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Improving Students' Essay Writing Ability through Consultancy Prewriting Protocol at Christian University of Indonesia

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Biodata

Lamhot Naibaho is an Associate Professor at English Teaching Study Program of Christian University of Indonesia. His research interests include L1, L2, language teaching, curriculum, and linguistics. He has attended and presented in national and international conferences such as JET, TEFL ASIA Journal, IAFOR Journal, and ICALLE, APKASI and ARISUTA RESEARCH CENTER. He is once as a reviewer at IAFOR Journal.

Abstract

This study presents a research report on improving students' essay writing ability through consultancy prewriting protocol. The objective was to find out whether students' essay writing ability improved taught by using consultancy prewriting protocol. It was conducted using classroom action research method. The subject of the study was the sixth semester students of English Education Department at Christian University of Indonesia. The instruments used were essay test, questionnaire, diary, and observation. The techniques for data analysis were qualitative and quantitative. In analyzing the data, the mean of the score and the score improvement percentage were as follows. The mean in the pre-test 52,39, the mean in the post- test of cycle one is 61,34, and the mean in the post-test of cycle to is 79,15. The percentages as follows the percentage of improvement on pre-test and post-test in the first cycle 17,08%, the percentage of improvement on post-test in the first cycle and post-test in the second cycle 29,03%. And the last is the percentage of the pre-test and the post-test in the cycle two is 51,07%.. The conclusion is that the consultancy prewriting protocol improves the students' essay writing ability. It is suggested that teachers should apply consultancy prewriting protocol as one of the strategies to improve students' essay writing ability.

Keywords: *essay, writing, ability, consultancy prewriting protocol*

Introduction

Being able to write is a vital skill for speakers of a foreign language as much as for everyone using their own first language, but even though so, still I will keep on saying that these skills themselves can not be separated because they give contribution to one another. Harmer (2004), that writing is one of the most important skills in language learning.

Learning writing or knowing how to write is a useful thing for somebody else, where through writing somebody will provides many advantages for him/her, such as: writing reinforces the grammatical structures, idioms, and vocabulary; writing also enhances the students to adventure the language; by writing the students become very involved with the language effort to express their ideas. Writing is not an easy thing to learn but though it can be learned by everybody. Writing is not a matter of talent, because basically no one's born knowing how to write, but it's a skill that most people can learn, and the more you do it, the easier it becomes (Grenville, 2001). What makes writing hard is some times we do not know where or how to start, what to write and so on. Just think of by the time you going to write a simple letter, just lets say a love letter or an admission letter, then you will find it difficult to start till you have to tear some sheets of paper because of making many mistakes and wasting much time to write the letter.

Writing is not merely putting down words or sentences in the form of paper instantly, but it is a process of thinking, as it is said by Lawrence (1975) that writing as a thinking process. It means that in the process of writing, someone has to think to relate lots of fact and to compare the fact or one has to be able to think of which facts to be written, so the writing can be in line with the topics of the writing.

In order to be able to produce a good writing, students should be able to follow the accurate language use, think as they write, and provoke the language development as they resolve problems when they put their ideas into the written form. In addition, writing requires extensive self regulation and attention control as stated in Graham & Harris (2000) in their researches discovered that students fail to do writing because they have limited number of words, limited patterns of sentences, and lack of motivation. They consider that writing is difficult they do not know what topic to choose and when they have selected the topic, they do not know how to develop it into good writing. Leo (2007) made a small scale survey. He found that students' problem in writing are (1) limited vocabulary (8%), (2) difficulty in organizing

ideas (16%), (3) no ideas to write about (20%), (4) no motivation to write (20%), (5) and lack of confidence in grammar (36%).

The problems were solved when the writer browsed the internet and he found a technique which is called Consultancy Prewriting Protocol. The technique is effective to help one to explore topic. As Harris, Graham & Butler, (2003) have been involved in the development and evaluation of an instructional approach to writing improvement among students with significant writing problems. Therefore, the writer is very much interested in conducting this research in order to discover whether students' essay writing ability will improve if taught using Consultancy Prewriting Protocol. This study was done in order to find out whether there is an improvement in students' essay writing ability if it is taught using Consultancy Prewriting Protocol.

