

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Towards eclecticism: A hybrid product-process approach to the teaching of EFL writing

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Abstract

This article argues for the adoption of a hybrid product-process approach to EFL writing instruction. It lays bare the weaknesses of the well-established writing approaches: the controlled approach, the current traditional rhetoric, the process approach and the genre approach. Then, it makes it clear how language teaching methods in general have lost their credibility and fallen out of favor over the last few years. Reasons of this discreditation are presented. This condition paved the way for the emergence of eclecticism, which started taking shape as a favorable classroom practice in the post method era. Within this framework, this paper suggests an eclectic approach to the teaching of writing. This approach pulls together and merges the strengths of both product and process approaches. The nine stages of this model are explained in depth. The article also presents practical tips and examples that would aid teachers in the adoption of this eclectic mix in their classrooms.

Keywords writing instruction; hybrid product-process approach; eclecticism; method

1. Introduction

In the academic context, writing is considered one of the most important skills that second language students need to develop (Klimova, 2012). Most syllabi assign a considerable weight to the writing skill and students' writing proficiency plays a major determinant role in their success. To facilitate the learning of this skill, various methodologies have emerged. The EFL writing field has witnessed a succession of approaches, but no one has proven really panacean in alleviating students' writing problems and difficulties. Each approach enjoys popularity for a certain time before it falls out of favour and comes under criticism paving the way for another approach to emerge.

The controlled approach was criticized for its exaggerated focus on accuracy and correctness. It spares no thought for the readers' background knowledge nor for the writing process the learner writer engages in from the beginning to the end. This approach was also criticized for using the growing grammatical complexity of the writer as a yardstick to measure their writing improvement to the neglect of other aspects such as purpose and audience. The current traditional rhetoric, which tried to take

learners beyond the sentence boundaries, was brought into disfavor for its descriptive nature. It is based on the assumption that different cultures have different types of rhetoric. By implication, it follows that training foreign/ second language writers on the target language/culture rhetoric is key to the development of their writing skills. However, in today's world, it has become hard to draw demarcation lines among cultures, and points of intersection are witnessed at all levels including the rhetoric. The process writing approach, with all its variations, was blamed for putting too much emphasis on the individual writer while disregarding the social dimensions of writing. Another weak aspect of the process movement is its assumption that the writing process is the same for all learners irrespective of their proficiency level, age, background and L1. The proponents of the genre approach methodology were taken to task for the handcuffing nature of the approach. It suffocates the creativity of learners as it provides them with prescriptive formulae to follow. It prescribes the way certain texts should be written. Such an interference with the writer's creativity can be demotivating and might generate a negative attitude within the learner writer. Another defective aspect of this approach is its over-emphasis on genre features while it overlooks content-generating skills and strategies learners need.

It seems that the limitations of these approaches are both conceptual and practical. An approach conception of writing is limited as long as it focuses on one single dimension and overlooks other aspects of writing. Subsequently, the practices will be skewed as long as they do not represent the totality of the writing act in a comprehensive way. Each of the approaches mentioned above holds a narrow and 'reductioned' view of writing, a skill which is too complex to tackle in a one-angled way. Alternatively, attempts have been made to reconcile methods and merge their strengths to come up with eclectic methodologies to writing instruction. In the post method era, this tendency towards synergy, however, has become commendable in the teaching of all language skills and not just in the teaching of writing. After the collapse of the method as a construct, eclecticism started gaining ground as a favorable practice in language teaching and learning (Mellow, 2002; Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

2. The demise of method

Towards the end of the 20th century, even earlier, several questions were raised about the viability of the method as a construct in language teaching. Renowned scholars in the field became highly critical towards the notion of method and inaugurated a search for an alternative.

As early as 1983, Stern threw the notion of method into question and called for a break with the method concept because methods "represent a relatively fixed combination of language teaching beliefs, and are characterized by the over-emphasis of single aspects as the central issue of language teaching and learning" (p.473). Sometime later, Nunan (1989) made the same point and confirmed that we need to assign "the search for the one right method to the dustbin" (p.2). It seems that he was firmly convinced that the quest for the good method was a chimera because no single method can fit all learners in all contexts. Each classroom has its own specificities and it should be left to teachers to choose the activities and the tasks that match their context. Nunan (1991, p. 228) put it as follows:

It has been realized that there never was and probably never will be a method for all, and the focus in recent years has been on the development of classroom tasks and activities which are consonant with what we know about second language acquisition, and which are also in keeping with the dynamics of the classroom itself.

