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STUDENTS' VOICE ON THE USE OF DEBATE AND 'SEMI' SIT-IN EXAM IN WRITING CLASS

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Abstract. This descriptive qualitative research attempts to examine students' attitude towards the implementation of debate activity in writing class and the implementation of 'semi' sit-in writing exam. In this study, the researchers used the term 'semi' sit-it exam to describe a condition when students have to develop the accepted writing outline into an argumentative essay in the exam day. Before writing the outline, students do debate activity to generating ideas as well as understanding the concept of argumentative essay through speaking activity. As many as 51 students of English Department, University of Islam Malang participated in this study. The data was collected through interview, and the obtained was analyzed and classified based on similar points. The result indicated that students learn new things and have better speaking skill through debate. On the other hand, few students argued that debate activity fails to assist them in writing process. Students responded differently towards the implementation of 'semi' sit-in writing exam. Some students stated 'semi' sit-in writing exam helped them write better and improve their writing speed while some students found difficulties to write essay with no help from others.

Keywords. Argumentative Essay; Writing Test; Writing Anxiety

A. INTRODUCTION

Writing is still considered challenging by most of students since it integrates multiple aspects, such as grammar, vocabulary, writing mechanics, ideas, supportive environment, knowledge about the issues, and understanding the essay organization, and many more. Furthermore, a good writer should make their written text meaningful and understandable. Crème and Lea (2008) argued that writing is about organizing and put ideas together into sentences and paragraph to deliver the message to the readers. In fact, it needs hard effort and adequate writing practice. Most students find writing difficult skill to master due to some factors, such as linguistics knowledge, limited time and lack of topical knowledge (Kurniasih, 2013). Writing elicits students' critical thinking and train students to be able to express ideas accurately and clearly. Richards and Renandya (2010) argued that writing involve complex linguistic knowledge such as grammatical knowledge, vocabulary, and writing mechanics. It is not surprising that producing a piece of writing in students' native language is difficult and writing in the second language is even more difficult (Gilmore, 2009). Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to be give more attention during the teaching and learning process in order to help students to be able to deliver their ideas successfully in the spoken and written form (Ismail, 2011).

Those problems will likely lead to writing anxiety as the previous research revealed that students experienced high writing anxiety when they are asked to write essay in English which results in producing poor essay. It is proved by a study conducted by Kurniasih (2017, p. 1) which found that “writing anxiety showed negative correlation with students' writing performance. In

other words, when students felt anxious, they tend to produce poor compositions. In contrast, when their anxiety is low, they will likely to produce good piece of writing". Yaman (2010) as cited in Bayat (2014) affirmed that writing anxiety may have positive and negative effect towards the students' performance. The positive anxiety is manifested in the form of motivation, and the negative type cause students' feeling nervous, not confident, and stuck.

In the development of technology, it is now much easier for students to produce excellent work; free error writing in terms of diction and grammar use. Students can find solution for their problem just in one click. Many students who feel desperate tend to misuse the advanced technology by translating from Indonesian version of their essay which has been prepared before into English using particular sites, but that way will not improve students writing ability since writing needs process and much practices.

Teachers can easily notice whether the work is original or not by asking the meaning of some words which are not commonly used by the students or comparing the students' pre-test score and their writing product during the course. If they cannot predict the meaning correctly, it can be subjected that the work is a machine work. It will obviously show the students' writing ability. To overcome the problems above and the researchers integrated process approach and writing approach in order to know students' real writing ability. The purpose of this study is to investigate students' point of view about the implementation of 'semi' sit-in exam. The term 'semi' sit in exam refers to the researchers' own idea about designing a writing task in which students have gone through the process of writing for the outline and finally they have to develop their outline into an argumentative essay, particularly their body paragraph. They have consulted their outline with major revision. The feedback had been given focusing on the language; diction, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanic, and ideas.

The researchers are interested to know the students' perception about the implementation of debate activity in a writing class and the implementation of 'semi' sit in writing test, integration between process and product approach. It is really crucial to do since the result of this research can be used as reference or recommendation for the next researchers.

B. METHODS

As many as 51 students enrolled in Writing III course participated in this descriptive study. In the course, students Third semester students of English Department in University of Islam Malang are required to take Writing III course in which students are required to write argumentative essay on a given topic. The researchers used semi structure interview to gather the data, then, the obtained data was classified based on the same categories and reported.

C. RESULT & DISCUSSION

The following are the description of how writing process is done in the writing class.

The course started with discussing the concept of essay organization and breaking down the model texts into outline to find out the thesis statement, topic sentences, and structure of concluding paragraph. Those texts also can be used as the example of good essay. Furthermore, it is hoped that students can easily understand the essay organization and do not find any difficulties to put theories into practice. After that, students are instructed to actively participate in the debate activities as the initial step in writing, namely generating ideas. The researchers see this way of teaching as a part of writing process which can increase students' motivation to write, positive perception on writing, and lower their anxiety. As a research conducted by Kurniasih (2013) revealed that lack of topical knowledge become one of the sources of writing anxiety. More to that, Steele (2004) affirmed collaborative work is one characteristic of Process Approach which plays a prominent role to help students generate and organize their ideas.

During the debate section all students have different roles, such as being the debater, adjudicators, chairman, note takers, and time keeper. Students were given enough time to prepare their arguments before the debated started. The note takers should write down both teams' arguments in the given form. The debate was conducted in three sessions with different topics; a).

Giving money to beggar, b). Separating class for low and high students, and c). Students with good grammar knowledge have good writing ability. At the end of each debate session, the chairman announced the winner by taking the average scores of the two adjudicators which have been scored using a scoring rubric of some criteria, such as content, style, and strategy. After the debate session, students should choose one topic and write an outline by making use of the ideas obtained in debate activity.

