Teaching Paragraph Writing Through Interactive and Process Approaches

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Abstracts

This article introduces the use of interactive approach in teaching writing, especially paragraph writing. Instead of communicating with the students about the writing product, the teachers of writing subject are mostly correcting the students' mistakes and errors in writing. The general idea of writing process is considered very important since it is very helpful for the students. The process approach in teaching paragraph writing is not focusing on the writing product but it is focused on the process of writing, so that this suitable approach that suitable to be applied since writing is a series of process.

Keywords: Paragraph, Writing, Process approach, Interactive approaches

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English as a second language refers to teaching students whose first language is non English. While language learning requires several skills. One of the language skills is writing, which can be start by writing sentences which continued by writing paragraph in a certain length. According to Moore, paragraph writing is aimed at beginning paragraph writing skills. It requires an adequate knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and sentence structures and others. Writing is important for the learners since they can express ideas, thoughts and feeling. Moreover it is a media to communicate to people in other places.

However, writing becomes the most challenging activity for the language learners. They sometime find that writing is the most difficult thing to do. The student's difficulties due to their lack of knowledge in writing. The foreign language learners tend to translate their sentences into English without using the correct translation method. It results in meaningless sentences. Besides, they do not follow

the writing process. This process is quite important for it will help students to arrange the ideas and develop them into a good paragraph. Furthermore, the language learners should be able to choose the suitable topic to write.

The topic should be well developed in the paragraph. In order to maintain the topic, the students should be able to put the ideas in a good order. It is also necessary for them to read kinds of texts and books. Furthermore, the teacher should be able to find the most effective way to teach writing in order reach the goal, that is to make the students to be able to express the ideas and develop the paragraph well. Since it is necessary to have a good paragraph structure, there is a process of writing that can be followed.

This article will mostly concentrate on the teaching writing paragraph. Then it will cover the nature of paragraph, the parts of paragraph, the nature of writing process and the approaches in teaching writing paragraph.

The Paragraph

Paragraph is a group of related sentences that discuss only one main idea, (Oshima & Hogue, 2006:2). A paragraph usually consist of more than one sentences, however, it is possible to built only one sentence as one paragraph. The number of sentences in a paragraph is not really important, however, the paragraph should be in a proper length to develop the main idea clearly.

- Parts of Paragraph

In a paragraph, usually consists of the main parts, they are; Topic sentence, supporting sentence and concluding sentence.

Topic sentence which states the main idea of the paragraph, A topic sentence is the most important sentence in a paragraph. It briefly indicates what the paragraph is going to discuss (Oshima & Hogue, 2006:4). As stated by Beare that topic sentence is one sentence which states your idea, point, or opinion. This sentence should use a strong verb and make a bold statement. Each of the topic sentence needs controlling idea which limits the range topic. The second part of paragraph is supporting

sentences that develop the topic sentence. These sentences should support the main idea mentioned in the topic sentence. The last part of paragraph is concluding sentence. It is the closing sentence which indicate that the paragraph is about to end. Here are the important points to remember about topic sentence (Oshima & Hogue, 2006: 4-5):

1. A topic sentence expresses the main idea of a paragraph.

2. A topic sentence is a complete sentence; that is, it contains a subject, a verb, and (usually) a complement. The following examples are *not* complete sentences:
   - *When I have something left in my head*
   - *The well dressed man with bright ideas*
   - *The smart, neat, well performed and well speech delivering new comer.*

3. A topic sentence provides the reader with a clear understanding of what a paragraph is about. A topic sentence contains both a topic and a controlling idea. It names the topic and then limits the topic to a specific area to be discussed in the space of a single paragraph. The following examples show how a topic sentence states both the topic and the controlling idea in a complete sentence:
   - *People say that New York is the city that never sleeps.*
   - *The well dressed man with bright idea is my husband*
   - *The smart, neat, well performed and well speech delivering girl is the best student that this college ever had.*

4. A topic sentence is the most general statement in the paragraph because it gives only the main idea. It does not give any specific details. The following sentence is too specific that can not be served as a topic sentence:

   The Americans are welcoming the new colored skin president whose speech very well during his campaign

   Sentence such as the following may be too general:

English is a difficult language to learn.

5. A topic sentence gives *direction* to a paragraph that both the writer and reader can follow.

6. The final "wrap-up" sentence in a paragraph often reinforces the topic sentence.

In addition to the topic sentence, a paragraph usually has other sentences. These sentences, which develop the main idea with more specific details, are the development sentences. (Sometimes the development sentences are called the "supporting sentences"). Here are the main qualities of a *well-developed* paragraph :

a) It provides enough supporting points for the main idea expressed in the topic sentence to be clearly understood.

b) It provides enough specific details and examples to be interesting and informative.

c) It does not leave the readers with unanswered questions that could be cleared up with a little more detail or an additional example or two.

