Teaching Argumentative Text to Foster Students Academic Writing

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Writing is one of the skills in teaching and learning English. Realizing that English as a foreign language (EFL) is taught in Indonesia, lecturer/teachers has never stopped finding ways to foster students’ skill in writing. Teaching writing in university students is not an easy task. It requires a lot of creativities and needs an ability to choose a proper approach, method, and technique. The objective of this study is to obtain the clear information how to improve the students’ ability in writing argumentative text. The participant of this study was the sixth semester students of the Department of English in Faculty of Tarbiya and Teachers training, Syarif Hidayatullah, State Islamic University. The total number of participant was 5 out of 42 students of sixth semester and they were chosen purposively. The technique used for collecting data were through test, observation, and interview. Meanwhile the data analysis technique consist of: data classifying, calculating, reflexing, interpreting, and be followed by drawing conclusion in order to obtain and know the students’ achievement as the portrayal of the students’ academic writing skill improvement.

The result of the investigation was that the students undergo a good progress during teaching and learning activity of argumentative text and it could foster the students’ academic writing skill which reaches of at good level. Based on the findings and results suggest that lecturer or teachers should always be creative in choosing an interesting or a proper method and technique that would be applied in teaching writing.

Keywords: writing, argumentative text and academic writing skill.

Introduction

In Indonesia, English is taught since junior high school until university level. Studying English is not a new thing for the students of senior high school before. Although English is not the novel thing for college university students, in fact they still have many difficulties in studying English. As we know that English is not the Indonesian native language. It is difficult for the students to remember all the words in English and to understand when someone writing in English.

The language skills to be achieved are divided in to two parts of language function, namely, oral and written English as a means of communication. In this case listening and speaking are oral language; reading and writing are written language. However for the students the written one is the most difficult skill of
language. Writing is one of difficult subjects at school. So the teacher must create
the subject so that the students can study the subject easily. Besides, the kinds of
the text can also be important in teaching English in order to make the writing
teaching succeed. To select the appropriate texts, the teacher must consider the
characteristics of the students, which directly related to the learning process.

In the teaching and learning process of writing, the teacher have an
important role. John (2007: 12) states that, “Teacher’s role is to help students
develop viable strategies for getting started (finding topics, generating ideas and
information, focusing and planning, structure and procedure), for drafting,
(incouraging multiple drafts of reading), for revising (adding, deleting, modifying
and rearranging ideas), and for editing (attending to vocabulary, sentence,
structure, grammar, and mechanics)”

There many kinds of texts that can be used such as narrative, descriptive,
exploration, recount, information, report, exposition, and argumentation. They are
very useful for the teacher to achieves the instructional goals of teaching learning
process and they can also be interesting for the students. In this study I try to find
out what the text that is really good for teaching writing. Through this
investigation I try to scrutiny about how good the ability of the students of
education department of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta in writing text or
paragraph by learning argumentative text. By teaching argumentative text as a
genre for teaching writing, the students will be more interested and easy to write
their academic writing task.

Research Methods

Participant
The total number of participant of this study used five out of 42 students of
sixth semester of English Education Department (EED) in the Faculty of Tarbiya
and Teachers’ Training, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. The main reason of
choosing these participants were to make easies to control and review their
writing activities process and giving feedback in order to reach the research
objective. (Rahayu 2007).

Research Objective
The objectives of the study were to: (1) describe clearly of teaching and
learning process of argumentative text of the five out of 42 students of sixth
semester of English education department in the Faculty of Tarbiya and Teachers
Training, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta (2) describe the improvement of
the five (5) out of 42 students of sixth semester of English Education Department
(EED) in the Faculty of Tarbiya and Teachers Training, Syarif Hidayatullah, State
Islamic University, Jakarta.

Research Design
A research method used in this study was an action research. Action
research is focused on the immediate application, not on the development on
theory, no upon general application. This research will be conducted in the
classroom. This activity contains several cycles. In each cycle have four elements:
planning, acting, observing and reflecting.
Data Collection Procedure

This action research needs the data to support the investigation. The data were collected along the research last in the classroom which covers: planning, observation, treating, and reflexion. The main data is the students' writing of academic writing.

