

The Process & Genre Approaches to the Teaching of Writing: Complementary or Contradictory?

Martin K. HYNES

英作文教授

—— 補完的あるいは反駁のプロセスとジャンルアプローチ ——

ハインズ マーティン K.

Abstract : In this paper I will discuss the contentious issue of the ‘process’ v. ‘genre’ approaches to writing in the L2 classroom. After briefly reviewing early arguments in the debate, I will then analyze the theoretical and pedagogical justifications for both approaches. As this analysis will prove, rather than being seen in opposition to one another, both the ‘process’ and ‘genre’ approaches can be regarded as ‘complementary’. What appears to lie at the heart of the ‘process’ v. ‘genre’ debate is confusion over exactly what each approach really is, and this will be a recurring theme of this paper.

1 Early Arguments in the Debate

The ‘product’ versus ‘process’ debate has been raging between teachers and researchers for almost two decades, with perhaps the brief flurry of exchanges between Horowitz (1986); Leibman-Kleine (1986) and Hamp-Lyons (1986), most indicative of this contentious issue. Horowitz (1986a), incensed at the ‘uncritical acceptance’ (ibid;141) of the ‘process approach’ argued that it was particularly unsuitable for E.A.P teaching contexts. Teaching writing to non - native speaking (NNS) students in a tertiary institution, Horowitz pointed to what he saw as a number of shortcomings with the ‘process approach’:

- Its’ failure to prepare students for in-class exam essays.
- The inductive nature of the approach is only appropriate to some writers and tasks.

- The assumption that ‘good writing’ can only be achieved by an appeal to the student’s ‘internal state of mind’, asserting that students rarely have freedom to choose topics for university assignments.
- The ‘process approach’ gave an inaccurate picture of how university level writing will be evaluated.

Leibman-Kleine (1986) immediately responded to Horowitz. Citing the research of Murray (1972) and Emig (1971), and pointing to the success of ‘W.A.C. (Writing Across the Curriculum) Programs’ in the United States, Leibman-Kleine argued that Horowitz’s distinction between ‘product’ and ‘process’ was ‘false’ and asserted the need to view ‘process’

“...not (as) an approach; (but as) many approaches. There will never be a process approach because writing – the process of writing – is such a complicated and rich process, involving many facets of being: cognition, emotion, sense of self, sense of others, situation, background, experience, development.”

(Leibman-Kleine : 1986; 785)

In the exchanges which followed; Horowitz (1986b) answer to Leibman-Kleine, Hamp-Lyons (1986) reply to Horowitz (ibid), and the persistent Horowitz’s (1986c) final response, both writers acknowledged the advantages which the ‘process approach’ brought to the L1 and L2 writing classroom. However, Horowitz (ibid) maintained the ‘process approach’ overlooked the social context of writing and remained fixated by the cognitive processes involved. In turn, Hamp-Lyons (ibid), was critical of advocates of the process approach who saw exam writing as unreal. After appealing to process proponents to give academic life the same recognition they have given to the students’ ‘*affective and developmental needs*’ (ibid 1986; 793), she finally asserts the need for a ‘*descriptive model*’ which will bring together the ‘process’ and ‘product’ approaches.

What would appear to lie at the heart of the above exchanges was the determination of Hamp-Lyons and Horowitz (even after Leibman-Kleine’s postulations), to regard ‘product’ and ‘process’ as two distinct approaches. In the context of the early to mid 1980’s, such a view was extremely popular, however as the following analysis will prove, such criticisms of the ‘process approach’ are no longer applicable and as Arndt (1987) states;

“...it may be ill-advised, and perhaps even impossible, to divorce the processes and products from each other, either in teaching or research.”

(Arndt: 1987; 257)

2 Process and Genre Theory

In the past two decades the concept of genre for L1 and L2 teaching has been the focus of an immense body of study, with the most developed research

taking three different routes:

- ESP / EAP analysis
- New Rhetorical Studies (1)
- Australian Genre Theories (2)

For this paper I will be focusing on the first element of this tripartite division and the ‘genre approach’ which grew out of EAP and its influence on EFL pedagogy.

The research of Swales (1981; 1986; 1990; 1993; 1994), has been seminal in shaping genre theory in ESP. Swales defined a genre as;

“...compris(ing) a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community and thereby constitute the rationale for that genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style.”

