



From Process Teaching To Process Testing: A Process-Based Module for EFL College Writing Assessment

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Abstract: This paper is an attempt to develop writing assessment in process-based EFL college writing classes, shifting it from product-based to process-based. This is attained through proposing a process-based writing assessment module. The proposed module advocates the idea that in process-based EFL college writing classes, learners' *writing competence* (i.e. knowledge of writing process strategies) need to be assessed side by side with other writing aspects, through their *writing performance* (i.e. written product). It has been ascertained that providing EFL college learners with process-based writing instruction enhances their writing performance and assists them to become better writers. However, for such innovative instruction to be effective and prominent, its objectives and content have to be reflected and highlighted in the components of the test to be conducted in the assessment stage.

The process-based module proposed in this study provides innovative testing ideas and techniques, mainly designed to evaluate writing of EFL college learners who had received process-based instruction. The module stresses the assessment of learners' writing competence (writing process) more than their writing performance (written product). The aim beyond such shift of assessment focus (i.e. from product to process), in addition to assessing learners' acquaintance with the various stages and strategies of the writing process, is to draw learners' and teachers' attention to the important role of such writing process aspects in producing better writing, as well as to avoid any potential test backwash effect on learners. Furthermore, such shift is expected to enhance writing assessment and help learners become proficient and skilled writers, particularly in EFL college process-based writing classes.

Keywords: Process-based, EFL College , Writing, Assessment

1. INTRODUCTION

The idea beyond the process-based approach to teaching writing is that student writers are supposed to be acquainted with the various strategies experienced in a typical writing process, which is expected to develop their writing abilities. In the *Writing Assessment Handbook* (2001) of the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment, it is stated that the writing process includes several strategies that need to be used by students before, during and after writing. "Effective use of these strategies is evidenced by good writers. ... Students must be taught these strategies and given regular and ample opportunities to practice them" (Pennsylvania State Department of Education, 2001, p. 9). For, EFL college learners who had received process-based writing instruction developed better writing abilities and strategies than those instructed through traditional methods of teaching writing (Al-Ghrafy, 1999).

Furthermore, student writers need to be assisted to become familiar with the different writing genres existing in actual life and the way they are composed, and how

they vary in content, organization, style etc. According to Al-Ghrafy (1999), supplying student writers with knowledge of the stages and strategies of the writing process, along with several seminars to practice the composing processes of these types of writing, is demonstrated to enable them to produce better pieces of writing. In such writing seminars, learners are provided with further information and counsel needed during each stage of the writing process. Furthermore, student writers are informed with what strategies they are supposed to use in each writing stage to produce a certain piece of writing. One way of achieving this might be through providing them with sets of writing process strategies, arranged in checklists corresponding to the three main stages of the writing process; i.e. *prewriting stage*, *writing stage* and *post-writing or rewriting stage*. A technique as such has proved to be effective in helping EFL college learners produce better pieces of writing (see Al-Ghrafy, 1999).

Several other writing process studies highlight the importance of providing EFL learners with certain type of instruction in the strategies of the writing process



(Zamil, 1982 & 1987; Raimes, 1987; Shih, 1986; Harris, 1993; Zemelman and Daniels, 1993; Rosen, 1993; McTighe and Ferrara, 1998 and others). Zamil (1982) argues that researchers and writing teachers realized that much more account should be paid to the complex nature of the composing process. He adds that as writers seem to have no prior idea about the writing process through which one's meaning is expressed, they are supposed to be provided with instruction that focuses on how to generate, formulate, and refine one's ideas (Zamil, 1982). Similarly, Raimes (1987) points out that a teaching program of writing should use possible ways to develop, refine or change the writing strategies that have been internalized by EFL learners, and others which may have not been facilitative in their writing processes when they are required to write on a certain topic. In Reimes' own words:

Course design thus should include instruction and practice with strategies: how to deal with the text of the question and with their own emerging text, how to generate ideas on a topic, how to rehearse ideas, and how to consider the options prior to devising a plan for organizing their ideas. Students need to learn, too, how to rescan their texts and which questions to ask to revise and edit more effectively. (Raimes, 1987, p. 460)

Hughes and Martin (1992) conducted a study to investigate whether students who are given instructional writing experiences across the curriculum would improve the quality of their writing over the course of an academic year. Results showed that students given experiences in writing improved the quality of their writing over the course of the academic year and that gains in writing quality increased according to the amount of instructional writing experiences.

Two further recent studies (Vanderpyl, 2012 and Alodwanl and Ibnian, 2014) emphasized the effectiveness of using process-oriented approach in teaching writing in EFL classes. In the first, Vanderpyl (2012) conducted an experiment with the process approach as writing instruction in two greatly varying EFL contexts, Myanmar and Saudi Arabia, and found that the process approach is effective on several levels. In his accounts, he describes the process approach as "effective in creating better student writers as well as a method for overcoming teaching obstacles" (p. 40). In the other study, Alodwanl and Ibnian (2014) investigated the effect of using the process approach to writing on developing essay writing skills of EFL university students. Results of their study showed that using the process approach to writing had positively affected EFL students' essay writing skills. This lead them to recommend placing more emphasis on teaching writing as a process rather than only as a product.