Through scoring, the results of the students’ work will be useful to depict students’ level of writing achievement. Since the purpose of the research is to measure the students’ academic writing skill, the writer interpreted the results based on the students’ score reached.

Scoring Schema

The following scheme of rating scale is used to measure the students’ achievement in their written product.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Topic Development</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Discourse Control</th>
<th>Sentence Structure</th>
<th>Mechanics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80—100</td>
<td>Fully addresses all aspects of the writing assignment, including in-text citations and frames. Stays on task throughout. Text uses appropriate alignment, spacing.</td>
<td>full and rich development (focus, relevance, explanations, support); shows sophistication in fluency of expression.</td>
<td>organization fully appropriate and effective for topic (point of view, unity, paragraphing); very strong introduction &amp; conclusion, thesis statement, topic sentences.</td>
<td>broad and fluent range of vocabulary; elaboration and detail achieved through appropriate word choices; correct use of word forms.</td>
<td>full control (logical coherence) and excellent use of cohesive devices (key words, pronouns, references, transitions, etc.); presentation of ideas extremely clear and coherent.</td>
<td>full range of sentence patterns (simple, compound, complex), effectively used; error-free sentence-level grammar.</td>
<td>Correct form for text type (e.g. Memo)—headings; correct citations; spelling, capitalization, and punctuation error-free.</td>
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<tr>
<td>60—79</td>
<td>Addresses the writing assignment but may not fully develop or include all parts of the assignment. May digress in parts of the writing.</td>
<td>clear and complete development of content; high fluency of expression (clarity).</td>
<td>organization controlled; generally appropriate to topic; appropriate paragraphing; introduction &amp; conclusion, thesis &amp; conclusion.</td>
<td>flexibility in range; appropriate use (word choice) of vocabulary in a variety of situations; mostly correct use of good control of cohesive devices; used successfully in a range of situations; coherence apparent.</td>
<td>mastery of sentence patterns demonstrated; may have occasional grammatical errors on the sentence level.</td>
<td>Spelling, form, indentation, capitalization, punctuation, and citation errors few and not distracting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>Comment</td>
<td>Content Development</td>
<td>Word Forms</td>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>Logical Flow</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>0—20</td>
<td>Does not address the writing assignment. Off-topic throughout the writing.</td>
<td>Simplistic statement of content; often copied from sources or lists of information.</td>
<td>Simple and complex sentences attempted but often unsuccessful; grammatical errors distract from meaning.</td>
<td>Spelling, form, indentations, capitalization, punctuation, and citation errors are frequent and distracting.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21—39</td>
<td>May write within the topic, but no evidence of addressing the writing assignment itself. Major omissions in the assignment.</td>
<td>Development of content restricted; may be incomplete or unclear; lack of fluency in expression.</td>
<td>Narrow range (word choice); many word form errors; vocabulary often used inappropriately; only basic and elementary meanings are conveyed.</td>
<td>Connections may be missing; lack of logical sequencing of ideas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>40—59</td>
<td>May address a part of the writing assignment, but generally writes about the topic and does not address the assignment directly. Obviouly digresses throughout the writing. Several omissions in the assignment.</td>
<td>Development of content adequate, but lacks clearly stated positions or supporting information; fluency of expression may be halting or awkward.</td>
<td>Adequate range (word choice); no precise use of subtle meanings displayed; vocabulary sometimes used inappropriately; often incorrect use of word forms.</td>
<td>Generally adequately connected; presentation of ideas generally clear and coherent; cohesive devices could be used more often and more effectively.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Statement, topic sentences evident and appropriate.**

**Word forms.**
Required assignment instructions not included.

Analysis Procedure
Classifying the Scores
The scores will become more meaningful numerical data if they are converted to numerical data, which will be processed to the scale of 0 to 100. Then the processed scores will be used arranged from the highest to the lowest, it will be easier to know the position of a student in his/her group.

