

DESCRIPTIVE WRITING USING THE PROCESS-GENRE APPROACH

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Abstract

Process-based and genre-based approaches both profess to improve the writing proficiency of students. However, if combined, the strengths of one could supplement the limitations of the other. In this study, the process-oriented approach to writing and the structure-specific features of the genre approach were combined and implemented in a class to help students produce descriptive writing compositions. Using the approach, the plan of action involved six steps: preparation, modelling and reinforcing, planning, joint structuring, independent structuring, and revising. The pretest and posttest scores were considered to see if the students' performance in their descriptive writing compositions improved with the use of the process-genre approach. The data gathered were treated using percentages, mean differences, and t-values. Results show that the mean in the posttest is greater than in the pretest, signifying that there is a marked improvement in the descriptive writing compositions of students. Further, the results using the paired t-test show that there is a significant difference between the pretest and the posttest. This implies that the process-genre approach helped the students perform better in writing descriptive compositions.

Keywords: Descriptive Writing, Process-genre Approach, Travelogue Writing

1. Introduction and research focus

Shifting the focus on writing as a product to that of a process is one of the most significant changes in teaching writing (Kroll, Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2002; Hyland, 2003; Jarunthawatchai, 2010). Instead of viewing their writing outputs as one-shot submissions which mark a product-centered view of writing, students whose teachers use the process approach see writing as more relaxed, allowing them more time to refine their concepts as they go through the guided steps of writing. However, although the process approach improves students' writing proficiency, it has limitations (Kim & Kim, 2005). Hence, the genre approach emerged as an alternative view of teaching writing. A genre-based approach as intervention had students performing better in writing than those exposed to the process approach (Hyland, 2007; Nueva, 2016). Genre approach necessitates that students learn explicitly the language used to make meaning in a text (Cope & Kalantzis, 2012). When the process approach is coupled with the genre approach, students are acquainted with the language features that characterize the type of academic writing expected of them. As such, students grasp the importance of the kind of texts that the writers produce and why these are produced (Badger & White, 2000).

From this, the researcher determined to use the process-genre approach in teaching descriptive writing to her students, combining the process-oriented approach to writing and the structure-specific features of the genre approach. Specifically, this paper sought to find if the process-genre approach was effective in enhancing the students' descriptive compositions in terms of their use of more concrete and realistic descriptions and on how they organize their compositions following the structure of the specified genre, in this case, descriptive writing in the form of a travelogue.

2. Plan of action

The researcher used the process-genre approach in teaching descriptive writing in the form of a travelogue to her students. The steps of the process-genre approach are briefly illustrated below:

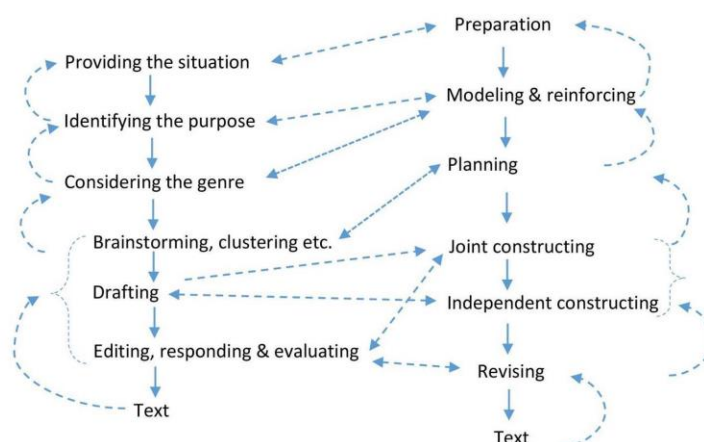


Figure 1: Application of the process-genre approach (Badger & White, 2000)

From the above model, the researcher adapted it using the six general steps suggested by Yan (2005) in implementing the process genre approach for a period of two weeks.

Preparation. The researcher first showed to the students the observation and foci forms they have to accomplish in their senior year where they will be required to teach writing to other students as part of their pre-deployment training. This is to emphasize the importance of their mastery of the writing process. After this mind-setting, the researcher showed a video clip of Greece featuring the country's tourist spots.