Literature Review

Before talking more about writing, it is better if firstly we talk about the definition of the writing itself, but it for what I think of those definitions, those experts tell the same idea about writing in different way. As it is said by Lindeman (1983) that writing is a process of communication which uses conventional system to convey the meaning of receiver. The expression of ideas, thoughts in the form of written form to communication is the goal of writing. In a slight difference, Webster (1948) states that composition means act of composing especially arranging of words to form sentences, paragraph, verse and so forth. Whereas Gelb (1969) said that writing is things that differ educated man to an uneducated man. In the era of information now, many people can easily communicate with others through communication devices such as telephone, mobile phone and even internet, they often miss understanding of it. They keep on saying that writing seems to be out of date. Due to that peoples' assumption, the writer has found the reasons why to write (Tangkas, 2006). Writing is a complex process that allows writers to explore thoughts and ideas, and make them visible and concrete.

Writing encourages thinking and learning for it motivates communication and makes thought available for reflection. When thought is written down, ideas can be examined, reconsidered, added, re-arranged and changed. As Barras (1995:9) also states that there are four main reasons for writing that is to help us to

Writing reinforces grammatical structure idioms and vocabularies (Reid, 1993:27). Writing also creates permanent and visible records of ideas for other to read and ponder. Writing is a powerful means of communication, for reading informs and shapes human thought. In an open society, everyone is free to write and thereby to create reading for other people. For

that freedom to be exercised, however the ability to write can not be concentrated in a few people. All of us need to access to the power of the written word.

Most jobs in today's technologies society require writing skill for preparing documents ranging from letters and memos to formal reports. Indeed throughout students' life. So for that, writing must be taught to the students. Harmer (2004) stated that for many years the teaching of writing focused on the written product rather than on the writing process. In other words, the students' attention was directed to 'what' rather than 'how' of text construction. However, we should also need to concentrate on the process of writing because process of writing is not easy option. White & Arndt (1991). In Nunan (1999) view writing as a complex, cognitive process that required sustained intellectual effort over a considerable period of time. Beside that writing is the most complex activities. Its purpose and varieties are manifold. It may be designed to amuse, to inspire, to persuade, to inform, to guide, and to enlighten.

Greenville (2001) also stated that there seem to be so many different kinds of writing: novels, poems, short stories, scripts, letters, essays, reports, reviews, instructions, where all are quite different. But they're all writing. They all have the basic aim of getting ideas from one brain into another. Any piece of writing will be trying to do at least one of these things; writing to entertain, writing to inform, and writing to persuade.

The process of writing involves setting goals, generating ideas, organizing information, selecting appropriate language, drafting, reviewing, revising and editing. It is a complex activity, which for many second language writers is difficult. The issue for approach strives precisely to do this. It is focused on providing to support the process of writing. The exact nature of that support depends on the nature of the students and their reasons for writing. There are some things that need to be taken care before starting writing, they are; planning activities, awareness of audience, reviewing and revising.

Heaton (1986) said that skills of writing include five general components or main areas, such as: (1) Content: the ability to think creatively and to develop thought including all of the relevant to assigned topic. (2) Organization: the ability to write in appropriate manner for particular purpose with a particular audience in mind, together with an ability to select, to organize and other relevant information. (3) Vocabulary : the ability to write the word effectively and to appropriate register. (4) Language Use: the ability to write and correct the appropriate sentences. (5) Mechanical Skill : the ability to use correctly those conventions peculiar to written language – e.g. punctuation, and spelling.

Essay writing is a piece of writing several paragraphs long instead or just one or two paragraph (Tangkas, 2006). It is written about one topic. However, the topic of an essay is too

long and too complex to discuss in one paragraph. Therefore must divide the topic into several paragraphs, one for it major point. Then you must tie all the separate paragraphs together by adding an introduction and conclusion. Writing an essay is no more difficult than writing a paragraph because the principles of the organization are the same for both. Except that an essay is longer.

The general form of an essay consisted of an introductory of a paragraph; contain a general statement and a thesis statement, the body of the paragraph; contains of some paragraph with a topic sentence and some supporting details, and a conclusion of paragraph; contain summary of review of the main point discussed in the body.

No matter which kind of essay you write, you should follow the same general process of prewriting, writing, revising, and proofreading. This guidelines should be helpful; Step 1: Prewriting—Thinking About the Topic, Step 2: Prewriting—Developing a Focus, Step 3: Prewriting—Choosing Details, Step 4: Writing—Getting the Ideas on Paper, Step 5: Revising—Adding and Deleting Ideas, Step 6: Revising—Polishing the Writing, Step 7: Proofreading—Checking the Details (Sorenson, 2010).

