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THE ECLECTIC USE OF THE PROCESS AND THE GENRE APPROACHES THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FOUR-SQUARE TECHNIQUE IN TEACHING EFL WRITING

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Abstract

This paper proposes a technique, namely Four Square, that the teachers can implement as an answer to the basic challenge in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing, that is to shape the learners to be more creative and productive in writing. The introduction of Four Square, mainly aims at the learners' ability in creating written texts which are grammatically accurate and functional in social context. The significant characteristic of Four Square to the development of learners' writing skill is the fact that it applies the process and genre approaches at the same time. The two approaches are necessary in making the learners more thoughtful in the sense of their creativity in expressing ideas and of their understanding of readership. In Four Square, the learners consider the steps of writing; exploring idea, prewriting, organizing, writing first draft, revising draft, and producing the final copy, as well as consider the readership; the audience, purpose, and social function of the writing they produced. Thus, Four Square will bring the learners to the sufficient and effective path of writing process and will enable them to write more meaningful to the readership.

Keywords: *Four Square, process approach, genre approach*

1. INTRODUCTION

Shaping the learners to be more creative and productive in writing has been the basic challenge in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing, and a technique namely Four Square is introduced to encounter the problem. The introduction of Four Square, mainly aims at the learners' ability in creating written texts which are grammatically accurate and functional in social context. Within the EFL writing learning-teaching, the need of the learners' mastering grammatical features as well as communicative features of the language is such an essential element toward better writers. Learners, indeed, have

been taught grammatical features separate from the context, yet often failed to find a close relationship between grammatical form and function; therefore, their knowledge of grammar was not carried over to their ability to write. In addition, even if the learners have developed a large vocabulary, which can be enough to express when writing, their vocabulary cannot be applied into real communication. The circumstance is closely related with the capability of the learners, as writers, to express their thoughts and to consider the readership at the same time. EFL learners in Indonesia are traditionally accustomed to being given specific instructions from the

teachers, and to receive authoritative feedback from them. Thus, learners write for the teachers, neither for themselves nor for its readership in general. As a result, the learners' creativity often measured by the teachers' expectations, regardless its readership. The implementation of Four Square, which includes the eclectic use of both the process and the genre approaches, has offered a new insight on EFL writing, making writing more meaningful and productive.

2. DISCUSSION

The process approach basically focuses on the effort of the learners, as writers, to express their thoughts through some sequential steps of writing process. Zamel (1983) proposes that a concern with the process approach is how writers generate ideas, record them, and refine them in order to form a text. Thus, process approach researchers tend to explore writing behaviors, by focusing on studying and understanding the process of composing. In addition, Flower and Hayes (1981) establish the model of writing processes: planning, writing, and reviewing. These processes are recursive and interactive, and these mental acts can be reviewed, evaluated, and revised, even before any text has been produced at all.

The implementation of Four-Square technique proposes that in teaching EFL writing, the emphasis is on the writers as independent producers of texts, so that teachers have to give their learners time and opportunity to carry out six steps of writing process. The steps taken include exploring idea, prewriting, organizing, writing first draft, revising draft, and producing the final copy. During the first

step of writing process that is exploring idea, the learners have the options to use clustering, brainstorming, or listing. In the second step, that is prewriting, the learners are responsible to give a main idea along with three supporting ideas. The third step, that is organizing, requires the learners to put the main idea and the supporting ideas into the boxes of the Four Square which then should be added up with a wrap-up sentence. In this stage, the learners also have the responsibility to add supporting details, connecting words, and vivid language. The fourth step, that is drafting, asks the learners to make rough draft of their writings. Then in the fifth step, that is revising, the learners have the necessity to revise the content and style of their writings. The last step of writing process is editing or finalizing, in which the learners have the obligation to edit the surface features, punctuation, spelling, capitals, etc. To sum up, within the writing process proposed by Four Square, the learners prominently consider the importance of developing their abilities to plan, write, and revise.