Generally speaking, it has been ascertained that providing learners with process-based writing instruction assists in improving their composing skill and writing quality. However, for such type of writing instruction to have a positive and permanent effect, its objectives and content are supposed to be reflected in some way in the testing items of the assessment stage. In other words, as process-based writing instruction focuses on helping learners acquire and practice effective writing process strategies and habits, the successive assessment stage, too, has to include items examining the extent to which such strategies and habits have been acquired and internalized by the learners and become part of their writing habits.

2. RATIONALE FOR PROCESS-BASED WRITING ASSESSMENT

A very genuine question to be asked, first, is *what exactly do we rate when assessing our learners' writing?* If this question is asked to teachers of writing in an EFL college situation, for instance, their expected responses would vary according to aspects, including their dogmas, contentment, educational background, teaching experience and the instructional methods they follow. The merely granted concluded remark about these responses is that no totally agreed on answer could be obtained from those teachers. This might imply the absence of clear criteria or guidelines in such teaching situations to be followed in assessing learners' writing. In this respect, Faigley (1992), as quoted in Broad (2003), argues:

College writing research in the disciplinary period which began, roughly, in the mid-1960s has not told us much about exactly what it is that teachers value in student writing. Researchers who have used statistical methodologies to address this question have thrown little light on the issue. ... And guidelines published by English departments- at least at places where I've taught- are even less specific. An "A" paper is one that "displays unusual competence"; hence, an "A" paper is an "A" paper. (Faigley, 1992; quoted in Broad, 2003, p. 1)

A promising answer to the question raised above is provided by Broad (2003), who maintains that what matters in any writing assessment context is what we really teach our students, and what we prepare them for and make them successful in, in their future life. In other words, writing assessment of any instructional program has to be strongly influenced and determined by the instructional content provided to learners and the objectives to be achieved at the end of the program. This, to some extent, translates the testing standard of *validity*; that is, "a test is valid if it serves the purpose for which it is used ... (Cronbach, 1988, p. 5; quoted in O'Neill,



Moore & Huot, 2009)". Lynne (2002) offers *meaningfulness* as an alternative term for validity in testing. The term she developed, Lynne argues, begins with the two notions of purpose and substance:

The idea of purpose as an element of meaningfulness draws attention to what evaluators expect an assessment to accomplish and for whom. Substance serves as a partner term, focusing on the content or subject matter of an assessment. These qualities shift the evaluator's gaze away from the means of testing—which has historically been the focus—and toward the reasons for and the object(s) of assessment which, I would argue, constitute a more appropriate center of attention for assessment. (Lynne, 2002, pp. 122-123)

In relying on these two terms, she implicitly maintains that before constructing any assessment, test developers need to understand as thoroughly as possible the objective(s) of the assessment and the type of information they are supposed to include in it. Unless this is taken into consideration, she adds, assessment efforts would certainly become worthless (Lynne, 2002).

In the light of such radical ideas in writing teaching and testing, *in what way should writing test items be formulated?* In many EFL college writing assessment contexts, it is very common to encounter a testing item like: "Write a composition of 200 words on one of the following topics: earthquakes, famine or war", to assess students' writing achievement. The interesting thing about this is that this item is used solely in a term-final assessment in many EFL college writing classes. Such a testing item might be applicable and meaningful, when used in certain stages of EFL college writing classes, to evaluate learners' performance, as far as it corresponds to the content and objectives of the instruction provided.

However, the problem exists when, in different EFL college composition classes, a testing item as such is used to assess only learners' writing mechanics, including *grammar*, *spelling* and *punctuation*, ignoring other crucial aspects of writing, like *content/message*, *organization* and *style*. Whatsoever the teaching method followed was, such narrow focus of writing assessment is expected to consequently have an undesirable effect on the quality of learners' writing performance. "Unfortunately, tests of punctuation and spelling have often tended to inhibit writing and creativity (Heaton, 1988)". Such a negative effect of test, technically known as backwash effect, is seriously persistent, particularly, in EFL college composition classes, where a testing item as the one mentioned above is solely used as the term-final composition test. For, concentrating only on mechanical aspects when testing writing would derive learners to consider composing a piece of writing as a mechanical

exercise of grammar, spelling and punctuation rather than a rhetorical process resulting in a creative and competitive piece of art. Furthermore, such negative effect might extend, particularly in early EFL writing classes, not only to that single testing situation but also to the learning and acquisition of the writing process itself. Heaton (1988) indicates that:

In the past, test writers have been too ambitious and unrealistic in the expectations of testees' performances in composition writing: hence the constant complaint that relatively few foreign learners of English attain a satisfactory level in English composition. Furthermore, the backwash effect of examinations involving composition writing has been unfortunate: teachers have too often anticipated examination requirements by beginning free composition work far too early in the course. They have 'progressed' from controlled composition to free composition too early, before the basic writing skills have been acquired. (Heaton, 1988, p. 137)