The measurement of the students’ achievement that is stated by Harris (1969: 134) will be interpreted as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria of Mastery</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>80—100</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60—79</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40—59</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21—39</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0—20</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings
First Cycle of the Students’ Writing
The activity of writing the final draft was followed by 5 students. In this activity I gave back the students work in the last activity and asked them to revise the mistakes they still made in writing the second draft once more. They could use dictionary to check the wrong spelling, and the they discussed the mistakes they made to the friends. In the result of making final draft was that 2 students got 60; 1 student got 64; 1 student got 70; 1 student got 72.

The achievement of writing the final draft is 40%. Based on the result of the writing second draft, it could be concluded that there was improvement of the students achievement in writing the final draft of the first cycle. Therefore it could be said that the students’ academic writing was successful but their ability need to be improved again. So the activities were continued to the second cycle.

Second Cycle of the Students’ Writing Activity
In the second cycle there were three parts, they were modeling of the text, independent construction of the text, and interview. Here is the analysis of
each part.

- **The First activity**

  The first activity in the second cycle was called modeling of the text. It was followed by 5 students. In this activity, the writer explained about the argumentative text. The students could ask questions to researcher/lecturer if they had difficulties in understanding the materials.

  The students and I discussed the generic structure of the text once more. I also explained steps in writing argumentative text once more so that the students could produce the academic writing text well based on the steps they had learned.

- **The Second Activity**

  The second activity of the second cycle was called independent construction of the text. There were three activities among others were making planning and writing the first draft, writing the second draft, writing the final draft. The purpose independent construction of the text was to check the students’ ability in producing argumentative text individually whether the students could produce argumentative text well or not.

**Students’ Writing Achievement of the Second Cycle**

The activity of writing the final draft was followed by 5 out of 42 students. In the activity I gave back the student’s work in writing the second draft before and asked them to revise the mistakes they still made once more. They could use the dictionary to check the wrong spelling, and they discussed the mistakes they made to the friends or teacher. After finding the mistakes, they had to write the final draft to be the best.

In the result of making the final draft was that 1 student got 72; 2 students got 75; 1 student got 76 and 1 student got 80.

The achievement of writing the final draft was 80%. Based on the result of writing the second draft, it could be concluded that there were improvement of the student’s achievement in writing the final draft. Based on the result of the join construction of the text, the student’s achievement was improved. Based on the students’ achievement and analysis it can be concluded that the teaching argumentative text was successful to foster the students’ academic writing.

**The Analysis of Interview**

Interview was done to the students and the purpose was to know the difficulties they faced in writing lesson, especially in academic writing. After having the test, the researcher spent 20 minutes to asked the students about the difficulties they found during the test. Firstly, they rarely had writing class because the teacher always focussed on reading skills, and writing skills only supported them. Secondly, they found some unfamiliar vocabulary items such as decided; run away; woods; cottage; dwarfs; etcetera.

After analyzing their work and made interview, I found some reasons which caused the students difficulties in arranging their composition. Besides the two reasons given by the students after doing the test, the writer had his own opinion based on the result of analyzing their mistakes. Most of the students made mistakes because of the reasons:
a. The student have not fully understood the feature of argumentative text/paragraph and some tenses that they used when they wrote the argumentative text.

b. The students did not read the given material attentively. They only got the information from what they read at glance and based on their experience before.

c. Some students failed to arrange or organize writing their chronologically. Most of them missed some of the generic structure of argumentative text.

d. The students failed to apply the knowledge of grammar and diction or word choice.

Discussion

Based on data analysis and the finding of the two cycles that the result of the study was that the students’ progress during teaching and learning activity through argumentative text to foster/improve the students’ academic writing skill. The students’ achievement in writing was fostered/improved, it was supported by the significance result of the pre-test was 30%; writing the first draft on the first cycle was 31.52%; writing the second draft 34.53%; writing the final draft was 40%. Meanwhile, writing the first draft on the second cycle was 62%; writing the second draft was 75.42% and writing the final draft was 80%. Based on findings above, it can be concluded that lecturer/teachers should always find out and be creative to teaching argumentative text to foster the students’ academic writing skill.

