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TEACHING ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING TO C1-LEVEL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: PROCESS AND PRODUCT APPROACHES

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT:
ARTICLE HISTORY: **KEYWORDS:**	*Argumentative writing is a cornerstone of academic success for university students, particularly at advanced proficiency levels such as C1. This paper examines two dominant pedagogical approaches to teaching argumentative writing: the process approach and the product approach. While the product approach emphasizes the final written output and structural models, the process approach focuses on stages of writing, including brainstorming, drafting, peer feedback, and revision. Through analysis of their strengths, weaknesses, and practical applications, this article advocates for an integrated approach that leverages the benefits of both methods for effective teaching at the C1 level.*

INTRODUCTION. Advanced university students, particularly those studying in English as a second or foreign language, must demonstrate mastery of argumentative writing for academic and professional success. At the C1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), students are expected to produce coherent, well-structured texts that present and defend complex ideas using clear reasoning and evidence. Teaching argumentative writing at this level poses unique challenges, requiring not only linguistic competence but also critical thinking, organization, and audience awareness. Two primary pedagogical methods dominate writing instruction: the product approach, which emphasizes the final written text and its structural features, and the process approach, which focuses on the stages of writing. This article explores how these approaches can be used to teach argumentative writing to C1-level university students, evaluates their effectiveness, and recommends an integrated approach.

The **product approach** treats writing primarily as a result — a finished product that students aim to replicate. In this approach, students are typically presented with a model argumentative essay, which they analyze in terms of structure, vocabulary, and grammar.

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This method is grounded in behavioral and structuralist theories, where imitation and reinforcement are central (Nunan, 2003). One of the main advantages of this approach is that it provides clear models that guide students' understanding of academic conventions. It helps learners internalize paragraph and essay structures, such as the conventional introduction-body-conclusion format, and supports assessment needs through standardized criteria. These structural frameworks are essential for students unfamiliar with academic writing norms, offering them a tangible blueprint to follow (Tribble, 1996).

However, the product approach also has its limitations. It may neglect the cognitive and creative aspects of writing and encourage surface-level learning and formulaic output (Raimes, 1983). As a result, students might prioritize correctness and conformity over originality and voice. Moreover, for learners who struggle with complex syntax or academic register, this approach can be demotivating, especially when their efforts are constantly measured against an idealized model. Despite these issues, the product approach remains valuable for teaching specific conventions, such as crafting a clear thesis statement, organizing paragraphs logically, and using formal tone—all of which are crucial for successful argumentative writing (Hyland, 2003).

A practical classroom activity aligned with the product approach might begin with presenting students a sample argumentative essay on a familiar academic topic, such as "Should university education be free?" The teacher guides students through analyzing the structure of the text, identifying the thesis, topic sentences, supporting evidence, and conclusion. Students then label the sections and discuss the function of each part. Following this, they complete a guided writing task where they fill in a scaffolded template of an argumentative essay, replacing general content with their own ideas. This allows them to produce a structured essay by following a clear model, emphasizing form and coherence.

In contrast, the **process approach** views writing as a recursive, student-centered activity that unfolds over time. This method emphasizes stages such as prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Rooted in cognitive and socio-constructivist theories, the process approach encourages students to explore ideas, collaborate, and reflect throughout the writing cycle (Badger & White, 2000; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). One of the key strengths of this approach is that it fosters deeper engagement with content and audience. Rather than merely replicating a form, students are encouraged to think critically about their arguments, anticipate counterarguments, and consider the rhetorical impact of their language choices. The approach promotes revision strategies and develops learners' ability to self-regulate and monitor their writing processes over time (Hyland, 2003).

Yet, the process approach also faces criticism. It may lack a clear focus on the formal features of argumentative writing, leaving students unaware of structural conventions or genre-specific expectations (Raimes, 1983). Additionally, it is time-consuming for both instructors and students, requiring extended class time for drafting, peer review, and conferencing. In settings where timed or exam-based writing is common, students may find

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themselves underprepared if they rely solely on the process approach. Nevertheless, it remains especially helpful for C1 learners who need to develop independence and flexibility in writing, and it aligns well with academic goals such as research integration, argument development, and originality (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014).

A practical lesson using the process approach may begin with a brainstorming session in which students generate ideas in small groups around a prompt such as "Should social media platforms be regulated by governments?" Each group creates a mind map of arguments for and against the issue. Then, students individually write a rough outline organizing their points into an introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion. They proceed to write their first drafts and exchange them with peers for feedback focused on content clarity, strength of arguments, and logical flow. The instructor facilitates feedback with guiding questions and vocabulary prompts. After revision and editing phases, students submit a final version and reflect on their writing choices in a short commentary. This multi-stage cycle reinforces critical thinking and writing as a dynamic, iterative process.

Both the product and process approaches address essential aspects of writing but from different angles. At the C1 level, students benefit most from a blended or integrated approach that combines structured input with flexible writing practice. For instance, instruction can begin with the analysis of model texts drawn from academic contexts to introduce students to essay structures, lexical cohesion, and argumentation strategies. This modeling phase sets the foundation for students to later engage in brainstorming and outlining activities where they generate ideas independently. Following this, students can move into drafting and redrafting, incorporating feedback from peers and instructors to refine both content and form. Throughout the process, returning to model texts can help students ensure their writing aligns with academic expectations. This cyclical movement between guided input and independent production supports both linguistic accuracy and rhetorical sophistication (Badger & White, 2000).

An integrated classroom activity could unfold over multiple lessons. On Day 1, the teacher introduces a model argumentative essay and students analyze its organization and language features. On Day 2, students research and brainstorm arguments for a related but distinct topic, such as "Should governments ban single-use plastics?" Using a collaborative online document, students co-construct outlines and write initial drafts. Peer review follows, with a structured checklist targeting both form (e.g., thesis clarity, paragraph structure) and content (e.g., logical development, use of evidence). In a final lesson, students revise their work, polish language, and reflect on what they have learned about writing as both a product and a process. By combining structure, autonomy, collaboration, and reflection, this approach addresses the varied needs of C1-level learners and prepares them for authentic academic writing tasks (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Hyland, 2003).

Moreover, the use of digital tools like Google Docs, collaborative platforms such as Padlet, and feedback tools like Grammarly or peer review plugins can enrich this integrated

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method. These tools support both drafting and editing stages, facilitate timely and contextual feedback, and promote learner autonomy. Students can revisit previous versions of their work, track improvements, and build portfolios that demonstrate progress across the semester (Nunan, 2003).

Conclusion. Teaching argumentative writing to C1-level university students requires a nuanced approach that balances attention to form and process. While the product approach equips learners with the structural knowledge necessary for academic discourse, the process approach fosters deeper cognitive and rhetorical skills. By integrating both methods, instructors can provide students with a comprehensive writing education that prepares them for the demands of academic and professional communication. Ultimately, effective instruction should be adaptable, learner-centered, and reflective of real-world writing tasks. Such an approach not only meets the practical demands of academic institutions but also empowers students to become confident, competent writers capable of articulating and defending complex ideas.

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