(Swales: 1990; 58)

This regard for both form and social function is echoed in the later research of Flowerdew (1993); Bhatia (1993); Thompson (1994) and others.

For many L1 and L2 professionals, ‘genre theory’, which inevitably focuses on the ‘product’, can be contrasted with the ‘process approach’ which they argued has its roots in the ‘Expressionist theory’ of writing. Such an accusation is partly understandable as firstly, many of the advocates of the ‘process approach’ in the L1 classroom came from the Expressionist school of thought (i.e. Murray and Elbow). Secondly, a large number of the early supporters of process writing in ESL and EFL (i.e. Zamel;1982) frequently used Expressionist terminology. Thirdly, such a charge may simply be a ‘knee-jerk’ reaction to the swift and somewhat radical manner in which traditional writing approaches that focused on form, such as ‘sentence combining’ (O’Hara 1973; Pack and Hendrickson 1980) and ‘controlled composition’ (Kunz 1972; Paulston and Dykstra 1973), were supplanted by the ‘process approach’ in the early 1980’s.

Additionally, as Sussser (1994) argues, citing the research of Fulkerson (1990); Gere (1986); Berlin (1987); Phelps (1988) and Zamel (1982;1983), it is impossible to confine the ‘process approach’ within one theory, as the approach is a component of numerous writing theories. Berlin (ibid),

categorized these into ‘objective’, ‘subjective’ and ‘transactional’. He saw ‘process’ as a major element in many theories and thus present in all three categories with particularly close ties to ‘expressionist’ (subjective) and ‘cognitive’ (‘transactional’) theories. The assertions of Caudery (1997; 5) and Phelps (ibid) support Berlin’s research, emphasizing the need to see the ‘process approach’ as a number of components as opposed to one single theory. As Phelps states;

“ What I call ‘process theory’ is not really a theory at all, but the common ground among many theories and practices that encompass highly diverse and frequently conflicting emphases, beliefs, values and treatment of texts.”

(Phelps: 1988; 161, cited in Susser: 1994; 34)

Clearly, seeing ‘process theory’ in such a light, it is possible to assert that the theoretical justifications for the ‘genre approach’ can be encompassed within the ‘process approach’ and thus in collusion with it, as opposed to conflict. Such collusion is clearly what Johns (1993) had in mind in his research of EAP classes in the United States. For Johns, the significance of reading in the SL writing classroom, makes it impossible to; *“slavishly follow either process or product theories.”* (ibid; 1993; 275). This significance of reading, in respect to the analysis of genre, will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 4.

In summary, it is impossible to confidently argue that process and genre theories are contradictory. For as much as the ‘process approach’ is a component of a number of theories, for many teachers and researchers ‘genre’ is an extremely ambiguous concept: Hyon (1996; 693) sees; *“genre literature (as) a complicated body of scholarship to understand.”* Johns (1995; 183), accuses Swales, the major supporter of genre, of *“retreating to process”* when finding ‘genre’ difficult to conceptualize! Even Swales (1990; 33) feels ‘genre’ *“remains a fuzzy concept”*! Finally, ‘genre’ is frequently termed as a ‘movement’, with the ability *“to mean many things to many people”* (Cope and Kalantzis 1993a; 2). Ironically, this final comment was repeated almost to the letter by Caudery (1997; 4) in his examination of process pedagogy! With this in mind it is to the pedagogical justifications of both approaches which we will now turn.

3 Process and Genre Pedagogy

Before analyzing process and genre pedagogy in greater detail it is first necessary to outline the major attributes of both approaches. Turning first to the ‘process approach’: Raimes (1991; 409) identifies a number of tasks which are regarded as characteristic of process pedagogy in the L2 classroom;

- A variety of feedback through collaboration (i.e. brainstorming, pair work, small group work and teacher intervention).
- Journals and free writing.
- Pre writing tasks and multiple drafting with feedback between tasks.
- Writing on topics which are meaningful and or of interest to the learner.
- Linguistic accuracy is downplayed (at least at the beginning of the process, and instead emphasis is placed on personal expression and content information).

