A Review on the Impact of a Blended Process-oriented Approach on the English Writing Skills

Shuwen Wang[1], Si Na Kew[1]

[1] Language Academy, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 81310 Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia

Correspondence: Shuwen Wang, Language Academy, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 81310 Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia. E-mail: wangshuwen@graduate.utm.my

Abstract

This study examines the application and efficacy of the blended process-oriented learning method in improving English writing skills among ESL/EFL learners. Data were gathered via an extensive literature analysis employing the key search phrases "blended," "process approach," and "English writing" across three academic databases: Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar. After evaluating 34 preliminary records and implementing rigorous inclusion and exclusion criteria, 10 articles were chosen for an in-depth bibliometric analysis. The results indicate that this pedagogical method has been adopted in diverse educational environments throughout Asia and Africa, markedly enhancing students' writing abilities. The paper delineates several technologies employed in these implementations, such as Schoology, MOOCs, Google Classroom, and WeChat. The integrated process-oriented approach enhances writing performance, boosts student enthusiasm, fosters interaction, and solves writing anxiety. Despite the positive outcomes, the study acknowledges limitations, such as the restricted number of articles reviewed and the focus on students' perspectives. Future research should broaden the scope to include more articles and explore teachers' perspectives. The study concludes with recommendations for seamlessly integrating technology into traditional classrooms and emphasizing the indispensable role of instructors in blended learning environments. These insights aim to guide ESL/EFL educators in effectively incorporating blended process-oriented learning into their teaching practices.

Keywords: Blended Process-oriented Approach, English Writing Skills, ESL/EFL Students

1. Introduction

Writing is one of the most essential language abilities for second and foreign English language learners. (Hussin et al., 2015; Ahmadpour & Khaasteh, 2017). Among the four language skills, English writing is particularly crucial (Tang, 2005) because it not only reinforces and internalizes English knowledge (Wang, 2005) but also serves as an endogenous driving force for second language development (Manchón, 2011). English writing is also significant for personal development (Wang, 2010), especially in the era of economic globalization.

Effective writing is employed daily, including sending letters to potential employers, creating reports, and writing college essays (Soiferman, 2017b). Furthermore, as an increasing number of institutions and companies are employing writing to evaluate the capabilities of applicants (Graham & Perin, 2007), the ability to write can have a substantial impact on an individual's ability to pursue future academic endeavors and achieve success in all fields of study (Song & Song, 2023).

English is essential; however, writing is the most challenging language skill to learn (Musa, 2023). EFL/ESL students find writing considerably more complex, and their English writing abilities have not improved (Du, 2022). A major factor contributing to low performance is likely the product-oriented approach that has long been used in English writing teaching (Qian, 2022). This approach focuses solely on the final product, neglecting the development of students' writing micro-skills, such as outlining, layout, and revision, and the cultivation of their thinking skills (Zhu, 2011).

Encouraged is that student performance is malleable and can be affected by teachers and shaped by broader teaching practices (Fredricks, 2004; Christenso, 2012; Reschly & Christenson, 2006). A blended process-oriented approach provides a great opportunity for EFL pupils to improve their writing performance. The blended process-oriented approach combines the advantages of both blended learning and the process approach, the process-oriented writing approach allows scholars to develop improved care to drive, task, and audience, improve content planning and purposeful use of tone and disciplinary vocabulary (Flanagan & Bouck, 2015), while blended learning makes up for the time-consuming shortage of the process-writing approach (Zhang & Wang, 2022) and provides students with the opportunities to access rich online teaching resources (Chi, 2021), thus combining the advantages of both, and have great potential to enhance EFL writing performance.

Given the theoretical advantages of the blended process-oriented approach, conducting a literature review on its application in EFL English Writing instruction is imperative. This review aims to systematically organize and analyze the application and effectiveness of the blended process-oriented approach in various teaching contexts. It will identify the strengths and weaknesses of this method, drawing on the successful experiences and lessons learned from existing research. Consequently, this review will provide a scientific basis and suggestions

for improvement for future English writing teaching practices. Ultimately, this endeavor promotes innovation and optimization in English writing teaching methodologies.

