

EMPLOYING SELF-ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUE TO PROMOTE STUDENT'S WRITING ABILITY IN COMPOSING CAUSE-EFFECT ESSAY AT UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH GORONTALO

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Abstract

This present study aimed to improve students' writing ability through self-assessment technique. The researcher used an action research method with two cycles. Each of cycle comprised four procedures namely: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The data was collected by observation and test. The researcher used an observation sheet towards students and teacher's activities during teaching and learning process. In addition, the researcher used test to assess students' achievement in writing. The subject of this study were 25 students of English Literature in Universitas Muhammadiyah Gorontalo who enrolled Essay Writing Subject in academic year of 2016/2017.

The result showed that students' writing ability improved significantly through self-assessment technique. The students had improvement in five aspects such as content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. The students' writing average score achieved 86,2. The students' response towards the technique was good, that the students agree of the benefits they obtained through self-assessment technique.

Keywords: *Writing, Cause-Effect Essay, Self-Assessment*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of four skills that students need to proficient in learning English as a foreign language. Students in an English department have to train themselves to be familiar with complex processes in composing an essay such as the process of gathering ideas, vocabulary enrichment, and grammatical rules in writing. These processes engage perpetually with four important aspects in writing that are content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanism, that need to be mastered by the students at the same time. This is the reason why writing is considered as the most difficult skill for the students. Richard and Renandya (2002) agreed and emphasized that writing is the most difficult skill for L2 learners and the difficult is not only in generating ideas but also transferring ideas into a text.

In English Department of cultural science faculty in Universitas Muhammadiyah Gorontalo, the researcher found that generally, the students who were in writing class had lack of English vocabulary and less of ability in composing sentences using the correct grammar. As a result, the lecturer needed to explain how to compose the correct sentences in English, first before she came to the topic/material based on course outline. It was considered as a time consuming activity, yet the lecturer thought it was the best way because she could not ask the students to compose an essay before they known to write sentences with the correct grammar.

In “Basic Writing” course, the students got low achievement in writing task. Most of them got below 70. Only eleven out of twenty five students had score above 70, and the rest thirteen students got score in range of 60-67. This result probably happened because the students’ lack of grammar mastery and the students’ lack of time in evaluating their own writing during they wrote an essay. This phenomenon attracted the researcher to find a solution in minimizing lecturer’s overwhelming task in evaluating students’ writing individually, to promote students’ writing ability in composing an essay, and to provide appropriate time for students to evaluate their work. Finally, self assessment was employed in the next writing course that was “Essay Writing” course.

Self Assessment is believed as a suitable technique to solve problems occur in writing an essay. Through this technique, the students develop their confidence and independence to analyze and evaluate their own writing, (Siew, 2007). In addition, Mariana (2017) elucidates that students train their critical thinking, observing, and finding out their own mistakes in writing and try to compose a better essay in the next opportunity. After all, if it is applied effectively, the students’ writing ability can develop and the teaching and learning process can be meaningful for both students and lecturer/teacher.

It is in line with Alderson’s perspective (2000) about self-assessment. He defines self-assessment is increasingly seen as a useful source of information on learner abilities and processes. Similarly, Student Self-assessment leads the instruction in learning toward helping individuals better understand themselves so that they can make more intelligent decision (Gronlund & Waugh, 2009). As stated by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2004), that it can build students’ self confidence because it lets them to give more accurate

information about their progress. At the same time, they are motivated to set their own targets and refer back to these at a given point in time in order to assess how successfully they have met those targets.

There are some reasons for choosing Self Assessment as the appropriate technique to overcome problems in writing class. First, the abundant number of studies in the field has indicated that Self Assessment is crucially effective and significant in developing the various language skills and learning strategies and in raising the awareness and motivation necessary for language learning (Mazloomi & Khabiri, 2018). Second, it can identify the gap between the learners' knowledge and that of their teachers' criteria for their writing assessment. It can also help them develop their own criteria for success in their writing classes. Third, Self-assessment provides information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which the students are engaged. It also will ultimately lead to increase productivity and autonomy, higher motivation, less frustration and higher retention rates among learners, (Rivers, 2001)

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used mix method, both qualitative and quantitative since it aims to describe the employment of self-assessment technique in teaching writing. This study is conducted based on the problems occur in the field which is analyzed with the supporting theories. This study is an action research with four procedures namely planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The reflection stage aims to fix several weaknesses for the next cycle. The subjects of this study were 25 students of English Literature in Universitas Muhammadiyah Gorontalo who enrolled Essay Writing Subject in academic year of 2016/2017. The researcher acted as a collaborative lecturer in teaching writing to the subjects.

The researcher prepares the strategy and the activity, the appropriate lesson plan, and the teaching media and material, the students' worksheet, the instrument of data collection, and set of criteria of success. The researcher also provides two follow up activities into two cycles. These two follow up activities are aimed to reduce the ignorance of students doing self assessment. These two activities are portfolios and publishing on the

Facebook. The researcher emphasizes the students' performance in writing on five aspects such as content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics.

The researcher also set the criteria of success as in table 1.

The criteria of Success	
The Process	The Product
All students in "essay writing" class are motivated during the action.	The students are expected to achieve the average score: 85 as the passing grade

In collecting the data in this study, the researcher uses several instruments. The test; is students' writing in composing cause-effect essay, observation sheet, and questionnaire. Observation sheet is used to obtain the data about the implementation of self assessment in teaching writing, its benefits in particular. Meanwhile, the questionnaire is used to find out the students' opinion and responds towards the teaching and learning process with self assessment assistance.