Modelling and reinforcing. The researcher showed sample travelogues about Greece and its islands. She then divided the class into three groups for discussion. To reinforce the purpose of descriptive writing, she distributed copies of the sample text, and asked the students to read the text with the following focus questions: 'What is the purpose of the article? Who is the target audience? Has the writer achieved his purpose? Justify.' Meanwhile, to emphasize the structural and language features that made the article descriptive, the teacher asked the students to briefly re-read the sample travelogues and to answer the following focus questions: 'How does the text begin and end? How is the entire text patterned and sequenced? Are the descriptions provided concrete and realistic?' The students reported their group's discussion during the synthesis, citing specific parts of the text that reinforced their answer. After the synthesis, the researcher distributed another sample travelogue that was not arranged coherently. She asked the students to re-organize their travelogue to improve its structure and content. Groups reorganized and restated the faulty travelogue in order to improve its content and structure. To reinforce what the class had learned about descriptive writing, other well-crafted travelogues were presented as bases of comparison.

Planning. Students were asked to propose what tourist attraction will be featured by the class, of which Baguio City won. The students were asked to complete a web diagram about Baguio

City, the summer capital of the Philippines. Items in the web diagram were classified into five categories: climate, food and souvenirs, people and their culture, tourist spots, and transportation. These were decided to be the elements that students will write about in their travelogue. Permission was also sought from the university president to conduct a field trip to Baguio City.

Joint structuring. The students made mini travelogues about Baguio City using the description and items presented in the planning stage. With the teacher first and eventually a partner, students were assigned to a particular item which they will describe. After this, they gave their output to another pair who commented on their articles. The teacher collected the outputs and returned this the following meeting. The revised texts were projected for the class to jointly view.

Independent structuring. The researcher gave guide questions for the travelogue and took her students to a field trip in Baguio City. After the trip, the students were given two days to write the draft of their individual articles, and were assigned schedules for teacher consultation regarding their outputs. They were likewise assigned to their “Baguio buddies”, two other classmates to whom they could show their papers for comments and peer checking.

Revising. From the teacher’s interaction with the students during the consultation hours and the suggestions of their Baguio buddies, the students revised their articles. They were given one week to polish their final output for submission.

3. Methodology

This is an action research implemented to 15 English majors enrolled in a Creative Writing class at the Urdaneta City University. The pretest and posttest scores were considered to see if the students’ performance in their descriptive writing compositions improved with the use of the process genre approach. Results of the Composition Task No. 5 (The Descriptive Composition) were used as scores in the pretest. The scores of the students’ travelogues were considered as posttest results. Rubrics were used in grading the outputs.

4. Statistical treatment

The data gathered were treated using percentages, mean differences, and t-values. Both the pretest and posttest scores were presented using frequency counts and percentages. The mean difference of the pretest and posttest was also computed. The significance of the mean difference was tested using the t-test for correlated sample at 0.05 level of significance.

5. Description of action and results

Students’ scores in the descriptive composition task which was considered as the pretest and the travelogues which served as the posttest were tallied. Table 1 shows the frequency counts and percentages of scores obtained by students in their pretest and posttest.

Table 1: Scores of students in descriptive writing compositions (N = 15)

Scores	Descriptive Equivalent	Pretest		Posttest	
		f	%	f	%
41-50	Excellent	2	13.3	4	26.7
31-40	Very Good	5	33.3	10	66.7
21-30	Good	7	46.7	1	7
11-20	Fair	1	7		
10 below	Poor				

In the pretest, only two students (13.3%) got *excellent* marks in their descriptive writing task while 5 (33.3%) got *very good* scores. Most of the students (7 or 46.7%) obtained *good* scores, and one student (7%) obtained a *fair* rating. Meanwhile, the posttest results showed higher scores obtained by students with four (26.7%) having *excellent* scores, ten (66.7%) were *very good*, and one (7%) with a *good* score. From the table, it could be observed that more students got higher scores in the posttest than in the pretest, attesting that combining the process and genre approaches helps students write better descriptive compositions.