A concluding sentence is not absolutely necessary; in fact, a concluding sentence is not customary for every paragraph in a multi paragraph essay. However, for single paragraphs, especially long ones, a concluding sentence is helpful to the readers because it signals the end of the paragraph and because it is a remainder of the important points. A concluding sentence serves three purposes:

1. It signals the end of the paragraph (Oshima & Hogue, 2006: 4-5):

2. It summarizes the main points of the paragraph.

3. It gives a final comment on the topic and leaves the readers with the most important ideas to think about.

Writing Process

Writing is most likely to encourage thinking and learning when students view writing as a process. Writing is a complex process that allows writers to explore thoughts and ideas, and make them visible and concrete, writing encourages thinking and learning for it motivates communication and makes thought available for reflection (Gaith, 2002). In order to have a good writing that represents the writer's thought, it is necessary to do some series of steps that usually called as the writing process. In the case of learning, the writer is the student. When the students start to write, they might have difficulties in putting the ideas and organizing them. It is better to give them an understanding that writing is not a matter of writing the letters, instead it is a process. There are four main stages in writing process, they are prewriting, planning, writing and revising draft, and writing the final copy to hand it. Although the process is considered ideal it is not always used. Nevertheless, it will serve the students well, particularly when the paragraph will stand alone (Kelly, 2000).

1. **Prewriting**

   According to Limone, prewriting stage in writing process are vital components to the success of your writing program. Prewriting process will include choosing and narrowing the topic and brainstorming.

   a) Choosing and Narrowing Topic

   When the writing process is about to start, the topic will be limited. On the other hand when there is a free choice of topic to write, then it must be narrowed to a particular aspect on that general subject.

   b) Brainstorming

   Brainstorming is a process in which the chosen topic is being narrowed down into a specific focus. Brainstorming for ideas can get start writing more quickly and save time in the later stages of the writing process. Three useful brainstorming techniques are listing, prewriting, and cluster.

   Listing

Listing is a brainstorming technique in which topic occur. The writer should quickly make a list of whatever words or phrases come into their mind.

The writer can follow this procedure:

1. Write down the general topic at the top of your paper.
2. Make a list of every idea that comes into your mind about that topic. Keep the idea flowing. Try to stay on the general topic; however, if you write down the information that is completely off the topic, do not worry about it because you can cross it out later.
3. Use words, phrases, or sentences, and don't worry about spelling or grammar.

Free writing

Free writing is a brainstorming activity in which you write about a topic because you are looking for a specific focus. The purpose of free writing is to generate as many ideas as possible and to write them down without worrying about appropriateness, grammar, spelling, logic, or organization. Follow these procedure:

1. Write the topic on the top of your paper.
2. Write as much as you can about the topic until you run out of ideas.
3. Reread the paper and circle the main idea that you would like to develop.
4. Take that main idea and free writing again.

Clustering

Clustering is another brainstorming activity that can be used to generate ideas. Here's how to use this technique: in the center of the paper, write the topic and draw a "balloon" around it. This is the center, or core, balloon.

2. Planning

According to Harmer, the writing process typically involves planning what is it going to write. Then, it is necessary to encourage the students to follow the following steps:

a. Making Sub-lists.

This step toward making an outline is to divide the ideas into sub lists and cross out any items that don't belong or that are not useable.

b. Writing the Topic Sentence

Finally, write a topic sentence. The topic sentence is the most general sentence in a paragraph, and it expresses the central focus of the paragraph. It contains the main idea of the paragraph (Kelly, 2000).

c. Outlining

An outline is a formal plan for a paragraph. In an outline, you write down the main points and sub-points in the order in which you plan to write about them.

3. **Writing and revising draft**

   a) Writing the First Rough Draft

   This is how to proceed:

   - Write the topic sentence and underline it.
   - Skip one or two lines per line of writing and leave margins of one inch on both sides of the paper. These blank spaces will allow the writer to add more details, information, examples, etc. in order for you to fully develop your point.
   - Write the paragraph following the outline as closely as possible.
   - Don't worry about grammar, punctuation, or spelling.

   b) Revising Content and Organization

   During the revision, the changes are sometimes needed to check over the content and organization, including unity, coherence, and logic. Changing, rearranging, adding, or deleting some of the words or ideas are common in order

to communicate the thought more clearly, effectively, and in a more interesting way.