After completing essay writing, it should be evaluate. According to Reid (1993), in evaluating the students' improvement in writing the essay, there are five components will be measured, such as content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. The score for content is 30 points, organization is 20 point, vocabulary is 20 point, language use is 25 points and mechanics is 5 points. So for all components students will get score 100 points. Writing is called good when the score of the writing is within 70-80 and 90-100 is called excellence. The components can be seen as follows:

a. Content

Level	Criteria
30-27	Excellent to very good: knowledgeable, substantive, thorough development of thesis, relevant to assigned topic.
26-22	Good to average: some knowledge of subject, adequate range, limited development of thesis, mostly relevant to topic, but lacks detail.
21-17	Fair to poor: limited knowledge of subject, little substance, inadequate development of topic.

b. Organization

- 20-18 Excellent to very good: fluent expression, ideas clearly stated/supported, succinct, well organized, logical sequencing, cohesive.
- 17-14 Good to average: somewhat choppy, loosely organized but main ideas stand out, limited supported, logical but incomplete sequencing.
- 13-10 Very poor: does not communicate, not organization, or not enough to evaluate.

c. Vocabulary

Level Criteria

- 20-18 Excellent to very good: sophisticated range, effective word/idiom choice and usage, word form mastery, appropriate register.
- 17-14 Good to average: adequate range, occasional errors of word/idiom form; choice, usage but meaning not obscured.
- 13-10 Fair to poor: limited range, frequent errors of word/idiom form, choice; usage, meaning confused or obscured
- 9-7 Very poor: essentially translation, little knowledge of English vocabulary; idioms; word form, or not enough to evaluate.

d. Language use

Level Criteria

- 25-22 Excellent to very good: effective complex construction, few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions.
- 21-18 Good to average: effective but simple constructions, minor problems in complex constructions, several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions but meaning seldom obscured.
- 17-11 Fair to poor: major problems in simple/complex constructions, frequent errors of negation; articles; pronouns; prepositions and/or fragments; run-ons; deletion, meaning confused or obscured.
- 10-5 Very poor: virtually no mastery of sentence construction rules, dominated by errors, does not communicate, or not enough to evaluate.

e. Mechanics

Level Criteria

- 5 Excellent to very good: demonstrates mastery of conventions, few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing.
- 4 Good to average: occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing but meaning not obscured.
- 3 Fair to poor: frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, poor handwriting, meaning confused or obscured.
- 2 Very poor: no mastery of conventions, dominated by errors of spelling; punctuation; capitalization paragraphing, handwriting illegible, or not enough to evaluate

There are so many techniques are used in writing, such as; Self regulated strategy development, Think pair share, words wall technique, Prewriting Guide, prewriting think sheet, semantic feature analysis, the journalists' questions Strategy, and the last is consultancy prewriting protocol. Among of these techniques, the research tries to use consultancy prewriting protocol technique.

Consultancy prewriting protocol technique as introduced by Urquhart and McIver in 2005. According to them a consultancy prewriting protocol technique is a structured process for helping a presenter thinks more expansively about a dilemma. Protocols provide a structured way for students to contribute their thoughts and ideas while creating the opportunity to listen to multiple voices. Protocols also serve as useful tools to temper dominant voices. Through this technique, therefore, the students are expected to be able to study with a structured way from teacher's multiple voices.

By using protocols, students participate in discussions by actively listening and responding to comments from their peers. When used correctly, protocols assist in classroom management by guarding against off-task behavior.

Procedure is a way of doing something, especially the usual or correct way. The following is some procedure of implementing the consultancy prewriting protocol technique suggested by Urquhart and McIver (2005): a) Prepare the question or questions you want your students to address in their discussion or set aside time for students to develop their own questions. b) Review the steps of the protocol with students and ask for clarifying questions. c) Divide the students into small groups. d) Allow time for students to have their discussion. e) Conclude the process by noting any suggestions that students make for future discussions.

The following is steps pointed out Urquhart and McIver (2005) on how to conduct consultancy prewriting protocol technique: The presenter gives an overview of the dilemma with which he or she is struggling, and frames a question for the consultancy group to consider.

(5-10 minutes). The group asks clarifying questions of the presenter. Clarifying questions are to help the consultancy group understand the dilemma and context. (5 minutes). The group asks probing questions of the presenter. These questions should be worded so that they help the presenter expand his or her thinking about the dilemma. The goal here is for the presenter to learn more about the question he or she framed and to do some analysis of the dilemma presented. The presenter may respond to the group's questions, but there is no discussion by the consultancy group of the presenter's responses. At the end of the 10 minutes, the facilitator asks the presenter to restate the question for the group. (10 minutes).

