

DISCOVERING STUDENT'S EXPERTISE TO AUGMENT CLAIM QUALITY IN WRITING CLASS AT UIN MALIKI MALANG

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Abstract

This study begins with the identification of some problems found in my writing classes. Developing cliché claim and copying other person's opinion have been the main problems followed by the failure to develop sufficient examples to support the claim and eliminate the number of grammatical and mechanical error in students' essays. I also tried to find out the reason through some discussions both with students and colleagues. It appeared that students reading habit is unsatisfying and as the result they do not expand their critical thinking skill. The other significant reason is students mostly think that writing is a difficult assignment.

Writing, especially on argumentation, is essential for academic purpose. Therefore the teaching of writing should develop both students writing skill and critical thinking that support their academic study skills. Such approach should also cover more socially oriented activities meaning that it is not merely an assignment to be read by the teacher. Tribble (1997) states that writing should focus on the way in which writers and texts need to interact. Writing learners, therefore, need to develop their skill through process approach which can help them to have better understanding academic writing perspective (Herdiah, 2005; Laksmi, 2006; and Siu, 2007). Accordingly, writing should also incorporate the teaching of critical thinking in EFL instruction (Triastuti, 2006).

At the beginning students were introduced to how to find the issue for WHAT TO WRITE. They need to get involved in interest mapping activity. In potency mapping, students are trying to discover the following: what my area of interest is, the kinds of topic I look for when I browse internet and the issues I couldn't miss. In the classes, it was found that their interest mostly covering the topic on music, fashion, sport, teen's lifestyle, and travelling. Whereas, the unfavorable topics are political issue and education.

Afterwards, students conducted brainstorming in groups having the same interest. On the next phase the students started planning ahead on HOW TO BEGIN WRITING by making an outline and present it in class conference. Their friends contributed a lot of ideas to support the proposed claim. Later, the students were assigned to find related data from various resources to get as many examples as possible to strengthen their claim. This is related to the activity to decide WHICH FACT SUPPORTS THE CLAIM. Their writing draft was checked by their friends in peer-editing. The comments given on HOW TO ELABORATE THE CLAIM were used to revise the draft before the final draft was submitted. As the last process, the evaluated draft was published in the form of mini magazine to be distributed to other students. This last activity has become the most favorable part for the students.

At the end of the semester, some benefits attained are as follow: (1.) students started writing more easily, (2.) they participated actively in class conference, (3.) reading skill is also promoted, (4.) no more plagiarism found, (5.) error in diction and grammar can be minimized by learning from others, (6.) reaching larger audience by distributing the magazines to other classes, and (7.) they are challenged to write more productively.

Background

Writing argumentation is a matter of applying what we understand from the information around certain issues in the written form and therefore this becomes a challenging task for teachers dig up student's interest to the information. Writing teachers cannot push students to write about a controversial issue which is unfamiliar to students' interest.

Writing, especially on argumentation, is essential for academic purpose. Therefore the teaching of writing should develop both students writing skill and critical thinking that support their academic study skills. Such approach should also cover more socially oriented activities meaning that it is not merely an assignment to be read by the teacher. Tribble (1997) states that writing should focus on the way in which writers and texts need to interact. Writing learners, therefore, need to develop their skill through process approach which can help them to have better understanding academic writing perspective (Herdiah, 2005; Laksmi, 2006; and Siu, 2007). Accordingly, writing should also incorporate the teaching of critical thinking in EFL instruction (Triastuti, 2006).

Basically, writing is an essential part of thinking and learning in educational context, particularly in light of 21st Century demands (Johannesen, 2001) and therefore writing tasks are a "critical tool for intellectual and social development" (Bruning & Horn, 2000, p. 30). In writing class, students' ability to present information and ideas through their writing has "an integral role in academic and professional success" (Applebee, Langer, Mullis, Latham, & Gentile, 1994, p. 25, quoted in Sadik, 2008). Such success cannot be reached without integrated writing skill which is started from students' interest in particular issues.