Moreover, such a test item might be effective only if it is used to evaluate writing performance of learners who have received enough instruction in composition writing; i.e., learners in final stages of study after having achieved good command of composition writing. In this concern, Heaton (1988) argues that,

..., once the students are ready to write free compositions on carefully chosen realistic topics, then composition writing can be a useful testing tool. It provides the students with an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to organize language material, using their own words and ideas to communicate. (Heaton, 1988, p. 137)

The situation might become worse when a testing item like the one mentioned above is solely used as a term-final test in early levels of study to evaluate writing performance of learners who received process-based writing instruction. A similar situation was experienced by the researcher in an EFL college composition teaching/assessment context, in the Department of English, Sana'a University, Yemen. The researcher was teaching one group in the second level, first semester, following the process-based writing instruction. Another group was taught by another teacher, following the traditional method of writing instruction. The problem exists when the Department required both of the teachers to construct a combined term-final composition test for both groups. Consulting test papers from previous years, the content of such tests usually consists of a single question (or sometimes two, depending on the study level), requiring learners to write a free composition with a certain number of words on a certain topic; sometimes



different topics are provided for choice. The researcher found it difficult to fulfill this obligation and insisted on constructing a separate term-final test that satisfies the content and purpose of the method of instruction provided to his group. The reason beyond this is that in classes following process-based writing instruction, requiring learners to write a free composition on a certain topic can be used as a solely testing item only at the final levels of study.

Generally speaking, it would be an easy task for any writing examiner to design a traditional testing item seeking the final product of a writing process; nevertheless, it would be a tiring work for the examinees to respond to such a task. It has been argued that such a traditional testing item of writing would put examinees in a very bad situation and complicated mood, or in, as Smith (1982) termed it, a "writer's-block". Many learners would find it a hard experience to respond to a testing item requiring them to start writing on a certain topic from nothing, ending up, in a very limited testing time, with a complete piece of writing (e.g. a composition). The situation becomes even more serious and confusing, particularly, for learners who received little or no instruction in the writing process. O'Neill et. al. (2009) argue that "... proficiency or exit assessment involves high stakes for students. In this context, assessments that make use of substantial and sustained writing processes are especially important (O'Neill et. al., 2009, p. 167)".

Many researchers (e.g., Wolcott, 1987; Hairston, 1992; Tompkins, 1994; Huot, 2002 and Troia, 2014) carried the view that writing instruction and assessment should take both process and product into account. Hairston, for instance, argues that:

We cannot teach students to write by looking only at what they have written. We must also understand how that product came into being, and why it assumed the form that it did. We have to try to understand what goes on during the act of writing if we want to affect its outcome. (Hairston, 1992, p. 84)

In the same respect, Huot (2002), in his book *(Re)articulating writing assessment for teaching and learning*, states that:

For the last two or three decades, writing pedagogy has moved toward process-oriented and context-specific approaches that focus on students' individual cognitive energies and their socially positioned identities as members of culturally bound groups. In contrast, writing assessment has remained a context-less activity emphasizing standardization and an ideal version of writing quality. (Huot, 2002, p. 104)

In his paper *Evidence-Based Practices for Writing Instruction*, Troia (2014) emphasizes the importance of using writing tests that include multiple samples of different types of writing. He argues that writing performance assessment must be based on multiple samples of different types of writing to consistently evaluate students' true writing ability since performance on any single writing task is heavily influenced by aspects including topic and genre knowledge, motivation, application of writing skills, and task parameters. He clarifies that judging students' writing ability on the basis of one or two writing samples is similar to administering a math calculation test which includes one or two items and on the basis of students' test score judging their competence to perform math calculations. He adds,

The effort teachers make to monitor their students' progress in writing through frequent sampling and evaluation of writing products is beneficial to students' writing achievements; such ongoing monitoring helps teachers quickly adjust instruction for individuals. (Troia, 2014, p. 24)

Process approach to writing instruction did much towards changing the traditional perceptions and practices of writing instruction and how learners learn to write. Grabe and Kaplan (1996) indicate that the process approach is frequently discussed as a wholly positive innovation allowing writing teachers and learners more meaningful interaction and more purposeful writing. That is, teachers are required to concentrate on teaching the processes and sub-processes that any written product has to pass through to become what it is. Alternatively, learners need to understand these processes and sub-processes and go through them by themselves in order to become familiar with them and acquire the various strategies and techniques related to each of them to apply in their writing. Such a positive innovation, therefore, must be concerned with more than just the final written product, and writing assessment must, accordingly, focus more on the writing process.

As innovative in its contribution to writing instruction, process approach is also expected to be inventive in writing assessment. That is to say, in this approach, writing testing items and tasks are supposed to be designed in such a way that they reflect the type of instruction learners actually received in writing classes. In other words, purpose and substance of writing assessment, following Lynne (2002), must replicate the objectives and content of the writing instruction presented and practiced in class.