The group talks with each other about the dilemma presented, while the presenter listens to the conversation and silently takes notes. (15 minutes). Members of the group sometimes suggest actions the presenter might consider taking. Most often, however, they work to define the issues more thoroughly and objectively. The presenter reflects on what he or she heard and is now thinking, sharing with the group anything that particularly resonated for him or her during any part of the consultancy. (5 minutes). The facilitator leads a brief conversation about the group's observation of the consultancy process. (5 minutes).

Research Methodology

This study will apply the Classroom Action Research. The location of the research was at Christian University of Indonesia at Jl. Mayjen Sutoyo, No. 2 Cawang, East Jakarta. The subject of the study was the sixth semester students of English Education Department at Christian University of Indonesia which consisted of thirty eight students. The procedure and the method of action research consist of two cycles. In addition, each cycle is done based on the plan that have been planned before, and in conducting the action research, there are four steps that are included such as; planning, action, observation and reflection in collecting the data, writing test was used as the instrument. The students were tested by asking them to write essay writing based on the direction of the teacher. Beside the writing test, the writer also used interview, questionnaire sheet, diary note, and observation sheet which are used when the researcher wants to identify what is happening. The technique of data analysis used in this study was qualitative and quantitative analysis. The qualitative data were used to describe the situation during the teaching process through interview sheet, questionnaire sheet, observation sheet, and diary note and the students' essay writing was analyzed quantitatively.

The Finding and Discussion

The data were divided into qualitative data (questionnaire, interview, diary note, and observation) and quantitative data (the test result). This research was done only to one class within two cycles which consisted of 38 students. In conducting the research, some topics of essay text had been given as the students' test, when the research was conducted. The test was conducted to the students in each meeting of the cycle. Pre-test was given to know the entry behavior level of the students, progressing-test was given to know how the consultancy prewriting protocol helped the students in making the essay text writing, and the last was post-test to know the final score of the students. The diary note, interview, questionnaire and observation were analyzed to know how the teaching process was, to know how the condition of class and the students were, and to know how the response of the students on the strategy offered was.

In the first cycle, pre-test was conducted to the students, in the second and the third meeting they were treated the essay text writing and consultancy prewriting protocol. In addition, in the fourth meeting a progressing-test was conducted and in the next meeting they were treated again and in the last a meeting post-test was given.

The students' scores increased from the pre-test to the post-test. They were tested three times namely pre-test, progressing-test and the last was the post-test. From the entire test and the teaching process conducted, it was found that the students' score kept improving from meeting to meeting. The students' score in the pre-test was lower than the progressing-test, progressing-test was lower than post-test or the post-test was the highest score of the conducted entire test.

The mean of the pre-test 52,39, the mean of the progressing test 61,34. The improvement from the pre-test into post test at the first cycle is gained from the calculation of the mean of post test and the mean of pre test by deducting them, the result is 8,95 (17,08%).

Table 1. Distribution of Frequency in the First Cycle

Range	Frequency	Σ	Percentage
91-100	0	0	0%
81-90	0	0	0%
71-80	0	0	0%
61-70	22	1424	61,08%
51-60	16	907	38,91%
40-50	0	0	0%

From the distribution table of frequency in the first cycles, some of the students did not show the good improvement of essay text writing because they could not achieve good standard of essay text writing as what had been written in the second chapter namely writing was called good when the score of the writing was within 70-80 and 90-100 was called excellence. In the distribution table of frequency showed that from 38 students who followed the essay text writing test started from pre-test in to post-test at the first cycle, None of the students got good standard of essay text writing and they were still in low standard of essay text writing although there were found improvement did by them all during the test.

To see those cases which were taken place among of all the students, then the researchers did a reflection on the first cycle, then the researcher try to find what was the problem so those cases happened among of the students. Then the researchers checked the diary not, and the observation sheet done during the first cycle and after checking up the reason why it was so, it was found from the observation sheet and the diary note showed that some of the students did not pay attention on the teaching process and when the essay text writing test. In order to solve the problem, the students were told back the purpose of the research and persuaded them to be more enthusiastic.

Therefore it was decided to carry out the second cycle, and in doing the second cycle, the researchers made another improvement of teaching strategy in order to making the students felt more enthusiastic so they gave good attention while the researchers explained the material. Then after doing the actions in the second cycle then there found that they had good improvement of writing essay text till some of them got excellent essay text writing namely by getting score above of 80 for the writing test. The mean of the post-test in the second cycle is 79,15.