Pennycook (1989) was also critical of methods, but he presented a different argument. He adopted a top-down approach in his evaluation of methods and verbalized his skepticism about their innocence because they aim at reproducing "unequal power relations" (p.5) in the society. In other words, methods serve the agenda of the powerful section of the society and give no chance to the disempowered to reverse the

situation one day in the future. The same patterns of power relations are reproduced again and again.

Prabhu (1990) reiterated the point Nunan (1989) had made before. He argued that no best method exists and that methods are true only partially. No single method can fit all learners because of certain variables that interfere with the language learning process. These factors are various and relate to the social situation, the educational organization, the teacher (training, skill, etc.) and the learner (aspirations, age, etc.). As an alternative, he warns teachers against their reliance on theorists' knowledge and calls on them to use their sense of plausibility¹.

Allwright (1991) and Brown (2002) used the death imagery to better describe the insignificance of methods. Allwright (1991) argued that methods are dead because they have become unhelpful in the language learning process. Brown (2002) was more expressive as he mandated that we write "our requiem for methods" after their "demise" (p.10). Along the same line, Kumaravadivelu (1994) lost faith in methods and counseled academics against the search for the best method. Otherwise, "we will continue to get entangled in an unending search for an unavailable solution" (p.28). As an alternative, he joins Prabhu (1990) in his notion of teachers' sense of plausibility. Instead of limiting the teachers' role to a mere implementation of the theorists' knowledge-based theories, they (teachers) should "construct classroom-oriented theories of practice... generate location-specific, classroom oriented innovative practices" (p.29).

So, a growing dissatisfaction with methods as constructs has taken shape. As evidence for their claims, different scholars put forward different, sometimes overlapping, arguments to discredit methods.

3. Reasons of the demise

Academics criticised methods on various grounds. They highlighted their limitations to dispel the misconceptions a practitioner might have about them as universal unflawed axioms of learning and teaching. In what follows, the discussion is limited to the arguments Allwright (1991), Brown (2002) and Kumaravadivelu (2006) respectively have put forward to refute the reliability and the viability of methods.

Allwright (1991) claimed that the method is relatively unhelpful for six different reasons. To quote:

- *It is built on seeing differences where similarities may be more important, since methods that are different in abstract principle seem to be far less so in classroom practice.*
- *It simplifies unhelpfully a highly complex set of issues, for example seeing similarities among learners when differences may be more important.*

¹ The teacher develops his personal theory of teaching based on the experience he's accumulated and the continuing process of reflection he engages in to develop professionally.

- *It breeds a brand loyalty which is unlikely to be helpful to the profession, since it fosters pointless rivalries on essentially irrelevant issues.*
- *It breeds complacency, if, as it surely must, it conveys the impression that answers have indeed been found to all the major methodological questions in our profession.*
- *It offers a “cheap” externally derived sense of coherence for language teachers, which may itself inhibit the development of a personally “expensive,” but ultimately far more valuable, internally derived sense of coherence...*

(Allwright, 1991, pp. 7–8)

Interestingly enough, Allwright (1991) critiques methods for their prescriptive nature because they prescribe to teachers how to conduct their teaching without sparing a room for the differences that exist among groups of learners and among learners within the same group. Also, methods illude teachers into believing that all issues have been settled and all questions have been answered.

Complementing what Allwright (1991) has initiated, Brown (2002) argues that methods are no longer fundamental to language teaching and hence are falling out of favour. As evidence for that, methods are “too prescriptive” (Brown, 2002, p.10) and tend to generalise their recipes with the assumption that they are applicable in all contexts. Besides, methods cannot be subjected to empirical verification to see which one is the best because language pedagogy involves a great deal of intuition and art. Brown is alluding here to the art-science controversy about methods and stands clearly on the art side. Another discrediting reason is that there are multiple points of intersection among methods to the extent that they become “indistinguishable from each other” (Brown, 2002, p.10). Finally, Brown takes up Pennycook’s argument (1989) and confirms that methods are not well-intentioned. They are “tools of a linguistic imperialism targeting the disempowered” (Brown, 2002, p.10). It seems that Brown is evaluating the theoretical underpinnings of methods. However, a sound and fair evaluation should be outcome-based.