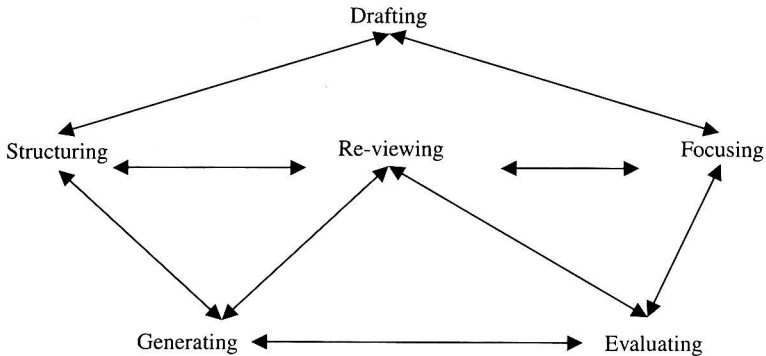
Two distinct features of the 'process approach' are the focus on 'awareness' and 'intervention' (Susser 1994; 34-35). By 'awareness', the intention is to alert the learners to the fact that writing is a process and that there are as many diverse processes as there are kinds of writing. However the learners should not only view writing as some kind of 'voyage of discovery', but also be aware of situations in which they have a planned mental picture of what they want to write from the outset.

'Intervention' involves both teachers and learners. The aim is to encourage the learners not only to generate ideas but also assist in the planning and production of initial and subsequent drafts. As White and Arndt (1991) state, this emphasis on *intervention* calls for a change in the traditional teacher/student roles;

"The teacher, instead of being cast merely in the role of linguistic judge, now becomes a reader, responding to what the students have written; the students, rather than merely providing evidence of mastery of linguistic forms, proffer experiences, ideas, attitudes and feelings to be shared with a reader."

(ibid; 1991; 2)

Acknowledging the influence of Raimes (1985; 1987) and Zamel (1982;1985), for White and Arndt (1991; 5), process focused pedagogy involves an 'enabling' approach. The aim is to 'nurture' the writers' skills, to thus enable them to find their own answers to the problems they create and to mold the 'raw material' of initial drafts into a coherent message, and progress towards an 'acceptable and appropriate form' for expressing this message. In sharp contrast to traditional linear models of writing, White and Arndt propose a framework which exhibits the intricate and recursive nature of writing;



(White and Arndt; 1991)

Turning our attention to the pedagogical justifications for the ‘genre approach’; with genre, the emphasis is on the ‘texts’ the students must write as the starting point in the lesson. The focus is very much on the rhetorical structure of individual genre, for example; ‘giving instructions’, ‘a letter of complaint’, ‘a telephone message’. Traditionally, in this approach, the students take on the role of apprentices with the teacher engaged in the role of expert on language. Students would examine both good and bad examples of genre, from the micro-level (e.g. through concordances of a number of texts to see how particular genres exploit certain linguistic forms), to the macro-level, which would involve for example, studying how sample ‘text-types’ are organized.

From the preceding brief description of process and genre pedagogy it could certainly be argued that both approaches contain elements which can be regarded as ‘*contradictory*’. However a deeper exploration will prove that rather than being seen in opposition, there are clearly many elements in both approaches which can be considered as complementary.

4 The Complementary Aspects of Process and Genre Pedagogy

In the brief outline above, an initial contrast was drawn between the ‘process approach’ which places priority on students creating their own texts, and the ‘genre approach’, of which the chief characteristic is the analysis of the finished product. However as I will now explain, this apparent contrast is not as great as many of the early process adversaries (i.e. Horowitz; 1986), seemed determined to believe.

In the ‘genre approach’, text types are introduced at the beginning of each lesson and are consequently the focus of text manipulation and comprehension activities. With such a convergent approach, with the students focusing on a pre-defined objective, it is not clear either from the writing activities themselves or the text type, how the students will actually arrive at their objective.

In an attempt to combat this, the ‘process approach’ emphasizes a divergent goal. With process supporters recognizing the importance of reading skills in writing development, genre analysis also plays a significant role, but not only at the beginning of the lesson but throughout the ‘process’.

In White and Arndt’s (1991; 4) framework, examples of genre are introduced at a number of stages. For example, in the ‘Focusing stage’, to enable students to identify with the purpose for writing and /or the audience. Or the ‘Structuring stage’, so students can recognize the organizing principle of the particular genre (i.e. comparison; presenting arguments and counter arguments; cause and effect), and see how this organizing principle is effected in that genre. Genre will also be introduced after the initial ‘Drafting stage’, so the students can identify different ways of beginning, adding to, or ending a text. Finally, various genres will be exploited in the ‘Reviewing stage’, for example to check divisions (paragraph problems), or to assess ‘impact’ – how different emotions and attitudes can be conveyed by different lexis.