To support this, Table 2 presents the comparison of the means in the pretest and the posttest.

Table 2: Comparative mean performance in the pretest and posttest

Statistical Tool	Pretest	Posttest
Highest possible score	50	50
Highest score obtained	47	50
Lowest score obtained	17	30
Mean	31.93	37.4

The highest score obtained in the pretest is 47 rated as *excellent* and the lowest score is 17 rated as *poor*. In the posttest, the perfect score of 50 considered excellent was obtained. The lowest score is 30 rated as *good*. Using the descriptive equivalent of scores in Table 1, the means of both the pretest and posttest are classified as very good. However, the mean in the posttest (37.4) is greater than in the pretest (31.93), signifying that there is a marked improvement in the descriptive writing compositions of students.

Meanwhile, the significance of the mean difference between the pretest and the posttest is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Significant difference in the pretest and posttest performance of students in descriptive writing

Statistical Tool	Pretest	Posttest
Mean	31.93	37.4
Mean difference		-5.47
Computed t-value		-2.23*
df = 14		
Critical t-value = ± 2.145		
*significant at 0.05		

A mean difference of -5.47 is evident between the pretest and the posttest scores of students. To further test the significance of the difference between the means at 0.05 level with 14 degrees of freedom, the paired t-test was used. Since the computed value (-2.23) of t is greater than the tabular value (± 2.15), the results are significant. There is a significant difference between the pretest and the posttest administered to the students. Furthermore, since the posttest scores reveal a higher mean, it indicates that the students have performed better in the posttest than in the pretest. This implies that the process genre approach helped the students perform better in writing descriptive compositions.

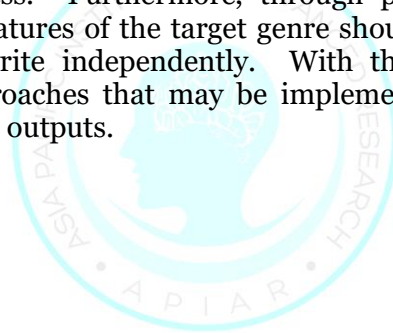
6. Evaluation of action

The results obtained in the posttest point to the process genre approach as helpful to the students in writing descriptive compositions, particularly in crafting travelogues. The outputs of students don't only show general descriptions, but also concrete and realistic descriptions. Details about the places and local customs were also more specific to lend authenticity and "local color" to the write-ups. The travelogues were better structured, opening with general description of Baguio City, and narrowing it to more specific places.

A side benefit to the process genre approach was the more minimal occurrence of grammatical errors in the final outputs. Although the researcher was more concerned with the quality of descriptions, she found that, with the input of other students in 'writing buddy system', grammatical errors were minimized. Students who were more adept in the English language helped their buddies in correcting grammatical errors. Indeed, the recursive steps of the process genre approach afforded students to draft, revise and recompose their write-ups before the final submission.

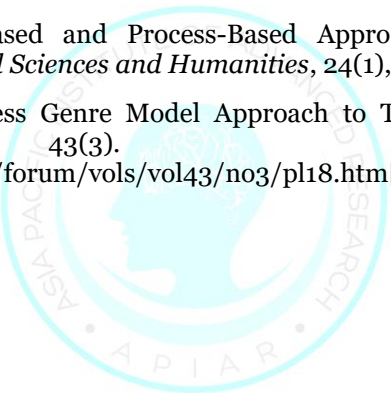
7. Insights

From the conduct of the study, the researcher realized how vital it is that the written product should not be the sole focus of the writing class; rather, composition teachers should help their students in the writing process. Furthermore, through presentation of models and joint construction of model texts, features of the target genre should be emphasized to the students before they are allowed to write independently. With this, the process genre should be considered as one of the approaches that may be implemented in the writing class to help students produce better written outputs.



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Appendices

Appendix A: Writing task guide (Pretest)

WRITING TASK GUIDE (Pretest)

CREATIVE WRITING
WRITING ASSIGNMENT NO. 1
The Descriptive Composition

Instruction: Accomplish any one of the writing tasks below.