It is commonly believed that writing is an important means through which students are challenged to think more critically. This becomes definitely a demanding task because it requires the writing processes, skills, and knowledge involved in writing strategies such as planning, drafting and revising text. Because the process is not simple, collaborative learning

should be applied. According to Larsen-Freeman (2000:164), cooperative or collaborative learning essentially involves students learning from each other in groups. In collaborative writing students are encouraged to brainstorm ideas in pairs or groups, to give each other's feedback, and to proofread and edit each other's writing. Successful collaborative writing allows students to learn from each other. It gives each member of the collaboration access to other's mind and knowledge, and it implies the task with a sense of shared goals which can motivate them.

The activities suggested in any level of writing courses have the same main parts namely prewriting, drafting and revising (Oshima and Hogue, 1999, Hedge, 2000). All of activities promoted are purposed to facilitate students to create a good writing. Unfortunately, having applied the activities in the beginning of the semester, I found that students still have some problems in writing argumentation.

This study begins with the identification of some problems in my writing classes. Developing cliché claim and copying other person's opinion have been the main problems followed by their failure to develop sufficient examples to support their claim and eliminate the number of grammatical and mechanical error in their essays. I also tried to find out the reason through some discussions both with students and colleagues. It appeared that students reading habit is unsatisfying and as the result they do not expand their critical thinking skill. The other significant reason is students mostly think that writing is a difficult assignment. These reasons begin from the fact that students do not know their own potential in expressing ideas on written, therefore finding their interest or discovering their 'real expertise' becomes significant.

Purpose

Based on the background above, this study is aimed to improve the students' writing skill especially on argumentative writing in UIN Maliki Malang. It is important in three ways. First, it is expected to guide the students to find their real interest to be developed into claims in their argumentative writing. Second, by starting from their interest, writing argumentation will be a more interesting activity than what they have assumed before, this is because they can publish their argumentative writing in the form of mini magazine. Finally, the students are immersed to collaborative learning which can be applied not only to improve their writing skill but also other competencies.

Scope

Writing is one of the language skills taught in the English Letters and Language Department of UIN Maliki Malang, along with other language skills, namely Listening, Speaking and Reading. Writing I covers paragraph development, writing II focuses on the development of essays of various types, and writing III is limited to the development of Argumentative Essay and practice of TOEFL and IELTS writing test.

Writing III is the concern of this study as argumentative writing appears to be a complex skill for students. Based on pre-test in the form of take home assignment, most of the students' essay started from cliché claim. Some students copied other person's opinion or used some parts of downloaded essay. There were more students developing sufficient examples to support their claim. The number of grammatical and mechanical error in their essays, although not much, still needs to be eliminated.

The course is normally conducted in the cycle planning-drafting-scoring. The textbook used for the course is *Refining Composition Skills* written by Smalley, Ruetten, and Kozyrev (2001). The activities introduced to the course cover Potency mapping, Brainstorming, Schemata broadening, Holding class conference, Peer editing, Draft revising, and Essay publishing.

Description of the Implementation

The implementation involves a series of stages, starting from the planning of the course to the completion of the course described below.

1. Planning the course

Before the activities of writing were started, the students were introduced to some important concept in argumentative writing. Teacher demonstrated the steps of writing using the following aspects:

- Finding the issue on WHAT TO WRITE
- Planning ahead on HOW TO BEGIN
- Finding the idea based on WHICH ONE TO EMPHASIZE
- Figuring out WHICH FACT SUPPORTS IT
- Organizing the idea based on HOW TO ELABORATE IT

The meeting schedule is as follow:

Meeting	Topic	Activities
1	Overview of the course & Pre-test	Writing an argumentative essay as one day assignment
2	Introduction to elements of argumentative writing	Taking notes on the essay feedback and demonstrated procedure
3	Potency Mapping & Brainstorming	Filling out questionnaire and discussion in group of similar interest to propose claim of fact
4	Schemata broadening and outlining	Making catalogue card related to the claim and constructing outline
5	Holding class conference	Answering questions related to the claim and asking for peer comment. Drafting as assignment
6	Peer editing on draft	Revising draft
7	Feedback on first essay	Revising and preparing for 2 nd claim
8	Brainstorming and outlining for 2 nd essay	Proposing claim of value or policy and finding related reference
9	Holding class conference	Answering questions related to the claim and asking for peer comment. Drafting as assignment
10	Peer editing on draft	Revising draft
11	Feedback on 2 nd draft	Revising draft into final work based on teacher's evaluation
12	Planning for publication	Deciding name and theme of the mini magazine as group work
13	Publication process	Arranging the essays and designing the magazine lay out
14	Introduction to TOEFL writing section	Individual test practice
15	Introduction to IELTS writing section	Individual test practice
16	Evaluation on writing test and writing project	Reviewing feedback and comment from the readers of the mini magazine

2. Implementing the course

The core of the writing activities is basically rooted from potency mapping. In this stage, students are trying to discover the following:

- What is my area of interest?
- What kinds of topic I look for when I browse internet?

- What are the issues that I couldn't miss?

From this activity, it was found that the favorable topics cover music; fashion; sport; health, teen's lifestyle; and travelling. Meanwhile the unfavorable ones related to political issue, philosophy and education

Having found the students interest, the next activity is brainstorming in group of similar interest to dig the related issue and decide the claim to be proposed. The first claim is in the form of claim of fact, while the second essay focuses on claim of value or policy. By doing the brainstorming, students can consider the pro and con opinion related to the issue proposed.

There are some goals in conducting brainstorming:

- Finding the possible questions related to the area chosen
- Identifying the controversial issue on it
- Constructing two views : pro & con
- Deciding which one to hold (or taking a stand)

After brainstorming, each of the students proposed two or three claims to be approved by the teacher through personal consultation done outside the class.

In consultation, the teacher reminds students to start searching for related references. The students should organize their reading process by making catalogue card as the following example

Source: Epidemiology and Health (edition: September, 2007)

Quotation: Dr. Mark A. Tully from Ulster University of North Ireland says, "Doing sport less than 30 minutes is advantageous. Based on the research covering 106 subjects aged ranging from 60-6, it is found that although the blood pressure, size of waist and buttock are not significantly different, the group doing walking to work show lower risk of getting heart disease." Dr. Kenneth R. Wilund says, "Doing regular sport can reduce chronicle diseases such as heart disease, diabetic, some kinds of cancer and gall bladder disease".

The students prepared outline of the essay comprising the method of introductory paragraph, method of development paragraph and method of concluding paragraph as reviewed in the introductory to elements of argumentative essay. The method of introductory paragraph can be in the form of funnel, turn about, quotation or dramatic entrance. The method of development paragraph has been discussed in Writing II covering exemplification, comparison and contrast, classification, process analysis and cause-effect analysis.

The next phase is conducting class conference. By participating in class conference, students are getting involved in the following learning experience:

- Presenting the claim
- Defining the type of claim (fact/value/policy)
- Explaining the outline of the argumentative essay
- Sharing ideas
- Getting feedback

In class conference, the students present their outline and asking for comment and suggestion from others. The most frequent suggestion given deals with the method of

introductory paragraph. Instead of having funnel, dramatic entrance or turn about are suggested to improve to quality of introducing claim as seen in the following example

Having Date before Marriage

Many people have negative assumption about having date before marriage. They tend to underestimate making love relationship, seeing the fact that it has some disadvantages such as getting bored easily, wasting time, spending much money, etc. However, we can't deny the positive effect of having date found among the young people. For instance, it can help us to get acquaintance more each time before getting married. Thus, wanting to know our spouse to-be, having date before marriage is needed.