2. Literature Review

A. Writing Skills among ESL/EFL Students and Its Challenges

Widdowson (2001) states, "Writing is the use of a visual medium to manifest the graphological and grammatical system of the language" (p. 62). Writing an important and clear statement in any language is difficult. Richards and Schmidt (2002)

summarize writing into four stages: planning, drafting, reviewing, and revising. A writer has to comprehend the subject matter, the objective of writing, and the target audience, as well as write effectively, organize well, understand the structure, and be aware of how to write (Mastan et al., 2017). In addition, the readers must experience a feeling of ease when reading the material. As a result, producing a piece of literature is a difficult task, even when it is attempted in one's mother tongue (Mastan et al., 2017). For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, learning English in a non-English-speaking nation is significantly difficult. This scenario may make writing in English much more complicated and concerning.

The main challenge for EFL scholars when combining writing activities is their lack of English skills (Selvaraj & Aziz, 2019). They frequently lack specific skills, such as appropriate use of grammar, conventions, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling (Ramasamy & Abdul Aziz, 2018). Many investigators worldwide have stated that university pupils combat grammar, unity, coherence, subsection group, diction, and spelling errors (Ariyanti & Fitriana, 2017). They may also encounter problems with grammar, language, sentence structure, and group of concepts in their writing (Silva, 1993; Mwangi, 2017).

In addition to these linguistic challenges, EFL students often confront mental barriers. Mudra (2024) notes that students often encounter negative attitudes toward writing, which can significantly impact their willingness to share their work with peers. Most EFL/ESL learners experience stress in writing activities, requiring more concentration and practice. The problem arises because the skill of writing is not only connected to grammatical skills and necessary language but also to open and cognitive facets (Alluhaybi, 2015). As a result, their writing performance was unsatisfactory.

B. Process-oriented writing approach

The current situation in EFL writing education can be attributed to various factors. A major factor is likely the product-oriented approach that has long been used in English writing teaching (Al-Jaro et al., 2016). This method focuses solely on the final product, neglecting the development of students' writing micro-skills such as outlining, layout, and revision, as well as the cultivation of their thinking skills (Zhu, 2011). The training is insufficient (Lee & Lee, 2015). Additionally, the student's central role in learning to write is often neglected (Hidayati, 2018). Traditional teaching methods frequently focus on the instructor's role in delivering content and assessing student performance rather than empowering students to take an active part in their writing development, leaving students in a passive position.

To address this issue, English teachers must research to explore effective ways to improve the overall writing competence of EFL students. The process-oriented approach offers a great opportunity for language learners to achieve this goal. This approach views writing as a creative thinking process, a recursive cognitive process (Montague, 2009). It allows scholars to grow increased care to drive, task, and audience, as well as progress preparation of content and purposeful usage of attitude and disciplinary language (Flanagan & Bouck, 2015). Evidence shows that the process-oriented writing method is a common interactive procedure that enables scholars to participate actively in the writing process (Kurihara, 2014).

However, the process approach has been criticized for not providing learners with sufficient input, particularly linguistic knowledge (Han, 2001; Horowitz, 1986), and for being time-consuming (Gezmiş, 2020). As a result, many teachers find it challenging to implement this approach in their EFL writing instruction (Tang & Wen, 2013). Therefore, the process approach needs to be upgraded. Combining blended learning with process pedagogy may be a useful experiment that could promote the feasibility and efficiency of implementing the process approach.

C. Blended Process- Oriented Approach in ESL/EFL context and its feasibility

The definition of blended learning varies among scholars, with some defining it based on its content (Fred & Hope, 2010; Ferdig et al., 2012; Staker & Horn, 2012) and implementation process (Thorne, 2003; Watson, 2008; Kaur, 2013; Li, 2016). However, all scholars agree that mixed learning is a technique that influences the best facets of digital and conventional face-to-face teaching to achieve optimal student teaching results. Research has identified several benefits of blended learning, which can be grouped into four main categories:

Firstly, blended learning increases time for practice, provides a large amount of input, and offers a platform that encourages student collaboration and communication (Ferriman, 2013; Miyazoe & Anderson, 2012; Yoon & Lee, 2010; El-Koumy & Mirjan, 2008; Cha, 2014). This mainly benefits EFL teachers, who often face time constraints in courses and classrooms.