Actually, writing assessment cannot be achieved successfully unless we expect learners to perform some kind of written tasks, which represents the final stage of any writing process. However, these final written

products should not always be looked at as the sole end of any writing process. If we, as many other writing researchers and teachers, are convinced that process-based writing instruction is one of the most effective approaches in the recent development of writing instruction, then, *what would be the appropriate way for evaluating writing in the view of such an approach?* The remaining sections and subsections of this paper tries to provide an answer to this question through proposing a module for writing assessment in EFL college classes, where process-based writing instruction is followed.

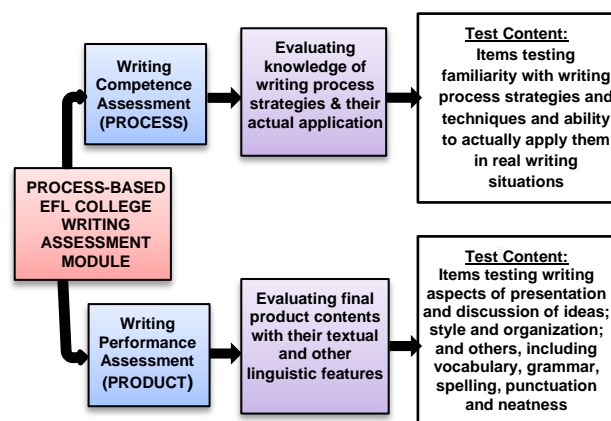
3. PROCESS-BASED MODULE FOR EFL COLLEGE WRITING ASSESSMENT

Generally speaking, the basic concern of writing process approach is to provide learners with instruction in the strategies of the writing process to help them acquire effective writing habits and develop better writing abilities. Hence, the subsequent writing assessment in any instructional program following this approach is highly expected to evaluate, in addition to other aspects of writing, whether these strategies have been acquired by learners and become part of their writing habits or not. That is, program final testing items and tasks are supposed to test whatever was taught during the program.

According to many researchers and test designers, a good test item of writing needs to fulfill certain criteria. Carroll and Hall (1985) argue that test items have to be selected as to represent realistic writing activities that learners can reasonably be expected to cope with, such as writing letters, memoranda and reports on business topics. Furthermore, the participants should be given "a real motivation to write continuous texts to meet a communication need in a particular setting" (Carroll and Hall, 1985). Similarly, Heaton (1988) maintains that a composition test should present a clearly defined problem that motivates learners to write. That is, it should ensure that learners have something to say, with a purpose in mind for saying or transmitting it to certain audience. Thus, process-oriented assessments, according to McTighe and Ferrara (1998), seek to gain insight into underlying processes and strategies demonstrated by the student and provide teachers with information about students' learning strategies and thinking processes, which enable teachers to heighten students' own awareness of processes and worthwhile strategies.

In the light of all this, therefore, the process-based EFL college writing assessment module proposed in this paper aims, in addition to measuring learners' **writing performance** (i.e. aspects of the written product), at evaluating learners' **writing competence** (i.e. aspects of the writing process). Writing competence, here, refers to learners' internalized knowledge of the various writing process strategies and their actual application, either as a

result of regular process-based writing instruction received in EFL college classes, or due to the existence of such knowledge, previously acquired in the first language learning/teaching situations. The following diagram illustrates the process-based module for EFL college writing assessment proposed by the study.



Process-Based EFL College Writing Assessment Module

This module advocates the notion that acquiring the knowledge of *writing competence* (**process**), in addition to the linguistic competence of English, is expected to enable EFL college learners to have better *writing performance* (**product**). Hence, focusing on assessing learners' knowledge of the writing process strategies (*writing competence*), acquired during the whole process-based writing instruction program, is expected to raise their awareness to the importance of these strategies in constructing and developing their individual writing processes. Learners need to learn, experience and practice the various writing process strategies, until they become able to apply them effectively when they write. Thus, assessing learners' knowledge of writing process strategies and their ability of applying them in actual writing tasks is expected to make them conscious of the importance of these strategies and of how each of them functions in the writing process.

It might be generally argued that through their writing performance/products (e.g. composition final drafts), we can assess learners' overall writing competence/process (i.e., reflection of learners' knowledge and application of the writing process strategies on the product). However, in the view of process-based writing assessment, such an evaluation can only be administered at final stages of the teaching program; i.e. when learners have attained a good command of and become acquainted with the writing process strategies (i.e., writing competence). In other words, such a testing technique can only be applied in the final level of the EFL college writing instruction program



to evaluate both learners' writing competence (process) and writing performance (product).

The process-based module proposed in this paper advocates actual testing techniques through involving learners in active writing tasks within real and continuing writing processes. In such tasks, learners are faced with certain writing problems representing parts of real writing processes, requiring them to solve such problems through applying their acquired knowledge of the various strategies of the writing process. Such problems might be, for example, finding and thinking about some missing parts of a text or reorganizing some of its scrambled sections (i.e. prewriting strategies), composing some missing parts of a text (i.e. writing strategies), revising and editing some texts or parts of them (i.e. rewriting strategies), or even composing a full text in final testing stages. In the following section, sample process-based testing items of the proposed module are presented.