In spite of its advantages, some findings claimed that in the application of the process approach, there has been an alert of some drawbacks of the approach. The disadvantages of process approach are that first, they often regard all writing as being produced by the same set of processes; second, they give insufficient importance to the kind of texts writers produce and why such texts are produced; and third, they offer learners insufficient input, particularly, in terms of linguistic knowledge, to write successfully (Badger & White, 2000). Horowitz (1986) also raises cautions about the process approach saying that the process-oriented approach fails to prepare

learners for at least one essential type of academic writing. Additionally, he said that the process-oriented approach gives students a false impression of how university writing will be evaluated.

Different from the process approach, the genre approach focuses more on the social context in which the writing happens and so then mainly focuses on its readership. Muncie (2002) proposes that a piece of writing needs to follow the certain conventions in order to be successfully accepted by its readership. Bizzell (1982; 1992) suggests teachers need to focus on the conventions of academic discourse, emphasizing the relationship between discourse, community, and knowledge. The outside forces that help guide the individual writer to define problems, frame solutions, and shape the texts also need to be considered. Generally, the philosophy of the genre approach is that all texts confirm to certain conventions, and that if a learner is to be successful in joining a particular English-language discourse community, the student will need to be able to produce texts which fulfil the expectations of its readers in regards to grammar, organization, and content (Muncie, 2002). This approach does not require the learners to write for their own nor for the teachers' sake, yet for whom they aim their writing at, its readership. The purpose and the audience of the writing should be set at the early stage, so that the learners keep on walking on the right track of the locus of their writing. The social context of the writing said to be essential in this genre approach. While the accurate grammar and organization are needed, they only play roles as means to express thoughts and social functions brought by the writing.

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Thus, some scholars claimed this genre approach as a goal-oriented approach.

The genre approach implies that writing takes place in a social situation and is a reflection of a particular purpose, helping the learners to successfully link the grammatical features and communicative features of the language. Traditionally, genres were seen as fixed and classifiable into neat and mutually exclusive categories and subcategories, such as exposition, argument, description, and narratives, which were treated as the large categories, with subtypes such as the business letter and the lab report (Freeman & Medway, 1994). Thus, in the traditional view of genres, teaching genres means teaching textual regularities in form and content of each genre. The positive sides of the genre approach are that it acknowledges that writing takes place in a social situation and is a reflection of a particular purpose, and it understands that learning can happen consciously through imitation and analysis (Badger and white, 2000). Moreover, because genres reflect a cultural ideology, the study of genres additionally opens for students an awareness of the assumption of groups who uses specific genres for specific ends, allowing students to critique not only the types of knowledge they learn, but also the ways in which knowledge is valued and in which it reflects covert assumptions (Coe, 1994). In accordance to this, the teachers need to help the learners understand that grammatical rules and linguistic forms aids in clear understanding of meaning and is always related to its function in the discourse. Also, teachers' motivation to focus on form should come from an analysis of learner's communicative needs, rather

than from an externally imposed linguistic syllabus.

Dealing with genre approach, Four-Square, in its implementation, successfully brings up the learners to the state where they really understand the audience, purpose, and social function of the writing they produced. In Four Square, the learners are introduced to the acronym T.A.P which is a convenient way to remind students to look for the purpose of the writing. T.A.P stands for Topic; goes in the Four-Square center, Audience; information, description, convincing or a story, and Purpose; expository, descriptive, persuasive or narrative. Based on the acronym, the learners will need to process the questions and key in on any words that direct them to the desired purpose of the writing. Teachers in this phase, play a role to provide questions and guidance to underlie the purpose of the writing. Take for example, the teachers bring about the 'wh-'questions to help the learners in developing narrative. While, in helping the learners to write persuasive, the teachers would rather guide the learners on how to give reasons. After all, the ability of the learners to clearly see the purpose of their writing, will lead them to exact understanding of the concept of the social function of their writing.