This is how to proceed:

- After read over your paragraph, focus on the general aspects of the paper and make notes in the margins so that you can rewrite parts that need to be improved.
- Check to see that the writing purpose is achieved.
- Check for general logic and coherence.
- Make sure that the paragraph has a topic sentence and it has a central main focus.
- Check for unity. According to Martindale, the sentences that are off the topic should be noticed and take out from the paragraph
- Make sure that the topic sentence is developed with sufficient supporting details.
- Check the use of transition signals. Sometimes, it is necessary to provide the reader with clues that help him to follow the writer's train of thought more easily. Words which show the relationship of one sentence to another are called transitional signals (limone)

c) Proofreading the Second Draft
- Check over each sentence for correctness and completeness; no fragments or run-on sentence.
- Check over each sentence for a subject and a verb, subject-verb agreement, correct verb tenses, etc.
- Check the mechanics: punctuation, spelling, capitalization, typing error, etc.
- Change vocabulary words as necessary.

d) Writing the Final Copy
Be sure that all of the corrections already noted on the second draft. Remember that writing is a continuous process of writing and rewriting until you are satisfied with the final product. From the outset, the dynamic process of planning, writing

revision, rough draft revision and final editing should be emphasized (Rooks, 1988).

Interactive and Process Approaches

In teaching writing teachers are sometimes do not feel free to use a certain approach in the classroom. They tend to be uncommunicative and have less interaction with the students during the class. Commonly, there is no particular approach applied for teaching writing. Since teacher usually mostly concerned with the final product (Brown, 2001). Hence, this article will introduce the process approach and interactive approach to teach writing, especially teaching paragraph writing.

1. **Interactive Approach**

Long, 1997 as cited in Brown, 2001 stated that the students communicate to each other either teacher or other students through oral and written discourse. The use of interactive approach can promote active learning, heighten attention and motivation, give feedback to the teacher and the student, and increase satisfaction for both (Steinert & Snell,1999).

From the statement above, it is obviously define that in teaching writing teachers are also possible to be more interactive. On one meeting, the teacher could have a group work. First, the class is divided into several groups. Each of the group should have a chairperson that chosen by the teacher for a certain criteria. Next, the teacher will hand out a paper which contains a topic and an assessment rubric (containing the parts of paragraph). In the end of the session, the chairman will evaluate the paragraph whether it meets the requirements mentioned in the rubric or not. Finally, the chairperson will announce the result and consult the teacher.

2. **Process approach**

As mentioned above that writing is a set of process that is very important in order to make the communicative writing. Recently, the teaching of writing has moved

away from a concentration on written product to an emphasis on the process of writing (Ghait, 2002). Caudery (1993) stated that The "process approach" to teaching writing focused on the writing process rather than the final product. But this was in the first instance a teaching *approach*, not a teaching *method*. According to Brown it is now to develop what is now termed the process approach to writing instruction. Process approaches do most of the following (adapted from shih 1986):

a. Focus on the process of writing
b. Help the students writers to understand their own composing process
c. Help students to build repertoires of strategies for prewriting, drafting and rewriting
d. Give students to write and rewrite
e. Place the central importance on the process of revision, etc.

In this approach, students are trained to generate ideas for writing, think of the purpose and audience, write multiple drafts in order to present written products that communicate their own ideas. Teachers who use this approach give students time to tray ideas and give feedback on the content of what they write in their drafts. Then, writing becomes a process of discovery for the students as they discover new ideas and new language forms to express them. A writing process approach requires teachers to give students greater responsibility for, and ownership of, their own learning. Students make decisions about genre and choice of topics, and collaborate as they write.

After the students (the writer), finish the process of writing, they should also pay attention on the result of their writing. It is useful in order to have a good writing piece which conveys ideas clearly for the readers. At some point at the writing process, the writer should turn their attention from the writing process to the written product (Gocsik, 2004).

Paragraphs are organized differently depending on their purpose, then it will deal with genre. There are three main types of paragraph:

1. Narrative

A narrative paragraph usually tells a story. The coherence of the paragraph can be made up of sentences that are ordered according to principle.

2. Descriptive

   This text type contains a description of something, what something looks like. Descriptive paragraph also need coherence, or good ordering sentences.

3. Expository writing is the form of written prose that deals with definition, processes, generalization and clarification of ideas and principles with the intent of presenting meaning (Pinard, 2001).

Conclusion

By applying those two approaches to the teaching writing, the teacher and the students writers would now easily in searching of ideas and starting their writing. When the students writer started their piece of writing, I think that will be easier for them to follow the steps mentioned.

The two approaches explained in the teat is necessary to be applied in teaching writing in order to star writing . While the students writer as the EFL students, it is necessary for them to follow the step of pre writing to begins the text.

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