4. PROPOSED SAMPLES OF PROCESS-BASED TESTING ITEMS

In the light of the process-based assessment module, a number of testing items can be constructed to be used together in assessing writing. In fact, such testing items are supposed to vary according to learners' levels of study, teaching content, and type and purpose of writing course. In the following sections of the paper, some process-based testing items are proposed as samples. These items are arranged to be used in two testing stages covering the testing items constructed for and administered in real testing situations for second year EFL specialization Yemeni college learners who have received process-based instruction in writing classes. The *First Testing Stage*, covers the testing items related to the writing course "*English Composition I*", taught in the first semester and the *Second Testing Stage*, covers the testing items related to the writing course "*English Composition II*", taught in the second semester. The process-based testing program during the two semesters goes in a continuum, beginning by using simple and controlled process-based testing tasks to evaluate learners' writing at the beginning of the first semester. Then, items are provided where the level of difficulty is gradually raised and the level of controlled-ness is gradually lowered, until complicated free composition testing items are provided by the end of the second semester. The proposed sample testing items of the two testing stages are as described in the sections that follow.

A. First Testing Stage:

This stage presents some samples of the process-based testing items constructed and administrated in actual testing situations (i.e., second year, first semester, EFL specialization Yemeni college classes). In this stage, the "*English Composition I*" course is primarily intended

to achieve various vocational as well as academic objectives. The course provides practice in writing for a wide variety of purposes to meet the needs of learners in the job market and in their quest for higher studies. It also gives practice in language skills for writing and organizing thought in English by a gradual movement from guided to free writing. The content of the course starts with topics like writing and organizing different types of paragraphs, writing and organizing different types of compositions, with more focus on the function and importance of the different parts of each type of these compositions. The course content ends with topics of writing compositions with the purposes of description, narration and argumentation. Below are eight samples of these process-based testing tasks presented. All these tasks are ordinary English texts, collected from various books and course books of writing, and modified and manipulated by the researcher to be used as test items. Each of these tasks is followed by comments regarding both its assessment objective and the part/aspect of writing or writing process it assesses.

Sample Task (1): The following text is the first draft of a paragraph, so it contains mistakes of grammar, spelling, punctuation and organization. Rewrite it as a second draft, correcting all such mistakes.

Jogging

Tony looked at hisself in the mirror, he was quiet fat, he had a big stomach, he opened his 'Keep Fit' book and decides to get fit, he put on a running vest and shorts. He ran along the road, some boys laugh at him because he was running so funnily, tow ladys was on the pavement, one of them has dog, tony tripped over the dogs lead and hurts himself, while he getting up, the dog bit him, its owner got very angry with tony. while he was limping home, it started to rain and he got very cold. He stood in his room feeling soaked through. he is wet and he has a backache, he had a cut on his knee and he has a bite on his arm, he threw the 'Keep Fit' book into the waste paper basket.

Comments: This task aims to accustom learners with the writing strategies/habits needed and applied when *revising* and *drafting* a paragraph. It examines their ability in discovering mistakes of different types in a text, fixing them and rewriting a revised draft.

Sample Task (2): The following are jumbled sentences. Read them carefully and then rearrange them in a logical way, correcting punctuation and other writing conventions. Finally, rewrite them to form an appropriate paragraph, adding to it a suitable title.



- enjoy your delicious breakfast
- after you take the cake out of the oven you need to let it to cool for a few minutes
- if you want to make something that is quick easy and delicious follow this recipe of a cake
- some people like to cook but everyone likes to eat
- first beat 4 eggs and add 4 cups of flour and continue to beat
- after that grease the bottom and sides of the backing dish
- then add 2 tablespoons of ghee or vegetable oil 4 tablespoons of sugar and teaspoon of packing powder and stir it well until the mixture is smooth
- then serve it with white tea milk or fruit juice
- finally cover the dish and put it in the oven and bake it for 20 minutes at 250

Comments: This task aims to reinforce the importance of concentrating on the *main idea* and *cohesion* of a text when revising and drafting. It attempts to measure learners' ability in regrouping and reforming the content of a text logically around a core idea and under a title, applying appropriate accessories needed for paragraph writing.

Sample Task (3): The following text is a paragraph with no title and topic sentence. Read it carefully and then write a *suitable title* and a *topic sentence* for it in the space provided.

.....

 My grandfather was special. He was tall and bent with age but he used to climb our local mountain as easily as the wild goats that roamed the area. He used to love winter and as soon as the first snows arrived he would take us children to the wooden chalet up the mountain for a week's training in skiing and tobogganing!

Comments: This task aims to accustom learners with the writing aspects of *title* and *topic sentence*, and with how to accomplish them in actual contexts. It tries to examine their ability in effectively constructing a title and topic sentence for a text through reading it.

Sample Task (4): The following is supposed to be a formal letter but it is not organized properly. Rewrite it as a second draft, checking and correcting all the mistakes of layout, organization and punctuation, making any other changes required by formal letters in English.