WRITING TASK 1
A Letter to the Fairy Godmother

If you were Cinderella, pen a letter to your fairy godmother, describing to her your situation. Tell her also your fondest wish(es) today.

WRITING TASK 2
A Letter to God

If you were Adam or Eve, write an excuse letter to God, describing your reasons for eating the forbidden fruit. State what you would do more than you may be forced to leave the Garden of Eden.

Limit your letter from 200-500 words. Use the writing form for each specific task, and follow the format of a literary letter.

Keep to mind the rubric for grading this output.

Matter	25
Manner and Method	15
Mechanics	10
TOTAL	50

Appendix B: Writing Task Guide (Posttest)

WRITING TASK GUIDE (Posttest)

CREATIVE WRITING
FINAL TERM REQUIREMENT
The Baguio City Travelogue

Instruction: Accomplish your travelogue by following the three main parts below. Then writing your article, be guided by the questions stated in each of the parts.

Part I – Description of Baguio City in general

What is the general atmosphere or “feel” of Baguio City? What do you think draws people to Baguio City? Describe the climate, the sights and sounds of the city. Is there any other impression that you can associate with Baguio City aside from its claim as the “Summer capital of the Philippines”?

Some contend that Baguio City has become very much commercialized. From what you see now is the city, do you agree? Or has it retained its Cordillera heritage in spite of its so-called commercialization? Support your answers with specific details and descriptions.

Part II – Feature Article regarding the Twin-peak Village

What does the name “Twin-peak” mean? Does this give you an idea of what the village is like? What is the main structure of the place? What makes “Twin-peak” Village unique from the commonly visited places in Baguio City? When local Cordillera customs or rituals could be seen in the infrastructure or featured events of the village?

Part III – Description of Mines View Park

Mines View Park is one of the most commonly visited parks in the city. What do you think makes it so all? Have people here regard the park as the ultimate Baguio City summer retreat. What could be brought in the surroundings? Are there things the park area just does?

When accomplishing your article, take into consideration our previous discussion of Baguio City in terms of climate, food, souvenirs, people and tourist spots. You may also want to add on local customs, your expectations about Baguio City and if there are more, etc.

Technical Concerns:

Minimum of three pages, with each page corresponding to the three parts of the travelogue.

Pictures for each featured place are a must. Captions should go beyond stating the obvious in its caption image.

Keep in mind the structure and format of a good travelogue. Make sure your descriptions are concrete and realistic, and the facts that you cite in your outputs are accurate.

Below is the rubric for grading this output:

Matter (quality of descriptions, originality, ideas)	25
Manner and Method (style, presentation and article development)	15
Mechanics (grammar and punctuation)	10
TOTAL	50

See your schedule of consultation to be posted at the Education Relations Board.

Appendix C: Critique guide for the writing buddy

CREATIVE WRITING
The Baguio Buddy
Critique Guide

All of you have been assigned to Baguio buddies. You may show your outputs to your buddies during your writing of your travelogues and get their opinion regarding what works in your output and/or what may be done to improve it.

As buddies, you do not just show your output, you also get to comment on your buddies' articles. When giving comments, you may want to consider the following areas:

Matter

How concrete and realistic are the descriptions of the places? Are these descriptions appropriate? Are the descriptions/ideas original or just copied from flyers?