Based on finding above that writing is one of the activities that cannot be completed in a time, but it needs process. It also needs an opportunity to convey ideas and to communicate ideas to other people, but writing is not a simple process, it’s hard work. Sometimes people/students cannot communicate their ideas systematically to others in a written language. They find that their writing is bad and ineffective.

Related to information mentioned above, (Donal H Graves, 1975: 231) says that to make effective writing, the students/people should know some steps in process of writing that there are three steps in writing: prewriting, writing and post writing. According to (1) Prewriting: this step includes discussion of the proposed writing- the theme or topic, ideas, and related words, feelings, and thoughts. A writer may bring all of or his/her experiences to bear on the composing act in this prewriting phase; (2) Writing, this step includes pausing and rereading as the writing is accruing, interaction with others, consulting resources, talking to oneself, and reformulating the ideas and organization of the composition; and (3) Post writing, this step involves repeating some behaviors from the composing phase until contemplation and approval signal that the product is satisfactory.

Besides of the three steps in writing above, Alice Osima and Ann Hugue (1988: 10—11) also divide the process of writing into three stage: a. Planning is an orderly produce used to bring about a derriere result. As the first stage in writing process, planning is a series of strategies designed to find and produce information writing.

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b. **Drafting** is a procedure for drawing up for preliminary sketch. As the second stage in the writing process, drafting is a series of strategies designed to organized and develop a sustained piece of writing.

c. **Revising** is a procedure for improving or correcting a work in progress. As the final stage in writing process, revising is a series of strategies designed to examine and re-evaluate the choices that have created a piece of writing.

Those are the three stages in writing which are able to identify some predictable stages in the evaluation of their writing process. In approach process to the teaching of writing, writing should be taught as a process when learners in their classroom. The students start for choosing topic or finding ideas, identifying purpose, organizing, making draft, and evaluating it to publish their writing.

### Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion in previous, it can be drown conclusions are as follow:

a. the way to improve the students’ ability or students’ writing ability are through reading a lot in increasing their vocabulary mastery and understanding about what argumentative text is; the characteristics of the argumentative text, the generic structure of argumentative text, the types of argumentative text, builder elements, and steps to compose or write a argumentative text. Beside these, the students need more practicing and self correcting to their writing activity, especially in argumentative writing genre. In general, the students know the steps to make a good writing but they find many problems in conducting the writing process.

b. Students’ ability in writing argumentative text is still have some difficulties in constructing effective sentences. Based on this condition, it can be concluded that the students’ writing ability level is at **good level**.

### Suggestion

Based on the conclusions above, it can be delivered some suggestions go to:

1. The teachers/lecturer should increase their knowledge in teaching writing skill and should try a various and proper method when teaching writing to the students.
2. The lecturer/teachers should give feedback to each students’ assignments. Giving feedback by the lecturer/teachers will be very useful for further writing improvement, especially in academic writing.
3. The lecturer/teachers at the department of English Education should focus on the students’ writing activities and their ability or performance in producing the text.
4. the students in order to maximize their potential intelligence in studying writing skill, especially argumentative text.
5. The students’ should learn more about the way of writing the argumentative texts in order that they can boost their writing performance. It will be better for them (students) to use the steps in writing when they write something in order that they can make a good writing. If they find
any difficulties, they will ask their teacher(s).

6. The teachers to use the rules in writing, in this case is the steps in writing when they teach writing in order they can increase the students’ achievement in writing. They also should help their students’ when facing difficulties in writing.

7. the teacher and the students must work together in teaching and learning process, especially in writing lesson, they should help each other to make the teaching writing process successful.

8. it is expected that this research will be useful for someone who will have a research or final project about teaching writing because in this research there are many steps in conducting research that can be used as references.
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