Kumaravadivelu (2006), providing evidence for the inutility of methods as constructs, argued that the importance of methods had been exaggerated. Researchers and teachers alike have created a mythical aura around methods. They have developed certain myths about methods and adopted them as axioms. For instance, they falsely believe that the search for the best method should go unabated as they will find it someday. They also stick to the belief that the method “constitutes the organizing principle for language teaching” and it is an “all-pervasive, all-powerful entity” (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p.164). However, the method as a construct is too narrow and too limited to explicate the intricacies and the complexities of learning a language. Another myth about methods is their universality. We hold the misconception that “one size fits all, cookie cutter approach that assumes a common clientele with

common goals” (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p.165). Methods, according to Kumaravadivelu, were also critiqued for the dichotomy they created between theorists as knowledge producers and teachers as knowledge consumers. Teachers, on the other hand, know their classrooms, their students and their contexts better and consequently rarely stick to the principles of a certain approach in their classroom. They instead generate their own knowledge that is practice-based. Kumaravadivelu (2006, p.166) nicely put it as follows:

Teachers seem to be convinced that no single theory of learning and no single method of teaching will help them confront the challenges of everyday teaching. They use their own intuitive ability and experimental knowledge to decide what works and what does not work. There is thus a significant variance between what theorists advocate and what teachers do in the classroom.

Finally, Kumaravadivelu (2006) concurs with Allwright (1991) and Brown (2002) in their assumption that methods are ideologically motivated. It is a “construct of marginality” (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p.167) because “it has played a major role in maintaining the gendered division of the workforce, a hierarchically organised division between male conceptualisers and female practitioners” (Pennycook, 1989, p.610-611). Ur (2015) and Richards (1998) were also critical about methods. While Ur sees that methods constrain teachers and debilitate their freedom and autonomy, Richards holds that they “impede the teacher’s full potential” (p.44).

These arguments invoked an outright rejection of methods and a steady disbelief in their merits. And questions have been raised about the direction language teaching and learning research would take in the post method era.

3. Towards eclecticism

The collapse of the method as a construct pushed scholars to stop their illusive search for the best method because no matter how good a method is, it will fall short of accounting for all variations at the language, the learner, and the context levels. So, research in language learning redirected its focus towards finding ways to synergize approaches and fuse their strengths while leaving out their weaknesses. Thus, eclecticism came into vogue and became a desirable pedagogical practice.

3.1. Eclecticism in language learning and teaching

Following the discreditation of the method as a construct, Eclecticism in second language learning and teaching started taking shape. It is a pluralistic methodology that draws on the strengths of various approaches to better suit the learning contexts and meet the learners’ needs. In other words, within the eclectic framework, teachers adopt techniques that are

applicable in their dynamic context. As we adopt eclecticism, “we choose what is best, what is most appropriate, given a set of learner/ student variables, teacher variables and situation variables” (Yorio, 1987, p.92).

Freeman (2000) considers eclecticism as an amalgam of techniques and activities the teacher borrows from different approaches to create his own blend. In the same line, Kumar (2013) defines the eclectic approach as a “combination of different methods of teaching and learning approaches” (p.1). It seems, then, that key to eclecticism is the notion of combination as long as teachers “should feel free in choosing techniques and procedures inside the classroom. They may choose whatever works best at a particular time in a particular situation” (Wali, 2009, p.40). This combination, however, should not be done randomly. Teachers need to make well informed decisions and appropriate choices. But as a pre-requisite for that, they are recommended to have a good understanding of the various approaches and methods and the merits of each one of them. They also need to keep in mind learner and context related variables. Mwanza (2017, p.5) summarizes the task of the eclectic teacher as follows:

In order for the eclectic approach to be appreciated by both the teacher and the learners, the teacher should have a thorough understanding of the approach. The teacher should know the various methods and techniques of language teaching, and have the ability to choose appropriately which methods and techniques to integrate in a lesson which can lead to the achievement of the learning and teaching goals.