This shift in focus in White and Arndt’s (ibid) framework, clearly proves that rather than ‘process’ and ‘genre’ pedagogy being in opposition to each other, ‘genre’ plays a significant complementary role in the ‘process approach’. The research of Tribble (1996) and Flowerdew (1993) certainly supports the assertions of White and Arndt. Flowerdew (ibid) proposed an ‘educational’ or ‘process approach’ to the teaching of professional genres. He advanced six types of activity (3), which he argues;

“...focuses on the process of learning about, and how to participate in, genres (an educational approach), as opposed to a procedure which focuses solely on the end product of specific varieties of genres (a training approach).”

(Flowerdew: 1993; 309)

This complementary role is not only confined to professional genres, but as Susser (1994; 39), citing the research of Zamel (1983); Brookes and Grundy (1988); Blue (1988); Canesco and Byrd (1989) and Goldstein (1973) reveals, is also perfectly suited for the EAP classroom. As Zamel (1983) states, in her discussion of process pedagogy; “ *A process approach is by its very nature concerned with product.*”. This convergence of process and genre pedagogy puts the criticisms which were raised in the mid 1980’s into a new perspective, in so much that they no longer apply! The major fear in EAP circles in the early to mid 1980’s, was their understanding that the ‘process approach’ placed too much emphasis on meaning, at the expense of form. With the ‘Communicative Approach’ the ‘new methodology’ sweeping ESL/EFL at this time, their concerns of a total rejection of form are perhaps understandable. However, as this exploration of process and genre pedagogy has revealed, the ‘genre approach’ can complement the ‘process approach’ in

the L2 writing classroom. In this respect, Hamp-Lyons (1986) appeal for a '*descriptive model*', combining both genre and process has been answered and even Horowitz (1986) must feel partially satisfied!

Additionally, as Caudery (1997) points out, this complementary element is not only restricted to a shift in focus of genre analysis, and there are other elements in both processes which can be regarded as complementary;

- The 'genre approach' acknowledges that writing is a complex and frequently extended process, which can involve collaboration, and it is important to encourage students during this process.
- Although the 'process approach' initially downplays accuracy or the appropriate use of language, it still acknowledges the importance of both. Additionally, process pedagogy does not suggest that the larger considerations of structure and text organization should be left until the end of the writing process. Neither does the 'process approach' deny the existence of conventions in the form of texts of varied types that the reader's expectations are molded by these conventions.
- Finally, both approaches place great emphasis on purpose and audience. In the 'process approach' it is '*in order to provide a means of deciding what content is necessary*' (ibid; 1997; 23), how this content will be sequenced, what needs to be explained and what the audience will know already. In the 'genre approach' the importance of purpose and audience is in order to find the most suitable form for the text.

Conclusion

Perhaps one of the main reasons why the 'process' and 'genre' approaches fueled so much debate and confusion, was the frequency with which researchers and teachers almost blindly supported their own approach whilst seeing the opposing model as an oversimplification. As Kay (1994) states:

"On the one hand, it appears that to use genre approaches is to risk shackling our students...while process approaches will liberate them. On the other, we learn that it is the genre that will empower them while to use process approaches is to be guilty of withdrawing from teaching altogether."

(Kay: 1994; 63)

However, as Zamel (1983); Leibman Klein (1986); White and Arndt (1991) and others have argued, it is necessary to regard the process approach not as one but many approaches. Additionally, one has to bear in mind the assertions of Hyon (1996); Cope and Kalantzis (1993) and Swales (1990),

who view genre theory and pedagogy as an extremely ambiguous concept, conceived of in different ways by different researchers.

In conclusion, although both approaches initially display characteristics which may draw them into opposition to each other, as this paper has proven, it is impossible to view either approach as an inflexible methodology. Rather than process and genre approaches being contradictory, they are clearly complementary.

