothesis:

Hypothesis one states that there are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and control one on the writing performance pre-test. t test for paired samples was used in order to in order to establish the equality of the groups in their overall writing skills and the components of writing performance as shown in the following table:

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Table (1): t test results of the writing pre-test in the components of writing performance for both groups.

Writing Skills	Test	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean	Paired differences			t value	df	Sig.
						Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean			
Organization and Layout	Control	33	4.0421	2.3603	.3843	.4387	2.532	.2865	1.689	32	.201 Not Sig
	Experimental		4.2561	2.5482	.4452						
Language Content	Control	33	4.5900	2.2315	.3480	.4754	2.6547	.2754	1.654	32	.308 Not Sig
	Experimental		4.7404	2.1563	.3984						
Writing Convention	Control	33	4.1268	2.3321	.3547	1.1296	2.4321	.3653	2.789	32	.078 Sig
	Experimental		4.7561	2.2312	.3647						
Total	Control	33	4.6938	2.3281	.3581	.2997	2.7754	.3241	1.843	32	.479 Not Sig
	Experimental		5.0701	2.2759	.3784						

Table (1) shows that there were no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the control group students on the writing performance pre- and post-test in overall writing performance, t value (1.769) is not statistically significant. These findings are in line with (Holmes, 2003; Moony, 2004; Mogahed, 2007). The results partially support hypothesis one since there were no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the control group students on the writing performance pre- and post-test in terms of organization and layout, t value (1.178) is not statistically significant, language content, t value (1.753) is not statistically significant. However, the results are not consistent with hypothesis one in terms of writing convention, t value was (2.989) is statistically significant. These results could be attributed to the traditional way of teaching writing that focuses on final product, not on the process of writing. As the traditional way of teaching writing concentrates mostly on structure, grammar and punctuation. The emphasis is on mechanics. As a result, the control group post results were better than pre ones concerning the writing convention component. In

addition to, mastering writing sub skills means mastering writing mechanics. Traditionally, writing was viewed mainly as a tool for the practice and reinforcement of specific grammatical and lexical patterns, a fairly one-dimensional activity, in which accuracy, content and organization were non-priorities.

Results of the Second Hypothesis

Hypothesis three states that there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and that of the control one on the writing performance post test favouring the post-test scores of the experimental group. The t test was used to compare the mean scores of the two groups on the writing post-test as shown in the following table:

Table (2): t test results of the writing post-test in the components of writing performance for the control and experimental group.

Writing Skills	Test	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean	t test for equality of means		
						t value	df	Sig.
Organization and Layout	Control	33	5.3962	2.4805	.3878	1.178	65	.000 Sig
	Experimental		8.8542	2.2654	.3765			
Language Content	Control	33	4.8782	2.2713	.3752	1.753	65	.000 Sig
	Experimental		8.9231	1.8639	.3143			
Writing Convention	Control	33	6.7978	2.6311	.3872	2.989	65	.000 Sig
	Experimental		7.6581	1.1865	.3142			

Table (2) shows that there was statistically significant difference between the experimental group and control one on the writing post-test in the component of writing performance (organization and layout, language content and writing convention) in favour of the experimental group.

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Results of the Third Hypothesis:

Hypothesis two states that there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group students on the writing performance pre-post test favouring the post-test scores. To specify the relative extent of change resulted from using the PWA from pre- to post-test for the experimental group, t test for paired samples was used as shown in the following table:

Table (3)

t- test results of the writing pre-post test in the components
of writing performance for the experimental group.

Writing Skills	Test	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean	Paired differences			t value	df	Sig.
						Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean			
Organization and Layout	Pre-test	33	4.2561	2.5482	.4452					32	.000 Sig
	Post-test		8.8542	2.2654	.3765	4.6543	2.1342	.3245	11.732		
Language Content	Pre-test		4.7404	2.1563	.3984						.000 Sig
	Post-test		8.9231	1.8639	.3143	5.4875	1.3287	.3563	13.579		
Writing Convention	Pre-test		3.5231	2.2851	.3596						.000 Sig
	Post-test		7.6581	1.1865	.3142	4.2158	2.1345	.3328	12.958		
Total	Pre-test		4.7561	2.2312	.3647						.000 Sig
	Post-test		8.4387	2.1253	.3481	5.4610	2.1452	.3513	13.461		

Table (3) shows that there are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental groups on the pre- post writing test favouring the post-test. The t values (11.732) for organization and layout, (13.579) for language content, and (12.958) for writing convention are statistically significant. These results are in line with those of (Mostafa, 2002, Mogahed, 2007; Hamadouche (2010). The implication here is that the PWA and its teaching strategy helped the experimental group students go through several steps (pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing and

publishing) that gave students the opportunity to write and rewrite and to learn from their errors.

The results of the study show significant differences between the experimental group, which received the proposed programme based on process writing approach and the control one which received the regular instruction. These differences came in favour of the experimental group. This result can be explained as follows: the development of the writing skills involves dealing with writing as a process that entails different stages and not as a product of accurate use of grammar and vocabulary. Thus, making students aware of the different processes of writing helped them to overcome the difficulties they faced when they write and to produce well written texts. The process writing approach helped students realize their potential, discover new information and develop their writing skills. However, there were statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the control group students' pre-post test in terms of (writing convention). The significant differences between the pre-post test results can be attributed to teaching the control group using the traditional method as the traditional method concentrates mostly on structure, grammar, and punctuation. Traditionally, writing was viewed mainly as a tool for the practice and reinforcement of specific grammatical and lexical patterns. Writing is often seen as something that should not detract valuable classroom time. Writing was not real or meaningful as students wrote to get grades only. Hence, students were not motivated to work hard and write. As a result, it did not develop students' writing performance. Consequently, the results lead to the conclusion that PWA could be effective in developing the students' writing skills. This result adds validity of other studies investigating similar aspects such as (Atwell, 2003; Bae, 2011).

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Suggestions for Further Research:

1. Additional researches with larger sample sizes are needed to explore the impact of process writing approach on students' writing self-efficacy.
2. Further research in this area is needed to investigate earlier grades in order to provide better insight of process writing approach steps with younger students.
3. Additional research is necessary in order to determine whether the present findings regarding the effects of process approach on students' writing performance are replicable at different school grade levels and for different genres of writing.

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