The next activity is drafting done as assignment. In class students check their friends draft by peer-editing to eliminate the grammatical and mechanical errors. This process also facilitates the teacher in the evaluation. The following is an example of a final draft written by a student who is apparently a football-aholic.

The Power of Football

I could play football when I was in elementary school. One of my classmates introduced me about this kind of sport. He explained everything about how to play football, when we could watch football match, what components in football are, and so on. From these cases, I could learn many things about bad effects and benefit of this sport. Actually, bad effects of football are incommensurate to many benefits that we will get from doing this kind of sport.

The first thing that we will get from football is the effect to our health. By football, we get so many advantageous in our body such as getting more energy, reducing risk of heart disease, helping weight control, and many others. Prof. Jiri Dvorak, a FIFA medical expert said, "The potential and the power of football to reach people from all walks of life to promote healthy living and a healthy lifestyle in the Oceania". As we know that this kind of sport will make our concentration improve. We have to concentrate in 90 minutes just

to look for a ball in which only a player brings the ball. We have to run around the field at the time. We have to focus on making a goal or more. Besides, we also have to manage our energy so that we can follow all particular time.

Increasing profit is also a beneficial effect of football. Many football players become rich because of this sport. David Beckham, the most famous British football player, becomes rich because of his skill in football. His club must give him high wage which is balance with his contribution to the club. His ability makes many people offer him to be the model of famous product such as Nike, Pepsi, Lea, etc. Not only the player but also the club or the country will get the benefit of football.

The club's or country's income will also increase because of certain event. In football, we will find many competitions which are hold by FIFA such as EURO cup, Olimpiad cup, etc. Ex Manchester United chief executive David Gill told that "The World cup will be a fantastic event and produce huge profits and the belief that the assets are being provided for free by the clubs. Therefore, many clubs or countries really want to be a host in certain event right now. It is because of the high profit that we will get.

In conclusion, football can give us so many advantages in our life. Our body will be healthy and our profit will increase because of football. Let's make our life better and healthy by this kind of sport. As a famous wise word says, "Men sana in corpore sano" in a strong body contains a healthy life.

The final work is then published in the form of mini magazine done in groups. Publishing the writing covers the following activities:

- Deciding the group member or editorial board
- Deciding the theme of publication and the selected essay
- Organizing the topic of the essays
- Lay outing and printing
- Distributing the mini magazine

The following is the mini magazine's content completed with the elements of the essays produced by the students:

1. Be SILBU magz

Theme: Change the world with writing

Topics	Essay Title	Type of Claims	Method of introductory	Method of development
Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pornography is not art Blue film: a big mistake Having date before marriage 	Claim of fact	Quotation	Comparison & contrast
		Claim of value	Turn about	Cause-effect
		Claim of value	Turn about	Exemplification
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get the best future with SMK 	Claim of fact	Turn about	Exemplification
Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The bad effect of play station Negative effect of getting married in young age Bad effect of transsexual character in TV 	Claim of value	Dramatic entrance	Cause-effect
		Claim of value	Dramatic entrance	Cause-effect
		Claim of fact	Dramatic entrance	Cause-effect
Sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The power of football 	Claim of fact	Dramatic entrance	Exemplification
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does organic food really save our lives? 	Claim of fact	Turn about	Exemplification
Beauty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beauty is cheap 	Claim of value	Quotation	Comparison & contrast

2. Ultra Mag

Theme: Metamorphosis

Topics	Essay Title	Type of Claims	Method of introductory	Method of development
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organization Say no to make a date Polygamy Why women should not have abortion The phenomenon of veil in Indonesia 	Claim of fact	Turn about	Exemplification
		Claim of value	Turn about	Cause-effect
		Claim of value	Turn about	Exemplification
		Claim of value	Funnel	Cause-effect
Entertainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The effect of horror movie What happen with 	Claim of fact	Dramatic entrance	Exemplification
		Claim of value	Turn about	Cause-effect
		Claim of value	Turn about	Exemplification

	our music			
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy and effective way to get data • Is independent learning a good choice? 	Claim of fact Claim of value	Turn about Turn about	Exemplification Exemplification
Culinary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be selective in choosing food product 	Claim of policy	Quotation	Exemplification