Despite the positive sides that the genre approach possesses, some negative notions of the approach are found in several studies. An argument has been raised at times that teaching learners' genres would degenerate into teaching arbitrary models and textual organization with little connection to the learners' learning purposes (Freedman, 1983). Sometimes, misunderstanding of the meaning of "explicit" teaching caused this

argument to arise. This means that, according to Gibbons (2002), students are encouraged to reflect on how language is used for a range of purposes and with a range of audiences, and that teachers' focus explicitly on these aspects of language. Misconception of the genre approach will result in the judgement that the approach almost ignores the grammatical features of the language since it only focuses on the communicative features of language. In fact, the teachers teach the grammatical features implicitly. The task for the learners is to make this implicit explicit. Another limitation of genre approach that has been addressed is about learners' role in this approach. As Badger and White (2000) point out, the negative aspect of genre approach is that it undervalues skills needed to produce a text, and see learners as largely passive. Frankly speaking, the two scholars seem to give the claim based on the evaluating process done by the teachers which hardly focus only on the grammatical or skill features. They claimed that the teachers consider more on how successful the writing brings out the purposes with the range of audiences, rather than merely consider the grammatical or skill features.

The process genre approach is viewed as an approach involving knowledge about language, knowledge of the context in which writing happens and especially the skills in using language as well as the purpose of the writing. The approach describes that writing development happens by drawing out the learners' potential and by providing input to which the learners respond (Badger and White, 2000). According to them, in the writing classroom, teachers need to

replicate the situation as closely as possible and then provide sufficient support for learners to identify the purpose and other aspects of the social contexts, such as tenor, field, and mode of their writing. For instance, writers who want to be car dealers would need to take into consideration that their description is intended to sell the car (purpose), that it might appeal to a certain group of people (tenor), that it might include certain information (field), and that there are ways in which car descriptions are presented (mode). After experiencing a whole process of writing, the learners would use the skills appropriate to the genre, such as redrafting and proofreading, and finally complete their texts. By following the conditions set out above, composition courses will not only afford learners the chance to enjoy the creativity of writing and to become independent writers, but also help them understand the linguistic features of each genre and emphasize the discourse value of the structures they are using. Four Square technique is capable to involve both knowledge about language and knowledge of the context in which writing happens, during the learners' process of writing. Both grammatical features and communicative features are covered within Four Square. Four Square demands the teachers to be grammatically accurate in checking and correcting the learners' writing. So, as the learners have to be accurate in the use of the language structures, the dictions, punctuations, and other grammatical features in their writing. At the same time, the learners have to realize that those sorts of rules; lexical and sentence level are means to build a contextual and meaningful writing so that they can

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deliver the purpose set before. The social context becomes matter since the context in which writing happens strongly influences the writing products. The learners have to keep T.A.P aspects within their mind as well as the grammatical features preceded. In Four Square, teachers often replicate the situation as closely as possible to the real situation to support learners to identify the purpose and other aspects of the social context. As mentioned previously, the first goal of Four Square is to get the learners to think. Thus, teachers often give stimuli to the learners to think of. The stimuli given are closely related to the social context, to the place in which the writing happens. Having examined the underlying assumptions, Four Square is suggested to be an ideal technique to cover process and genre approaches at the same time.

3. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the implementation of Four-Square technique within the EFL writing classroom provides huge opportunities to the learners to develop their writing skill competence. The significant characteristic of Four Square which plays important role in supporting the learners' writing skill is the fact that it applies the process and genre approaches at the same time. The two approaches are necessary in making the learners more thoughtful in the sense of their creativity in expressing ideas and of their understanding of readership. Furthermore, the nature of Four Square which insists grammar accuracy and communicative purpose of the written texts, will become such a force to form the learners to be better writers. In addition, Four Square will bring the

learners to the sufficient and effective path of writing process and will enable them to write more meaningful to the readership.

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