Manner and Method

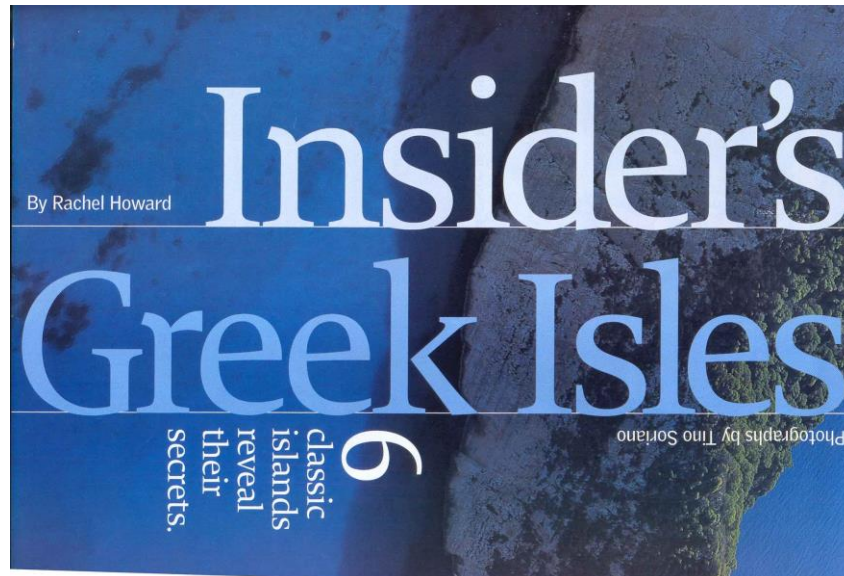
How was the travelogue developed? Did it follow the principles of unity and coherence? Did it follow the structure of a well-crafted travelogue? Are the pictures appropriate to the content of the captions? Are these laid out well?

Mechanics

Were all the i's dotted and all t's crossed in the article? Are there grammar items that may be reworded/changed?

Names of Baguio Buddies are posted right next to the schedule of consultation hours with the teacher. For questions or concerns, feel free to contact me in the cell phone number I floated at the start of the summer term.

R. M. Agibway
Instructor



By Rachel Howard

Insider's Greek Isles

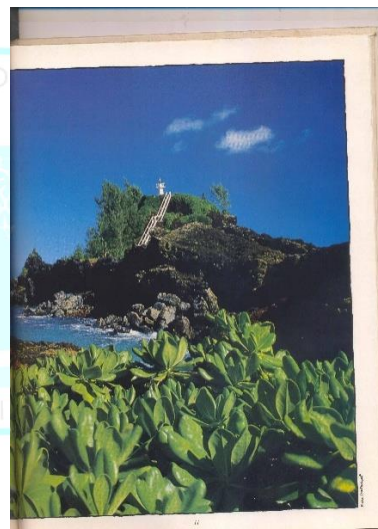
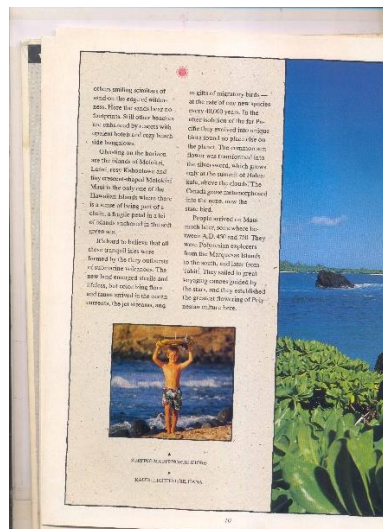
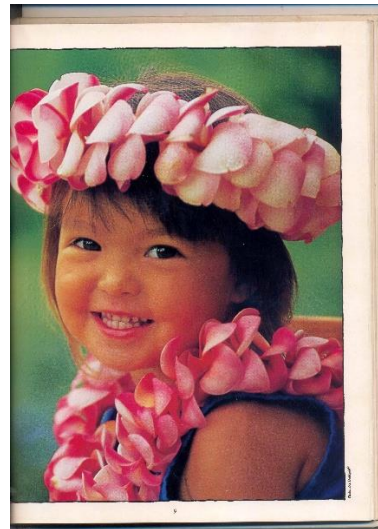
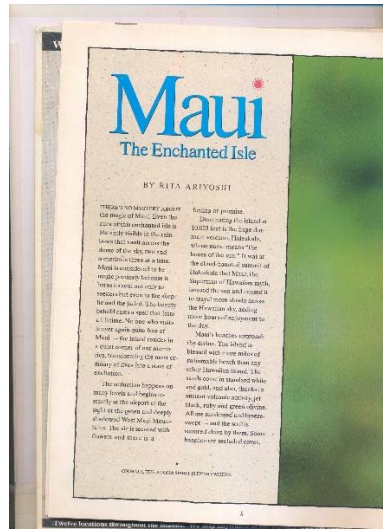
6 classic islands reveal their secrets.