5639 S. Blackstone Office Foreign Student Admin.
 Chicago, Illinois 60615 Northwestern University
 January 14, 2003-06-07 633 Clark Street
 Evanston, Illinois 60545

dear madam/sir

please send me a catalog and an application for admission to the school of engineering at northwestern university. I have a diploma from a high school in beirut, Lebanon. I arrived in the united states six months ago now i am studying english at loyola university. I would like to begin my studies at Northwestern in september, 2003. my major field of interest is mechanical engineering.

I would also like to receive information on tuition and housing would it be possible to live with an american family? In addition i would also like to know about any scholarships for foreign students.

Would you please send all of this information as soon as possible please send it to the above address.

Thank you very much. sincerely yours Ali Sharif

Comments: The task aims to emphasize the importance of the writing conventions related to *composing and organizing formal letters in English*. It examines the learners' abilities in rewriting a formal English letter in a proper way, while applying appropriate writing conventions of organization, layout and punctuation.

Sample Task (5): Use the following writing plan to write a paragraph of about ten sentences, and then write an appropriate title for it.

■ **Writing= method of human intercommunication by means of conventional visible marks.**

■ **3 main writing systems:**

1. Word-syllabic (one sign = one word) e.g. Chinese
2. Syllabic (one sign = one syllable) e.g. Amharic, Japanese
3. Alphabetic (one sign= one sound) e.g. Arabic, Greek, Latin

Comments: This task aims to reinforce the importance of *the planning stage* in the writing process and to encourage learners to adopt it as a strategy in their writing process. It examines their ability in transforming a writing plan, consisting of a topic idea and three supporting ideas, into complete meaningful sentences grouped into a paragraph with a single idea and title, and applying appropriate language and writing conventions.

Sample Task (6): Arrange the following jumbled sentences in a logical way to form an amusing story. Do not forget to organize your writing in a proper way, using appropriate connectives and/or sequence markers and adding correct punctuation marks.



The Boy Who Cried 'Wolf!'

- a boy looked after sheep
- many sheep were killed by the wolf
- one day a wolf really came to attack the sheep
- he did this several times and the villagers were angry with him
- he frightened people in his village by saying a wolf was attacking the sheep
- he ran to tell the villagers but they did not believe him

Comments: This task aims to reinforce the importance of aspects of *cohesion* and *sequence of events* in narrative writing and the important role of connectives and sequence markers in achieving such text qualities. It examines learners' ability in reordering a group of events chronologically to form an amusing story, applying different connectives and/or sequence markers and making necessary punctuation changes.

Sample Task (7): Write a paragraph on 'Mass media in Yemen'. Begin your paragraph with a definition of mass media. Then, provide a description for the three different types of mass media, beginning with 'There are

Comments: This task aims to train learners to write a unified paragraph through controlled steps. It examines their abilities of using successful writing techniques in constructing a meaningful piece of writing following certain instructions and applying appropriate rules and conventions of paragraph writing.

Sample Task (8): Use the following plan to write a report about your daily routine. Make use of all the points/ideas included. Your report should include four paragraphs and a suitable title. Do not forget to organize your report according to the provided plan.

Title	
Introduction	My personal information (i.e. name, age, marital status, job, etc.)
Morning time	What activities I usually do in the morning (i.e. get up, do some exercises, etc.).
Main day time	What activities I usually do in the main part of my day (i.e. in my work, college, or others).
Conclusion	What activities I usually do in the rest of my day (i.e. go back home, change my clothes, etc.).

Comments: This task aims at reinforcing the strategy of making plans prior to starting writing on a topic. It examines the learners' abilities in transforming the components of a writing plan into a complete piece of writing on a certain topic, following the instructions

provided and applying all the necessary writing requirements for that.

B. Second Testing Stage:

This stage presents some samples of the process-based testing items constructed and administrated in actual testing situations (i.e., second year, second semester, EFL specialization Yemeni college classes). In this stage, learners are supposed to study a course called "*English composition II*" which focuses mainly on helping learners to build and develop their abilities of writing compositions of different types, in addition to improving their personal strategies of the writing process. This is achieved through providing them with further practice in less controlled and free writing on topics of general and topical interest. The course starts with practicing the main purposes of writing, including description, narration and argumentation, and ends with topics of free writing, like writing in newspapers, and writing commentaries, stories, different kinds of reports, book reviews and biographical sketches. Nine sample process-based testing tasks are presented below, where each of the nine tasks is followed by some comments regarding its aim and the aspect/part of writing or the writing process it assesses. The tasks 1-5 are ordinary English texts, collected from some course books of writing, and modified and manipulated by the researcher to be used as test items. However, the tasks 6-9 are free composition test items designed by the researcher on topics related to the learners' environment.

Sample Task (1): The following text represents a true story; however, two of its parts are missing. Read the text carefully and then add to it the missing parts; i.e., (1) a suitable title, and (2) a dramatic end with a moral.

This is a famous tale about an old man and his donkey. This old man lived in a village in a warm country a long time ago.

Title:

One day a young man came to the old man's house and said, 'Can I use your donkey today, please? My two donkeys are ill, and you're not using yours.'

