

Process, Product, or Genre: EFL Writing Instruction

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Abstract

This paper explores three writing approaches popular in the EFL field, the process, product and genre approach. It starts with an overview of the background and history of each approach, which parallels the paradigm shift in the theory of language from linguistic, psycholinguistic to sociolinguistics and critical linguistics. Then the paper discusses the main features of each approach and its classroom applications. The process approach focuses on the writer as the producer or creator of texts; the product approach on the text and its formal accuracy; the genre approach on the reader, or on the conventions that a piece of writing needs to follow to be accepted by its readership. Each approach emphasizes a different aspect of the writing phenomenon, respectively linguistic, cognitive, and social. The paper also analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. Although the process approach gives a greater emphasis on individual writers and the writing process itself, it fails to take into account the socio-cultural conventions which define, shape, and eventually judge a piece of writing. To complement this deficit, Badger and White (2000) added the genre approach to the process one in what they called a genre process approach that sees writing as a series of stages starting from a particular situation, purpose, to process writing and then finally to the final text. Exploring all the approaches, the authors offer some suggestions for the teaching of English writing in the EFL context at the end of the paper.

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