So, for eclecticism to be effective, the teacher is required to be knowledgeable about the different methods and know how to apply his blend in a given context instead of using the eclectic argument “merely for the sake of avoiding commitment and playing it safe” (Weideman, 2001, p.8). Actually, different researchers warned against this misconception teachers might have about eclecticism and used different labels to describe the principled combination of different activities: enlightened eclecticism (Brown, 1994), principled eclecticism (Mellow, 2002; Kumaravadivelu, 1994), disciplined eclecticism (Rodgers, 2001) and informed eclecticism (Freeman, 2000). All these “variants” of eclecticism aim to enhance “the careful, principled combination of sound ideas from sound sources into a harmonious whole that yields the best results” (Hammerly, 1991, p.18). For that end, we need “to understand the why, and the how of eclecticism in language teaching” (Yorio, 1987, p.93).

It can therefore be reiterated that eclecticism needs to be principled and not haphazard. It follows, then, that the teacher’s task is a daunting one as s/he is required to abide by a set of principles so that their pluralistic methodology can yield the desired learning and teaching outcomes. Ali (1981, p.7) sketched out the following principles of the eclectic approach:

- (a) *Teachers are given a chance to choose different kinds of teaching techniques in each class period to reach the aims of the lesson.*
- (b) *There is flexibility in choosing any aspect or method that teachers think suitable for teaching inside the classroom.*
- (c) *Learners can see different kinds of teaching techniques, using different kinds of teaching aids, that help to make lessons much more stimulating and ensures better understanding of the material on the other hand.*
- (d) *Solving difficulties that may emerge from the presentation of the textbook materials.*
- (e) *Finally, it saves both time and effort in the presentation of language activities.*

(Cited in Mwazna, 2017, p.6)

Since the implementation of eclecticism differs from one context to another, it can be argued that another feature of eclecticism is that it is situational. It is also subjective as it differs from one teacher to another because teachers are free to choose and combine what will better serve their learners and maximize learning in the classroom. Another characteristic of the eclectic method is the acceptance of errors as normal occurrences in the language learning process. Errors are signs that learning is taking place and, hence, should be expected, inspected, and corrected. However, correction should not be immediate. It should be delayed, and it is commendable that teachers adopt peer correction and self-correction techniques instead of relying solely on themselves as the only source of correction. This tolerant view towards mistakes is not peculiar only to the eclectic method. As early as the 60s and the 70s, attempts were made to understand the nature of errors and see how they can contribute to learning instead of considering them as bad habits that need eradicating (Selinker, 1972). I daresay that the eclectic method does not only blend the best practices, but it also probes into the array of theoretical principles of different approaches and adopt the ones that are well-founded. To illustrate this, the eclectic approach considers language as a whole and not in terms of its constituents. This assumption is well founded as long as it reflects the way language is used in real life situations. All skills and aspects of language are used simultaneously. The pedagogical implication that follows is that integration of skills becomes a desirable classroom practice to enhance the communicative competence of the learners and make of them communicatively competent citizens who can use language efficiently in different communicative situations and for different communicative purposes. One of these basic skills is writing.

3.2. Eclecticism in writing instruction

Writing instruction was no exception to this synergic methodology that has started taking shape. As stated in the introduction of this article, all writing approaches were proven deficient in one way or another and, as a consequence, no single approach

could respond to all questions related to the instruction of this skill. Each approach had a single point of focus and, thus, did not capture the whole picture of writing. In other words, approaches to writing instruction “tend to troubleshoot only certain specific problems related to the teaching of ESL/EFL writing” (Alharbi, 2017, p.33).