Secondly, blended learning provides a non-threatening environment for students to practice writing skills, reducing anxiety and promoting creative thinking (Yoon, 2011; Lee & Pyo, 2003; Liu, 2013). In this environment, text communication removes barriers to effective communication, allowing students to express themselves naturally and gain input from shy students who might otherwise remain silent.

Thirdly, blended learning experiences promote cooperation and communication among scholars and between pupils and educators, increasing engagement in learning (So & Lee, 2013; Liu, 2013; Chickering & Gamson, 1987). In a mixed learning atmosphere, students are

encouraged to interrelate with their peers and teachers both in-person and online, benefiting from the appropriate use of technology and feeling increasingly connected to their learning community.

Lastly, mixed learning has been established to improve the learning outcomes of learners in writing (Liu, 2013; Zhou, 2018; Isyaku, 2021; Hosseınpour & Rezvani, 2019; Yao, 2019; Wahyuni, 2018). Given these advantages, blended learning will likely be an excellent option in writing instruction if designed and managed correctly.

Based on this, Blended learning has been suggested as an effective teaching and learning model for EFL writing. Integrating blended teaching into writing instruction allows online learning to extend the classroom, addressing the issue of insufficient class time and input in university writing courses and ensuring the effective implementation of the process method. Moreover, blended learning and the process approach emphasize student-centeredness and are guided by social constructivist learning theory.

The procedure writing approach focuses on activities within the method. With the application of technology in education, the lack of contextuality and interactivity in traditional process teaching can be compensated for (Scherer et al., 2019). In a supportive and non-threatening environment created by blended learning, students are motivated to engage in activities and collaborate in the writing process inside and outside the classroom (Borba, 2014), ultimately constructing a "learning community." The blended process-oriented writing approach offers a more convenient and effective teaching model for college English writing teachers (Zhang, 2014).

3. Methodology

A. Data Collection Procedure

The researcher conducted a literature review using "blended," "process approach," and "English writing" as key search terms. Websites such as Web of Science (WoS), Scopus, and Google Scholar were used to find data from articles relevant to the study. Data was gathered in April 2023 from access points located at the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), a research university in Malaysia that has subscriptions to both the WoS and Scopus databases. They found 7 WoS, 6 Scopus, and 21 Google Scholar documents for the same search queries. A total of 34 records were obtained from the three primary sources. The figure illustrates the retrieval procedure provided in the illustration below.

B. Data Screening

A screening was performed on each of the 34 records before further investigation. WoS, Scopus, and Google Scholar entries were combined into one Excel document, and duplicates were deleted in the initial screening stage. The total number of records left for analysis was 32 after duplicates were eliminated.

C. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Research had to meet all of the following requirements to be considered for inclusion in the bibliometric analysis: 1) be published among 2017-2023; 2) comprise an abstract and full text; 3) be a research study conducted within the context of blended process-oriented learning in English writing; 4) recruited participants who were English as a foreign language learners or teachers; 5) non-conference proceedings; 6) non-review works.

All 32 articles (with title and abstract) were screened under the same inclusion and exclusion criteria.

As a result of the fact that 22 papers did not satisfy all six eligibility requirements, it was necessary to reject them from consideration. As a consequence, a total of ten articles were judged to be pertinent to the discussion and suitable for bibliometric analysis. This area will adequately explain the results of the systematic review of 10 pieces regarding integrated process-oriented learning in students' English writing. The results include an analysis of the research focus, the applied new technology, and the usage of blended process-oriented learning.

4. Result

After analyzing the publications based on their geographical location, it was discovered that most of the studies (n=10) were conducted in Asian countries. With four articles, China has the highest ranking among all countries. Indonesia comes second with the (n=2) articles. Besides, only two (n=2) articles are found in Africa (Egypt, Libya). The study's comprehensive details are arranged by location in Table 1.