Notes

- (1) New Rhetoric Studies evolved in the U.S. and was concerned with L1 teaching, focusing on rhetoric, professional writing and composition studies. Instead of concentrating on genre forms, New Rhetoric Studies investigated the situational contexts in which genres occurred and placed particular emphasis on the social purposes which genres fulfilled in these situations. Hyon (1996; 696), cites the research of Miller ('Genre as Social Action' 1984), as being particularly influential in shaping New Rhetoric Genre theory.
- (2) The Australian Genre theories grew out of a much larger language theory developed by Halliday; 'systemic, functional linguistics' (Halliday et al 1964; Halliday and Hassan 1976; Halliday 1978; 1985). As Grabe and Kaplan (1996; 133) note, for Halliday, grammar developed out of the necessity for writers (and speakers) to interact for functional purposes and that language is inseparable from context or content but instead varies systematically between both, and is thus the medium through which meaning is realised.
- (3) Flowerdew's (1993; 309) six types of activity were:
 1. using the results of genre analysis
 2. 'metacommunicating' (talking about instances of genre)
 3. learners doing their own genre analysis
 4. concordancing
 5. 'on-line' genre analysis by learners as an aid in creating their own texts
 6. translation based on a sample of instances of a given genre

Bibliography

- Arndt, V. 1987. Six writers in search of texts: a protocol-based study of L1 and L2 writing. *ELT Journal* 41/4: 257-267.
- Benesch, S. 1995. Genres and processes in a sociocultural context. *Journal of Second Language Writing*. 4 (2): 191-195.
- Bhatia, V.K. 1999. Integrating products, processes purposes and participants in professional writing. In C.N. Candlin and K. Hyland (eds.) *Writing: Texts, Processes and Practices*. Longman: London, 21-39.
- Caudery, T. 1997. Process Writing. In Fulcher, G. (ed.) *Writing in the English Language Classroom*. 1997. Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall, 3-23.
- Cope, B. and Kalantzis, M. (1993a) Introduction: How a genre approach to literacy can transform the way writing is taught. In B. Cope and M. Kalantzis (eds.), *The powers of literacy: A genre approach to the teaching of writing*. (pp.231-247). Bristol, P.A.: Falmer Press
- Flower, L and Hayes, J.R. 1981. A cognitive process theory of writing. *College Composition and Communication* 32/4: 365-387.

- Flowerdew, J. 1993. An educational, or process approach to the teaching of professional genres. *ELT Journal* 47 (4): 305-316.
- Gee, S. 1997. Teaching writing: a genre based-approach. In G. Fulcher *Writing in the English Language Classroom*. Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall Europe in association with the British Council, 24-40.
- Grabe, W. and Kaplan, R.B. 1996. *Theory and practice of Writing*. London: Longman.
- Hamp-Lyons, L. 1986. No New Lamps for Old Yet Please. *TESOL Quarterly*. 20 (4): 790-796.
- Hopkins, A. and T. Dudley Evans. 1988. A genre-based investigation of the discussion sections in articles and dissertations. *English for Specific Purposes* 7: 113-121.
- Horowitz, D. 1986a. Process not product: less than meets the eye. *TESOL Quarterly* 20/1: 141-144.
- Horowitz, D. 1986b. The author responds to Leibman-Kleine. *TESOL Quarterly*. 20 (4): 788-790.
- Horowitz, D. 1986c. The author responds to Hamp-Lyons. *TESOL Quarterly*. 20/1: 796-797.
- Hyon, S. 1996. Genre in three traditions: implications for ESL. *TESOL Quarterly* 30 (4): 693-722.
- Johns, A.M. 1995. Genre and pedagogical purposes. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 4 (2): 181-190.
- Kay, H.L. 1994. Genre: the view from the classroom. In Khoo, R. ed. *LSP: problems and perspectives*. Singapore: SEAMO Regional language Centre, 63-79.
- Leibman-Kleine, J. 1986. In defense of Teaching Process in ESL composition. *TESOL Quarterly*. 20 (4): 783-788.
- Raimes, A. 1991. Out of the Woods: emerging traditions in the teaching of writing. *TESOL Quarterly* 25/3:407-430.
- Silva, T. 1993. Toward an understanding of the distinct nature of L2 writing: the ESL research and its implications. *TESOL Quarterly* 27/4: 657-667.
- Susser, B. 1994. Process approaches in ESL/EFL writing instruction. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 3 (1): 31-47.
- Swales, J.M. 1990. *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge: CUP.
- White, R.V., and Arndt, V. 1991. *Process Writing*. London: Longman

(ハインズ マーティン K. 本学非常勤講師)