The product, the process and the social contexts were the various focal points of these approaches. However, these are parts that make up the whole. To put it in another way, all these dimensions of writing (product, process, and context) are fundamental and, thus, we should turn the light on all of them at once instead of having one eclipsing the others. This led researchers to think of taking another trajectory of research. Instead of perceiving of writing approaches as polar opposites, we should look for ways to reconcile them and come up with an eclectic approach that merges their strengths because the adoption of single approaches will result in nothing but in a poor unbalanced performance of learners on writing. As a matter of fact, approaches to writing “overlap...A teacher using...a process approach will still use techniques drawn from other approaches...There is no one way to teach writing, but many ways” (Raimes, 1983, p.11). Inherent in this statement is a call for an eclectic writing methodology “one that presents a governing philosophy but pays attention within that philosophy to all four elements involved in writing: form (product), writer (process), content, and reader” (Raimes, 1991, p.422).

Actually, Raimes’ views (1983, 1991) on writing intersect a lot with those of Hillocks (1986). Following the analysis of his experimental studies², he reached the conclusion that the most effective way of teaching writing would be the “process-product hybrid” (Dyer, 1996, p.316). He confirmed that the process approach alone could not constitute an effective instructional method of writing. He strongly recommends that teachers fuse it with product techniques to come up with better classroom practices. Similarly, Hamps-Lyons (1986) expresses the same line of thought and necessitates the adoption of a synergic, pluralistic approach to the teaching of writing, which “will allow us to reconcile the product approach and the process approach” (p.793).

It has become clear that a tendency towards process-product hybrid approach to writing instruction emerged a long time ago. This pragmatic view was an early approach to eradicate the demarcation lines, which are hard to define (Matsuda, 2003), between approaches and dwell on their strengths. This interest has been renewed later as Hedge (2000) claims that “the sensible way forward for the teacher is to use the

best of product and process approaches in order to develop those aspects of writing most needed by students” (p.329).

I daresay that the stands mentioned above lay the ground for an eclectic approach to writing. This skill can be taught effectively only if we adopt more than one approach at the same time because “writing can only be effective and functional if particular treatment is given to understand the creative, cognitive and social aspects of language learning. It would necessarily involve not only one certain approach, but various selected teaching approaches” (Ula, 2018, p.127). On the other hand, the aforementioned theoreticians did not provide practical models that teachers would adopt in the classroom. Different teachers might come up with different merges of process and product approaches because they lack a consensus on the strengths and weaknesses of the methods. As theoreticians, we endorse the adoption of the product-process hybrid approach to the teaching of writing in our EFL/ELT classrooms, but we provide teachers with no practical clues on that. In what follows, I present a product-process model which consists of eight stages. Ample explanations and tips will be provided on each of the stages so that teachers can have a clear idea on how to operationalize this model and adopt it in their classrooms.

3.3. The product-process hybrid model

As Table 1 shows, the product-process hybrid model consists of three phases, and each phase subdivides into corresponding stages. The skill-getting phase, which is prior to the actual act of writing, subsumes three stages: *understanding1*, *analyzing and crafting*. In this model, students are provided with a sample text to work on and manipulate. It can be a paragraph, an article, a letter, etc. The purpose of *understanding1* stage is to ensure that students understand the text at hand first. The devised questions probe the students’ understanding of the semantic load of the text. In simpler terms, they are meant to check students’ comprehension prior to any further exploitation. These questions, however, need to meet certain requirements. First, they need to target the gist and not specific details in the text because comprehension is not an end in itself as it is expected to lay groundwork for the upcoming tasks. Second, these questions should be limited in number. Maximally, three questions would suffice at this stage. Third, this stage should not eat up a lot of the session’s time. It should be kept as short as possible. Otherwise, students would get the impression that the session is a reading comprehension one. One way to keep the allotted time to the minimum is to handle the activity orally.

² In his study, he analyzed more than 500 experimental treatments in L1 writing instruction to find out the variables that contribute to the quality of students’ writing. He identified three variables: the duration of instruction, the mode of instruction (the presentational mode, the natural process mode, the environmental mode, and the individualized mode) and the focus of instruction (the types of writing activities).