Table 1. Geographical Distribution of Studies

Region	Country	No. studies	Studies
Asia	China	4	Zou & Liu (2018) Wang (2020); Wu (2018); Zhou (2020)
	Indonesia	2	Puspita1 &Hasyim(2019); Muhtia et al, (2018)
	Taiwan(China)	1	Chen (2021)
	Malaysia	1	Handoko (2021)
Africa	Egypt	1	Hamouda (2018)
	Libya	1	Albelazi (2021)

A. Results of how and what kind of technologies have been used in blended process-oriented EFL writing research

In almost all studies reviewed(n=10), technology can only be used in the online session to expand the learning time or space and to improve

the effect of online learning. Only one study was written by Wang (2020) in which the technologies are used in both online and face-to-face sessions. Wang (2020) asked students to write on the online writing APP (iwrite2.0), and automatic feedback was received in face-to-face sessions, but it is only because the APP was installed on classroom computers.

Table 2. Technology Usage of Studies

Articles	Technology	Use environment (online/ face to face)
Chen(2021)	blogs;Moodle	online
Wang(2020)	WeChat, online writing APP(iwrite2.0)	online and face-to-face
Wu (2018)	MOOCs & Juku	Online
Hamouda (2018)	BBS/WEB contents	Online
Albelazi(2021)	Computers	online
Artaet al., (2019)	Schoology	online
Zou&Liu (2018)	Experience English - writing platform	Experience English- writing platform

B. Analysis of Effectiveness of Blended process-oriented approach on EFL writing.

The results indicate that the Rain Classroom-Based Teaching method is a helpful language training and learning method in China. Most reviewed studies demonstrate that implementing the Rain Classroom-Based Teaching method has improved students' English writing skills. However, three studies did not investigate the result of the mixed process-oriented method on English writing performance with related data and were therefore categorized as "other".

Table 3. The incidence and percentage efficiency of the mixed process-oriented method

Effectiveness	Studies	Frequency	Percentage
Improve	Chen,2021; Wang,2020; Hamouda,2018; Albelazi,2021; Muhtia et al., 2018; Zou&Liu,2018; Handoko,2021	7	70%
Not Improve Other	Wu,2018; Chunyi Zhou,2020; Puspital & Hasyim,2019	3	30%

5. Discussion

The results of geographic distribution, the methods employed in studies on mixed process-oriented studying, and the effectiveness of the mixed process-oriented learning method will be addressed in this section. The integrated process-oriented learning method has been positively received in multiple learning settings within the ESL/EFL context. The results demonstrated that using this learning technique in 4 nations and regions in Asia and two nations in Africa (refer to Table 1) had a substantial influence on increasing pupil writing abilities and other situations.

The analysis of the articles showed that many websites were used to study the advantages of mixed education for writing. For example, Schoology (Muhtia et al., 2018) is a model of a learning management system (LMS) that provides the school with all of the resources it requires to create compelling material, design courses, and evaluate student comprehension. Blogs and Moodle to blended process-oriented learning writing classes (Chen, 2021), WeChat and online writing APP (iwrite2.0) (Wang, 2020), one autonomous online learning platform (Zhou, 2020), computers, the Internet (Albelazi, 2021). Moreover, Blended process-oriented approach using MOOCs (Wu, 2018), BBS/WEB (Hamouda, 2018), and finally Google Classroom (Puspital & Hasyim, 2019).