3. Lazuardi Magz

Theme: Winged swiftly through the sky

Topics	Essay Title	Type of Claims	Method of introductory	Method of development
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should we follow all western culture? 	Claim of value	Turn about	Comparison & contrast
Beauty and fashion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High heel shoes • Yes, I'm beautiful • Watch our cosmetic 	Claim of fact Claim of value Claim of fact	Turn about Funnel Turn about	Cause-effect Exemplification Exemplification
Social issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it difficult for career women to be successful as men? • No pornography 	Claim of value Claim of value	Turn about Dramatic entrance	Exemplification Cause-effect
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effective is using high technology in school? • The advantages of using train than bus 	Claim of fact Claim of fact	Turn about Funnel	Exemplification Comparison & contrast
Sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indonesia badminton 	Claim of policy	Dramatic entrance	Exemplification
Entertainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indonesian music in Malaysia 	Claim of policy	Dramatic entrance	Exemplification

4. Infinity magazine

Theme: Writing is how to be immortal

Topics	Essay Title	Type of Claims	Method of introductory	Method of development
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fast food is not good for our health Fast food, is it safe? Never let dangerous food kill you 	Claim of value	Funnel	Cause-effect
		Claim of value	Quotation	Cause-effect
		Claim of value	Turn about	Exemplification
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthy life by sport Healthy food 	Claim of value	Turn about	Exemplification
		Claim of value	Quotation	Exemplification
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Going to library is a must Using LPG 	Claim of value	Turn about	Comparison & contrast
		Claim of policy	Funnel	Comparison & contrast
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hate can produce child Sex among Asian The forbidden art 	Claim of fact	Dramatic entrance	Cause-effect
		Claim of fact	Funnel	Cause-effect
		Claim of value	Dramatic entrance	Exemplification
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young generation and identity of nation 	Claim of value	Turn about	Exemplification

3. Completion of the course

Based on the published essays, it is found that there were more students writing on claim of value (58%) than on claim of fact (33%) and claim of policy (9%). This is because they have strong argument which has been rooted from their basic interest. Concerning method of introductory, there is an interesting finding. In previous writing class students tend to use funnel. Yet, because of the suggestion from the class conference, students used various method of introductory. Turn about is mostly used (51%), whereas dramatic entrance is chosen by some students (25%), the rest used quotation (12%) and funnel (12%). The method of development which was mainly employed is exemplification (50%), over cause-effect analysis (35%) and

comparison and contrast (15%). The various types of claim, method of introductory and development employed by the students show that the implementation to some extent help students write using various elements of argumentative essay.

Based on the students' feedback of the course at the end of the writing process, some benefits attained are as follow:

- Students start writing more easily
- They participated actively in class conference
- Reading skill is also promoted
- No more plagiarism found
- Error in diction and grammar can be minimized by learning from others
- Reaching larger audience by distributing the magazines to other classes
- They are challenged to write more productively

Conclusion

This paper has presented a report of the study that was aimed to improve the teaching of Writing III (Argumentative Essay Writing) course in the English Letters and Language Department of UIN Maliki Malang by finding the students' expertise to augment claim quality. The focus of the course was on the improvement of the essay quality particularly on claim of fact, value and policy. The examination of the teaching implementation and student feedback shows three major advantages of this study. First, it is expected to guide the students to find their real interest to be developed into claims in their argumentative writing. Second, by starting from their interest, writing argumentation will be a more interesting activity than what they have assumed before, this is because they can publish their argumentative writing in the form of mini

magazine. Finally, the students are immersed to collaborative learning which can be applied not only to improve their writing skill but also other competencies.

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