Table 1. The Product-Process Hybrid Approach to EFL Writing Instruction

Phases	Stages
Skill getting	1. Understanding 1
	2. Analyzing
	3. Crafting
Skill using	4. Understanding 2
	5. Planning
	6. Drafting
Reviewing and evaluating	7. Peer reviewing
	8. Editing
	9. Teacher's feedback
	• Teacher's comments
	• Teacher's treatment of errors
	• Reformulation
	• Conferencing

At the *analyzing* stage, students, with their teacher's scaffolding all along, analyze the model with the targeted subskill being the focal point. That is, the main purpose of this stage is to raise students' consciousness to the way the target subskill functions in the written discourse and, hence, questions should be devised accordingly. For instance, if the targeted subskill is how to write a contrast paragraph, students might be asked to identify the similarities and differences between X and Y, extract the linking words used, identify the type of relationship between the propositions before the linking words and those after the linking words, and find out how the writer starts and ends the paragraph. So, all the questions are intended to narrow the students' attention down to the subskill to see how it is realized and how it operates. In other words, in the contrastive paragraph example, the questions need to center around the rhetoric of this type of writing in terms of the format and the function of the linking words (how they hold sentences or parts of sentences together in terms of the propositional load).

At the *crafting* stage, students are given the opportunity to practice and train on the appropriate use of the subskill. As appropriate crafting exercises for the example above, the contrast paragraph example, students can be provided with a jumbled contrast paragraph to reorder. Then, they are provided with sentences to complete appropriately using the right linking words from the box. It is worth emphasizing that the rationale of this stage is to provide students with ample practice opportunities as a way of getting them ready for the drafting stage later in the process. It is a practice stage that is meant to somehow automatize students' use of the target subskill.

The second phase, *skill using*, consists of three stages which frame the actual act of writing. At the *understanding* stage, the teacher needs to ensure that students well understand the composition question. Well-phrased composition questions allow students to write efficiently and effectively. For a composition question to be effective and clear, it needs to meet certain criteria. As shown in Table 2, it needs to

specify the main topic, the required format of writing, the target audience, the required pattern of organization and the composition framework. Taking these elements into account helps student writers write in a meaningfully real-life like way. Writing is a purposeful activity (the audience) to convey some ideational content (the main topic and the framework of the composition) following a certain rhetoric (the format, the pattern of organization and the type of writing).

Table 2. A Sample of an Effective Composition Question

The composition question:	Nowadays, lots of students drop out of school in cities and towns. Write an article to your school magazine about the causes and the effects of dropping out from school.
Main topic:	Dropping out of school.
The framework of the composition:	Causes and effects of dropping out of school in cities and towns.
The required format of writing:	An article
Target audience:	School magazine readers
Type of writing:	Cause and effect
Pattern of organization:	Introduction, body, and conclusion

As students understand the composition question, what they are required to do, they move on to the *planning* stage. This stage is two-fold. They brainstorm the ideas first. Then, they organize them in a paragraph outline to have a visual representation of the written product prior to its realization. Each box in the paragraph outline represents a sentence in the paragraph. However, at this stage, students do not write full sentences. They write just words and phrases. Once they finish up this task, they write the appropriate connector next to each box. Depending on the type of writing the composition question requires, the teacher needs to provide learners with a set of linking words to have recourse to if need be. Students, afterwards, use the notes in the outline to write the paragraph. At this stage, the *drafting* stage, students embark on the task of actual writing.

In this model, *reviewing and evaluating* is a post-writing phase that consists of three stages: *peer reviewing*, *editing* and *teacher feedback*. Once students end the writing of the first draft, they swap their papers with their peers for reviewing. Students check their peers' writings against a set of criteria the teacher provides in the form of a checklist. For instance, if it is a cause-effect writing session, the checklist might include elements such as the appropriate use of the linking words, the provision of enough supplementary details, the statement of the topic and the main idea and whether or not all the ideas in the paragraph fall within the framework dictated by the composition question. This stage

allows student writers to receive feedback from the reader's point of view. This feedback is focused as it centers around the specific areas the checklist delimits. The checklist should also allow the peer reviewer to put forward some suggestions the peer writer can act upon to improve their writing at the *editing* stage. At this stage, based on their peers' feedback, students write the final draft. The changes they effect might include the content and the form as well. As a final stage, the teacher's intervention is crucial in this model. This feedback can take the form of *comments*, *error treatment*, *reformulation*, or *conferencing*.