As for the environment in which technology is used, a vast majority of technology is used as an extension of traditional classrooms. Wu (2018) used MOOCs to self-learn before class, then made drafts, automatic feedback, and multi-drafting on Juku after class. Similarly, Muhtiaetal. (2018) conducted writing preparation via Schoology before class and then utilized Schoology to do online quizzes and assigned writing homework after class. However, amid offline discussions and brainstorming activities conducted in face-to-face teaching classrooms, technology has not improved the study and interaction environment. Only one study was written by Wang (2020) in which the technologies are used in equally online and face-to-face meetings. Wang (2020) asked students to write on the online writing APP (iwrite2.0), and automatic feedback was received in face-to-face sessions. However, it is because the APP was installed on classroom computers and has limited support for offline interactive activities. Many researchers advocate that blended learning should extend and restructure all traditional class contact hours (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Sharma and Barrett (2007) also advised that technology should be utilized to enhance face-to-face teaching when questioned on how to reach a principled blended learning method. Ultimately, face-to-face sessions continue to be the principal mode of instruction (Wang & Wang, 2011). Furthermore, exchanging ideas among students within a real classroom environment constitutes an invaluable generative resource in pedagogical settings. This quality is unmatched by purely online instructional methods (Gao, 2014). Therefore, in a blended process-oriented context, attempts should be made to introduce technology into face-to-face classroom instruction and build a new, convenient, and efficient classroom interaction.

Moreover, the study of the articles showed that most academics got a positive result from applying mixed process-oriented methods for improving English writing skills with statistically significant outcomes. However, those studies used different online platforms like Schoology and Google Classroom. Hamouda (2018) found that members of the mixed-procedure learning group outdid the control group in their writing presentation. Arta et al.(2019) also found an important change in students' writing capability between the skilled scholars who used the Mixed process Learning Plan and those who were trained by the conventional method (Sig.(2-tailed) = 0.022, $p < 0.05$). Chen (2021) developed an EFL college writing course for English majors, and after the course of study, the scholars could write extended and more grammatically complex texts. Overall, they felt optimistic about the course. Zou & Liu (2018) were surprised to discover that the new blended process teaching model could effectively advance subjects' writing quality, fluency, and richness. Besides, a blended process-oriented approach has also been proven to raise motivation obviously (Wang, 2020; Zou & Liu, 2018).

The research question of the other three studies is not to examine the effect of a mixed process-oriented method on English writing performance. Puspital and Hasyim (2019) attempted to describe the application of mixed-process learning using descriptive qualitative methodology. They found that blending technology and classroom actions could type the procedure of education writing conducted constantly and well-controlled. Wu (2018) employed a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview to investigate scholars' insights on mixed procedure teaching. Most students (86.2%) highly valued this intended writing course. Zhou (2020) tried to examine the influence of the blended process method on writing concerns and found that it offers English officers a safe and elastic learning environment, easing their psychological concerns in all scopes: bodily anxiety, estimation anxiety, avoidance behaviour, and self-confidence anxiety. Chen (2021) also highlighted the significance of teacher's guidance. According to the questionnaire, teacher's guidance is the most important basic of a combined process EFL writing course rank. Therefore, the leadership from the educator cannot be changed by other skills and is recommended to be led in a brick-and-mortar schoolroom.

6. Conclusion

This study comprehensively evaluated 10 articles connected to the mixed process-oriented approach in English writing instruction for ESL/EFL learners. The findings indicate that this approach has been positively received in various educational settings, particularly in Asia and Africa, and has demonstrated its effectiveness in improving ESL/EFL students' writing abilities, providing a flexible and engaging learning experience that supports the development of writing skills, self-learning, and motivation. The approach also promotes student interaction and helps alleviate writing anxiety, creating a positive psychological atmosphere for learning.

While this study provides a thorough literature analysis, there are some limitations. The review was restricted to 10 articles, which may not fully represent the breadth of research in this area. Further study should consider a wider range of training and keywords to generalize the findings. Moreover, the current review primarily focused on students' perspectives. More research is needed to explore teachers' perspectives and challenges in applying mixed learning to teaching writing abilities. Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable insights for ESL/EFL teachers and instructors, who can leverage the findings to identify the assistances of joining blended process learning into their English writing teaching practices. Considering the study's findings, the researcher has a few recommendations in the works. Technology should be seamlessly integrated into traditional classroom instruction, and more research is required to explore its potential to enhance face-to-face teaching. Moreover, it is important to recognize that technology cannot replace teachers. The role of the instructor's guidance should be valued and emphasized at all times and in all settings.

Data availability statement

The data supporting this study's findings are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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