Photographs by Tino Soriano



to go to the prehistoric-poorly-purified of Germwood, in which case, you'll find **Captain Webster's** (cell 266-6270), a former (cell 266-7122), they are "members of the (the) Chinese (most) capitalistic, gilded fish and a Greek (the) sea breeze, red mallet, or sea breeze.





Appendix E: Sample composition (Pretest)

My ever-dearest Fairy godmother,

Hi! How are you? I bet you're perfectly fine, just a wave of your magic wand can zap all your problems away. No wonder you're still ravishing. Or is it just Clay Total Effects? Whatever.

As for me, I've just finished doing the chores. I'm so tired, I could sleep for a week straight! When my father comes back, I'm gonna ask him to buy me a vacuum cleaner, a floor polisher, a washing machine and a dishwasher. But I bet my stepmother wouldn't like that - she has a knack for torturing me. Why, oh, why does she hate me? Is it because I'm prettier and far more intelligent than she is? If my father was here, she'd probably treat me nice. I wonder where my dad is.

My sisters were invited to the ball. They said I couldn't come because I have nothing nice to wear. They already went shopping for makeup - Shu Uemura, MAC, Chanel, Laura Mercier, Bobbi Brown - name is! As if they can pile up all of those stuff on their faces! And guess what? They spent thousands of moolah to have their hair rebonded. Tomorrow, they're getting that lavish mud massage and mineral salt scrub. You should have seen them breaking more than a dozen corset-laces, too.

Fairy god mother, I really wanna go to the ball. If you'd be kind enough to give me a dress, I'd like something similar to that of Zhang Ziyi's Giorgio Armani gown that she wore at the Golden Globe awards. I don't like glass slippers, I think they would


make my feet sore. Besides, they look so fragile, I'm afraid they would break and cut my feet. How about a pair of Mondo elastik slippers? They would look sooo sexy on me, I mean. I'd look ultra-sexy on them! If you would let me choose, I'd rather not have a pumpkin carriage for a ride. A nice sports car driven by a hottie like, say, Dennis Trillo would be great! And since I've been a very nice girl and spent practically most of my life doing the dirty work and sleeping on that rock-hard, dingy mattress at the attic, I hope you'd let me splurge even for just a night... pretty please!!! I would have a totally splendid night if you'd give me a camera phone - I'd like to take snapshots of the voiree, you know. Then I can pass them to you via blue tooth later on, do you like that?

Oh, I'd really appreciate it if there was no curfew but since it's your rule, you just have to give me a TechnoMarine watch so I won't lose track of the time. Am I too demanding, my dear fairy god mother? That would be all, thanks for being so kind, so generous. Thank you!

Truly yours,


P.S. You have a credit card, don't you?

Appendix F: Sample composition (Posttest)


CHILLIN' OUT IN BAGUIO

Submitted by:
STUDENT 1

Submitted to:
Ms. Rhea M. Agibuary

Welcome to **BAGUIO** city 

When I was little, I had always pictured Baguio to be the place where I can find everything I want like chocolate, giant bubble, chocolate, giant bubble, chocolate, giant bubble (which I thought was real deep, but I love it nonetheless.)

When I hear "Baguio", I instantly envision riding a bike, a boat or a horse to enjoy the scenic view and enjoying the picturesque backdrop of pine trees and beautiful flowers, visiting to Baguio's delicious like delicious mountain or strawberry-glazed cake, perhaps.

Baguio had always been known for its cool climate, its panoramic view, lush gardens, remarkable parks and friendly environment. Its exquisite delicacies and high quality products are also nationally famous. Baguio city, besides its sparkling and beautiful landscape, is the ideal place to visit and unwind. Indeed, it wouldn't have been named "The Summer Capital of the Philippines for nothing!"