The teacher's *comments* need to be meaningful to student writers in the sense that they provide them with remarks, insights and suggestions on how to improve their writing. They should serve different functions (Lees, 1979³). The teacher has also at his disposal a set of *error treatment* techniques that he can resort to. He can use one technique at a time or vary them depending on the students' levels and characteristics. He can resort to correction feedback⁴, coded⁵ feedback, uncoded⁶ feedback and marginal⁷ feedback (Bouziane, 2019). Alternation between these types of feedback, which differ in their degree of salience/explicitness, is highly commendable in this model. Another feedback technique the teacher uses in this model is *reformulation*. It stands for "an attempt made by a native speaker to understand what a non-native writer is trying to say and then rewrite it in a form more natural to the native writer" (Allwright, 1988, p.110). However, given the inaccessibility of native speakers in the region where the experiment is carried out, the teacher can resort to classroom *reformulation*. He takes a student's product and shares it with the whole class to reformulate it collaboratively. The purpose is to make the written product more natural. In addition to syntax, spelling, grammar and lexis, attention is to be drawn to global aspects that affect the naturalness of the text such as "overall organization, signposting, cohesion, information packaging and clarity of meaning" (Allwright, 1988, p.109). The rationale behind this feedback technique derives from the premise that students learn from others' mistakes.

The last feedback technique the teacher can adopt is *conferencing*. It allows the teacher to provide

individualized feedback to students. The teacher holds a meeting with a student to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their paper. The teacher can provide and ask for clarifications as well. He also provides suggestions for the student on how to improve their writing. The teacher will resort to this technique when he notices that a student faces major difficulties in writing. This way, the teacher will have a better understanding and clearer insight into the problems the student has and provide relevant suggestions and tips. The discussion needs to be focused because the teacher cannot remedy all the writing problems the student has in one single meeting. The focus should be on the salient problems the student has.

5. Conclusion

The eclectic methodology of writing instruction, which allows teachers to untie themselves from sticking to a single methodology and strike a balance between two methodologies, has a set of merits. The teacher is liberated from following the tenets of a single approach to the letter. Instead, he is entitled to the right of merging techniques from two different approaches at the same time to meet the students' needs. The eclectic approach also keeps the teacher open to alternatives as it is commendable to assimilate various teaching methodologies in the classroom. However, eclecticism in teaching writing does not imply that teachers mix methods in an arbitrary way to come up with a 'clumsy' approach that might prove to be totally ineffective. Improvisation might thwart the procedure of the writing lesson and play havoc with its output. Eclecticism should be theoretically grounded. Put differently, the teacher practices should be governed by research-based evidence and by his sense of plausibility so that s/he takes well informed decisions.

Different methodological blends have emerged with regard to the teaching of the writing skill. Of these, the product-process mix is the most viable solution for students' writing problems on a number of grounds. It is skills-based. It involves training students on efficient writing sub-skills. As mentioned above, this training consists of two phases (the skill getting and the skill using phases). Each phase subdivides into corresponding stages and tasks. So, as an approach, this combination draws some of its tenets from the learner training field. Another reason for the viability of this model is that it can be of valuable help to low-achievers, those who fail to meet the standards of the writing course. This is applicable to the Moroccan high school context where most EFL students have substantial difficulties in writing. It still stands out as the most challenging language skill for them to master. The proposed model, the product-process hybrid, if adopted systematically, can help students surmount their writing difficulties and hence improve their writing performance.

³ Lees categorizes seven functions of teachers' comments: correcting, emoting (expressing how they feel about a student's product such as "this is great", "I like this", etc.), describing (drawing the student's attention to what generated the feelings/the sources, suggesting, questioning, reminding and assigning).

⁴ The teacher corrects the errors himself. For instance, he crosses out a wrong part and provides an alternative. It can be word, a verb form, a phrase, etc.

⁵ The teacher draws the student's attention to the error but does not correct it. Some symbols are used for that purpose such as sp. For spelling and wo. for word order.

⁶ The teacher underlines or circles the error without providing any further feedback.

⁷ The teacher totals the number of errors and writes the number on the margin.

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