

**BEYOND LANGUAGE STRUCTURES: A PROCESS
APPROACH TO WRITING IN THE SECOND LANGUAGE AT
THE UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL**

**Thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kelaniya, Sri
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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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Beyond Language Structures: A Process Approach to Writing in Second Language at the Undergraduate Level

Abstract

This dissertation explored the interrelation between the Process Approach to writing and the writing competence of the learner. The thesis adopted the hypothesis that Process Approach to writing improves the writing competence of the learner, and therefore, should be adopted as a better approach in place of the currently practiced Product Approach to writing. The *writing competence*, as envisaged in this thesis, was not only the learner's ability to successfully complete a particular writing task with emphasis on explicitness and accuracy, but also his/her cognitive engagement with that task with an awareness of the meta-cognitive processes involved in the task; i.e., a students' ability to reflect on the strategies they use to write. This particular approach was tested with the undergraduates of the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences (FHSS) at the University of Ruhuna in a representative sample. Cognitive learning theories were used as the theoretical framework while the qualitative research paradigm was adopted for the study.

The study employed unstructured open ended interview, participant observation, group discussion, students' previous examination records, case study, and focused interview for data collection. A group of 30 undergraduates was selected and they were given a baseline test using Product Approach writing activities and the students' performance was recorded. This was followed by the Process Approach oriented writing program for about 72 hours within a period of three to four months. Finally, the same test was given, and the results were analyzed.

The findings showed that the writing skill of students has considerably improved after the Process Approach teaching program, and therefore, it needs to be given due recognition in the overall English language teaching program conducted by the English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU) of the University of Ruhuna. Thus, the research hypothesis that the Process Approach to writing enhances learner's writing competence was sufficiently proved. Both the improved test scores and the number of students that have passed the final test provided evidence for this.

Key Words: Process Approach, Product approach, competence