The improvement from the Progressing-test on first cycle into post test at the second cycle is gained from the calculation of the mean of post test on second cycle and the mean of pre test at the second cycle by deducting them. The result was 17,81 (29.03%).

Table 2. Distribution of Frequency in the Second Cycle

Range	Frequency	Σ	Percentage
91-100	1	91	3,02%
81-90	9	752	25,00%
71-80	28	2165	71,97%
61-70	0	0	0%
51-60	0	0	0%
40-50	0	0	0%

From the distribution table of frequency in the second cycles, most of the students showed the good improvement of essay text writing because in the second cycle they were forced to be more active and more enthusiastic. So the problems in the first cycle that caused the students could not achieved good writing essay text standard had been solved in this cycle. Because the problem had solved and the passing standard criteria had been gained, the research was ended in this cycle, because the students had achieved standard essay text writing as had been written before namely essay text was called good when the score of the writing was within 70-80 and 90-100 was called excellence. In the distribution table of frequency showed that from 38 students who followed the essay text writing test, there were 28 students (71.97%) who had achieved good standard of essay text writing and the rest of the students' score go to high standard of essay text or excellence essay writing text. It is about 9 (28.02%) students who achieved excellence essay writing text.

Table 3. The Percentages of the Students' Essay Text Writing Test Progression

Test	Percentage
pre-test – to post-test 1 st cycle	17,08%
to post-test 1 st cycle - post-test 2 nd Cycle	29,03%

The total percentage of the improvement from the pre-test into post-test was 26,76 (51,07%). So it could be said that students' essay text writing increased as much as 51,07%.

The qualitative data which were taken from the diary notes showed that the students' interest to learn essay text writing through consultancy prewriting protocol kept increasing even some problem occurred in the students such as paying not good attention while they were

treated the consultancy prewriting protocol so the progressing of the mark was very low. From the interview sheet showed that most of the students said that they were rarely and even never taught the essay text by using the consultancy prewriting protocol. The questionnaire sheet showed their good response after teaching and giving them the strategy in learning process. The observation sheet showed that in the first cycles they were in low desire, but after they were told back the purpose of the research, they paid more desire, so in the second cycle; they were very active and enthusiastic in writing their essay text by using the consultancy prewriting protocol. Even though some of the students still found it hard to write the essay text but at last they could master and were able to write the essay text writing well.

The result indicated that there was an improvement on the students' essay text writing ability through consultancy prewriting protocol. It was supported by the fact that the mean of the score in every meeting increased, and the mean could be seen from the score and from the percentage of the students' writing improvement that the tests got higher gradually as shown before, the mean in the pre-test 52,39, the mean in the post- test of cycle one is 61,34, and the mean in the post-test of cycle to is 79,15. The percentages as follows the percentage of improvement on pre-test and post-test in the first cycle 17,08%, the percentage of improvement on post-test in the first cycle and post-test in the second cycle 29,03%. And the last is the percentage of the pre-test and the post-test in the cycle two is 51.07%. The qualitative data were taken from interview sheet, diary notes, and questionnaire and from observation sheet showed that students' participation in this study increased from meeting to meeting. Based on the interview, the students admitted that their English teacher did not use consultancy prewriting protocol in teaching writing skill especially on essay text writing. These data described the students' attention, enthusiastic, responses and the participation was good during the research process.

Conclusions

After analyzing the data, it was found out that the students' score increased from the first cycle namely from the first meeting until the eight meeting. In all of the meetings it was showed that the students got improvement in essay text writing through consultancy prewriting protocol. It was showed from the mean of the score and the score improvement percentage as followed the mean in the pre-test 52,39, the mean in the post- test of cycle one is 61,34, and the mean in the post-test of cycle to is 79,15. The percentages as follows the percentage of improvement on pre-test and post-test in the first cycle 17,08%, the percentage of improvement on post-test in the first cycle and post-test in the second cycle 29,03%. And the last is the

percentage of the pre-test and the post-test in the cycle two is 51.07%. Thus the use of consultancy prewriting protocol on student's essay text writing ability worked well.

The results of this study shows that the use of consultancy prewriting protocol on writing ability can improve the students' essay text writing. These following suggestions are offered; a) to English teacher, it is better to use the consultancy prewriting protocol in teaching students' writing skill because it was easy for the students to write a text, especially on writing the essay text. b) to the students, it is suggested to use relevant topic to conduct the farther research by using consultancy prewriting protocol.

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