The following are the description of how sit-in writing test is done.

Students were given a timed test, 100 minutes to develop their outline into an argumentative essay type I/II/III which has been previously consulted several times to the lecturer. Students can develop their outline only if their outline has been accepted with the code 'ACC'/accepted on their outline paper. Basically, students have to develop only the body paragraphs since they have completed and consulted the introductory and concluding paragraph before the writing test. Furthermore, students were not allowed to access their digital dictionary, but they could only look up their manual dictionary during the exam.

**The following are the result of the obtained data which has been classified into some points:
Students' point of view on the use of debate in writing class**

Some students believed that debate activity help them to be more knowledgeable. During the debate session, students have the chance to listen to different arguments supported with some evidence to convince the opponents, so students become better informed about particular. It also trains their critical thinking to respond information. Iwamoto's (2010) findings proved that 80% of the students learn critical and logical thinking through debate activity. One cause of writing anxiety is lack of topical knowledge which now can be overcome with debate activity to reinforce students' knowledge about the topic to write. As one student said that "Debate activity gives me more ideas, inspiration, and new information about the topic".

Some researchers had found that debate activity is very useful to improve speaking and writing skill, especially argumentative writing because debate trains students to learn critical thinking, organize their ideas, and help students to find appropriate and strong pro and cons arguments (Moore and Parker, 2004 & Cotton, 2002, as cited in Iwamoto, 2010). Furthermore, an experimental study conducted by Kimura (1998) revealed that students in experimental group taught by using debate have better quality in arguments, organization of ideas, and style of communicating the ideas compare to the students in control group taught by using conventional technique, like grammar and translation practice and many writing practice.

The second advantage of debate activity is it is an interesting way of improving productive skills. Students perceived positively on the use of debate technique in writing class, it is an innovative way of turning boring class into an enjoyable atmosphere. Iwamoto's (2010) study reported that most of the students' enjoyed debate activity and wanted to have another debate. Integrating speaking and writing help students to improve two productive skills in the spoken and written form. Normally, students only have writing activities for one semester. After they have completed one writing assignment, another writing project is waiting to be completed. Thus, it can be concluded that writing course means asking the students to write as many as possible to make them a better writer. To be noted than students are not machine, they will do better task if they are treated as human who likes to be in a comfortable situation. As a student argued that "I like debate activity in writing class, not only writing and writing".

Some student also argued that all students should be well trained of the debate technique, so they will obey the debate rules. If all the students have understood and are familiar with the technique, the debate session will run well and help the note taker to summarize the arguments in a better way. As stated by one student that "Sometimes, it is difficult to understand another team idea, if they don't have good experience in debate".

The next point is that students have different opinion on the assigned topics, but they could not deliver their opinion because they did not become the debaters in which they should use the

opinion of others in the argumentative essay. Therefore, teacher should be aware of the weakness of debate and allow the students to write down their own opinion if the argument is strong enough to rebut the opponent's idea. One student complained that debate limits his creativity. As stated by the students' Student 4 said that "Actually I have my own opinion, but I cannot use it in my argumentative essay".

Students' attitude toward the integration between debate and writing test

Developing the outline makes writing test easier because students have made their writing outline and have made some revisions based on the researcher's feedback before the exam day. In other words, student will have to write an argumentative essay for the accepted outline. They have to develop their essay on the body paragraphs and conclusion in the class. It is easier because they have been ready before attending the exam. This is supported by a statement that "This kind of writing exam helps me to write better because I don't start from the very beginning".

Some students argued that writing test improve students' writing speed because they have to write the essay within a limited time is challenging. Students should be able to generate ideas, choose the correct diction, use correct grammar, and punctuation. As stated by one student that "I have only one hour to write my full essay. I learn to improve my writing speed"

Some students found it difficult to write an essay in the test because they are not allowed to discuss with friends for unsure diction and grammar. It is the time for them to measure their own ability. In some writing activities, students do peer editing activity, pair work, and group work, as stated by student that "it's so difficult because I cannot discuss with my friends if I don't know the word and the grammar".

The majority of the students believed that debate activity assist them during the writing process to generate ideas for new topics, and it is also beneficial for the students to lower their anxiety in writing. A study conducted by Kurniasih (2013) found that students who are lack of topical knowledge tend to feel anxious which result it making error in writing. This study revealed that 14% of the students experienced high anxiety to complete their argumentative essay within time constraints. However, 86% of the students argued that developing argumentative essay from a fix outline made them more relax because they already know what to write in the classroom, feels like completing the essay at home. Yayli (2009) as cited in Bayat (2014) stated that process based writing may change students' negative perception toward the writing itself. Furthermore, a study conducted by Grabe and Kaplan (1996) proved that writing process help students to produce successful text.

This way of administering writing test helps teachers to evaluate students' real writing ability since students were instructed to use only the ideas obtained in the debate session not from anywhere else. In addition, students did their own task without having the access to internet. They were only allowed to consult to their dictionary. The researcher believes that it is the right way to assess the students' skill and still accommodate students' affective side.

D. CONCLUSION

From the statement above, it can be concluded that most of the students showed positive attitude toward the implementation of 'semi' sit-in writing exam preceded by debate activity. Students think that integrating speaking and writing helps them improve their productive skill to express ideas written and orally. However, this study needs to be made clear in giving the rules for the note takers to prepare their note neatly and to present the opinion of both teams to avoid misunderstanding. This study also found that this way of teaching writing may give better solution to know the students' real writing ability. It is suggested for the next researcher to study conduct a study on similar topic using experimental design to measure the effectiveness of debate technique for writing skill. Furthermore, it is also needed to carry out a correlation study between students' perception and their writing achievement.

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