The old man knew this young man well. The young man was not kind to animals and often hit donkeys. So his donkeys were often ill. The old man did not want to say 'Yes', but he could not say 'No' because he was polite. So he said, 'I'm sorry, but my donkey isn't here. My son is using it.'

The young man did not believe this because the old man's son had three donkeys. Then, the man's donkey made a loud noise and the young man heard it. The young man was very angry and said:

.....



Comments: This task aims to emphasize and draw learners' attention to the importance of certain parts of the text whose presence is essential to make a story complete, with more focus on the end of the story in particular. The task examines the learners' ability in constructing the missing parts of a story; i.e., *a suitable title* and *a dramatic end with a moral*, depending on the other parts available in the text.

Sample Task (2): The following text would represent a full composition except that its first part (i.e. introduction) and the title are missing. Read the available parts of the text carefully, and then try to add to them an introduction and a suitable title in the space provided.

.....

.....

.....

.....

I agree with these people. In my opinion, the changes in the way meat is produced have been so serious that I do not want to buy meat or eat meat. For example, chicken has become a very popular food in Britain in the last twenty years. In the past it was quite expensive and you ate roast chicken on Sunday or on special occasions. Now it is very cheap and people can eat it every day, but it is not as good as it was. This is because the chickens are kept in very bad conditions in very small spaces and they are fed with hormones and antibiotics to keep them healthy until they are killed. Not only are the chickens killed in a horrible way after a horrible life, but I think the meat from these chickens is not good for you. It is full of water (to make it heavier) and chemicals and it does not taste good. I do not feel that this sort of meat is good for me and I am happier eating vegetarian food which is cheaper and tastes better.

Perhaps the statement '*Meat eating is as bad for you as it is for animals*' is too extreme. I do not think that people should all stop eating meat immediately or that meat will kill you. However, I do not think that meat is very good for you anymore and I do not want to eat it myself.

Comments: This task aims to emphasize the importance of the *introduction* and *title* as two basic parts of a composition, with more focus on the introduction; its position and content. The task examines learners' ability in constructing *an effective introduction* and *appropriate title* to a composition depending mainly on the available parts of that composition.

Sample Task (3): The following are a title of a composition and some jumbled sentences which need to be rearranged in a way to form two separate paragraphs as the body of the composition (i.e. *advantages* and *disadvantages*): (1) decide which of these sentences should be grouped together and in which order, and then write out the two separate paragraphs to form the body of the composition with correct punctuation and organization; (2) write a suitable introduction as the opening paragraph of the composition, and end up the composition with your personal remarks as a conclusion.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Television

Introduction?

- what is more television can have a serious educational side and there are plenty of good current affairs programs and documentations which are very informative
- while it is good to have such cheap and convenient entertainment in your own living room it may also mean the end of reading and conversation for large parts of the evening
- furthermore although there are many good programs on television there is often far too much blood and violence on the screen
- one of the most obvious advantages of having a television is that it offers cheap and convenient entertainment which nearly everyone can afford
- this can be especially harmful for children who will often sit up late at night watching horror films and then have nightmares for days afterwards
- on the other hand having a television can have a certain disadvantages
- this is especially important for people who are alone all day or for large families who can't afford to go out to cinemas and theatres

Conclusion?

Comments: This task aims to train learners to construct a full composition through providing them with its title and some jumbled sentences for its body. Learners are required to reorganize the jumbled sentences in a logical way into two separate paragraphs to become the body of the composition, and then to add to that an appropriate introduction and a conclusion. The task examines whether learners can recognize and/or construct the different parts of a composition and their contents or not, given only a title of the composition and some jumbled sentences representing its body.



Sample Task (4): Write a newspaper report using the information in the box below:

<u>Information</u>
<p>Incident:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attack on family (4 members) ○ 1.30 am, Oxford Street, London ○ Father killed and others severely injured ○ Reasons unknown <p>Attacker: man; young, about 25-30, tall, blond long hair; wearing jeans, black leather jacket</p>

Comments: This task aims to involve the learners in another type of writing represented by newspaper report writing. It attempts to examine their abilities in transforming some news notes into a full newspaper report applying the techniques and following the strategies required for this type of writing.

Sample Task (5): The following text represents a *formal letter* written by 'Arthur' to a bank manager requesting to take out a loan. Read the letter carefully, and then rewrite it as to be *an informal letter* written by 'Arthur' himself, but this time, to his very intimate friend 'William', asking him for the same amount of money. Make all the necessary changes.

<p>72 the Street Morley Norfolk NR18 9AF The Manager Midland Bank Norwich</p> <p>Dear Sir,</p> <p>I am writing to ask if it would be possible to take out a loan. I have recently moved to a new house which has no central heating. The estimated cost of installing a complete system is £ 2,000. I wonder if you could let me know if they would consider lending me that amount.</p> <p>If I need to complete an application form I would be grateful if you could send me one as soon as possible.</p> <p>Yours faithfully,</p> <p>E. G. Arthur</p>	<p>26/9/2007</p>
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Comments: This task aims to draw learners' attention to the differences between *formal and informal letters in English*, with regard to the linguistic aspects and writing conventions specified for each type of letters. The task examines the learners' ability in differentiating between the two types of letters, and in converting an English formal letter, i.e. its linguistic content, and its writing conventions and format, into an informal one.

Sample Task (6): Write a brief description of your own writing process. Your description should include what you do and what really happens when you write; i.e., *in the prewriting stage, in the writing stage and in the post-writing or rewriting stage*.

Comments: This task requires learners to produce a free composition. It aims to draw learners' attention to the three basic stages of any writing process and to the importance of the various strategies that are supposed to be practiced and applied in each of these stages. The task examines learners' knowledge of the strategies of each stage in the writing process (their writing competence) and their ability of using such knowledge to produce a good and organized piece of written description. The concern here, in addition to examining learners' writing competence (i.e. knowledge of the writing process), is evaluating learners' writing performance of producing pieces of writing, where each learner describes his own writing process.

Sample Task (7): Write an essay, outlining '*The causes and effects of children labor*'. Remember to make a list of points 'causes and effects', and plan your introduction and conclusion before you start writing your first draft. Try to end your essay with possible solutions to help in stopping this phenomenon from spreading more and more.

Comments: This task represents another example of advanced free composition. It aims to involve learners in producing a full composition, discussing the causes and effects of the phenomenon presented. The task examines learners' abilities in producing a complete piece of writing, on a real topic, following the provided instructions and applying certain writing conventions related to this type of writing.

Sample Task (8): Write a short story (real or imaginary) on '*The most frightening night in my life*'. Do not forget to have a dramatic opening, clear events and a good ending for your story.

Comments: This is a third task of advanced free composition. The task aims to involve learners in producing narrative writing through requiring them to use their real or imaginary experience in writing a short story. It examines their abilities in narrating a story of their own experience in writing, fulfilling all the linguistic and writing conventions required for this type of writing.

Sample Task (9): Write an essay comparing and contrasting '*Being married and being single*'. Don't forget to plan and organize your ideas before you begin writing. Use suitable connectives for comparing and contrasting. Try to give reasons for your own view at the end.



Comments: This task represents a further example of advanced free composition. It aims to involve learners in producing a full argumentative composition on a certain topic, comparing and contrasting its two sides. The task examines the learners' abilities in producing a complete piece of writing, comparing and contrasting two sides of a real topic, following the provided instructions and applying certain writing conventions required for this type of writing.

5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The interesting thing about the tasks presented in this paper is that they were all used as testing items by the researcher in real testing situations, during the first and second semesters, in the second level, Department of English, Faculty of Languages, Sana'a University, Yemen. It was found that these testing tasks were effective and encouraging for the students to write. Students are allowed to produce different written tasks in the same writing test, related to different aspects of the writing process, instead of being required to produce a full written product. Many students who always feared to write in composition tests, began to participate in achieving such short written tasks easily. Instead of being stuck in answering a single essay question in a writing test, students found it interesting to answer such process-based writing tests. For, such tests would contain a number of different writing tasks, allowing students to jump from one task to another, and then return to the previous ones while answering. It was generally observed that students' writing performance was significantly improved and relatively more writing was produced by them. In addition, students showed positive reactions towards such testing tasks, while and after carrying out the writing test.

Several other similar writing testing tasks or items might be constructed on the same basis and for the same purpose of assessing learners' awareness of the various stages and strategies of the writing process (writing competence) and their application in their writing. Nevertheless, this does not mean ignoring other aspects of the writing product (writing performance); i.e., content, organization, grammar, vocabulary etc., which are all assessed through- and parallel to- testing aspects of the writing process. A further crucial point to be mentioned here is that before applying testing tasks similar to the ones presented in this study module in actual testing situations, the assessed learners must have been provided with a complete instructional program in process-based writing. Finally, further research needs to be conducted in other similar writing testing situations to find out the significance of applying such testing tasks on students' achievement and attitudes.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper does not claim to list or cover all the possible testing items and techniques that may emerge or be proposed through the process-based writing approach. However, this paper is meant to be a humble effort through which some ideas and techniques in process-based writing assessment are presented. This is achieved mainly through proposing a process-based module for assessing the writing of EFL college learners received process-based writing instruction. The module focuses more on assessing the learners' writing competence (process), in addition to assessing other writing aspects, through their writing performance (product). The paper, through this proposed module, presents seventeen process-based writing assessment tasks, each of them is followed by comments regarding its purpose and the writing process area/s it tests and focuses on.

This paper is significant especially for traditional contexts of writing instruction, due to the process-based writing assessment module it proposes. The module presents advanced ideas and techniques for assessing learners' writing, with more focus on their writing competence (process) rather than on their writing performance (product). The reason behind such focus is to draw learners' and teachers' attention to the importance of writing competence and also to encourage learners to acquire effective writing habits and practices to apply them in their actual writing process. This is expected to develop learners' writing abilities and assist in making them proficient and skilled writers.

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