After introducing and explaining self assessment usage in writing, the researcher analyzes the result of its implementation. In this case, reflection is done to investigate whether or not the students achieve the criteria of success.

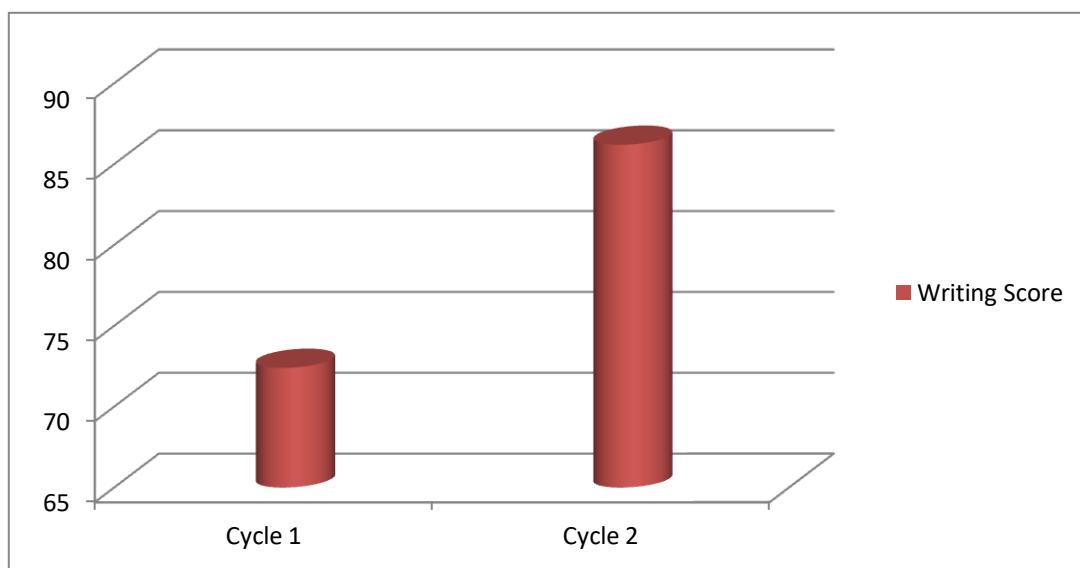
RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This study is conducted into two cycles. In cycle 1, the researcher and lecturer introduce self assessment as new instrument in writing class and it aims to help the students in composing their essay. Then, they are asked to write a cause-effect essay and choose the topic of essay by themselves. The topics are various based on students' interest but the type of those essays is cause-effect essay. This cycle runs for 4 meetings including the steps of writing that are prewriting, writing, revising, editing, and publishing. In this cycle the students need to publish their writing in form of portfolio file. Based on observation result of cycle 1, most of the students are confused in using self assessment sheet and they are reluctant to express themselves at the beginning. The lower students were not comfortable and did not like the idea of revealing their failure in writing an essay. As a consequence, the

researcher and lecturer spent some time with those students to explain them about aims of the technique which is to help them in order to know the mistakes that they have done in their writing and they could revise it immediately. It also helps the lecturer to determine the students' problems and to know about students' strengths in order to handle and reinforce them properly. Another weakness in this cycle is that in post-writing activity. Most of the students are not interested and not enthusiast in the way of keeping their writing by themselves in form of portfolio file. They wanted their writing published online, hence; everybody could read their writing. The students' writing score do not achieve minimum score which is set as the criteria of success, with average score 72,4. Sixteen students got below 75 and the rest got above 75. Therefore, the researcher plans cycle two with several changes to achieve the criteria of success.

In cycle 2, the students are asked to write again a cause-effect essay and are asked to publish it online in Facebook. But, before they publish it, the lecturer emphasizes that they have to evaluate their writing carefully by using self assessment since it will be seen by everyone in their FB. In that way, the students are excited to write the essay better than in cycle 1. In this cycle, the students have opportunity to discuss the draft of their essay with the lecturer and their friends. Feedback for lecturer and friends help the student develop their paragraphs in essay. After that, the students observe, analyze, and evaluate their writing with assistance of self assessment. In this cycle, students are more confident and honest to express their progress of essay on self-assessment sheet. Based on their evaluation on self-assessment sheet, they revise the essay, write the revised one again, and publish it on FB. They are aware that their writing improved when they use self assessment well because they found their mistakes and weakness through self assessment sheet. They understand and evaluate the structure of an essay that are introduction, body paragraphs, and concluding paragraphs. In addition, they understand how to develop introductory paragraph by using anecdote, general to specific and historical style. They are also able to write a thesis statement with or without predictors. In short, they are improve in participation in class and writing skill with focus on content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. This cycle spent also 4 meetings. The result of this cycle was

that 19 students got 80-95. Only 2 students got below 75 and the rest 3 got 75. Therefore, the students average score was 86,2 which pass the criteria set before, that is 85.



The questionnaire shows that the students' response towards self assessment is positive. All students said that self assessment help them to fix their first draft, to find out their mistakes particularly in grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation, guide them to analyze carefully every part of essay. By using self assessment they feel more confident to write and to publish their writing online on their FB because they believe the mistakes have been revised before. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2004), that Self-Assessment can build students' self confidence because it lets them to give more accurate information about their progress. At the same time, they are motivated to set their own targets and refer back to these at a given point in time in order to assess how successfully they have met those targets. In line with Brown and Harris (2014) who argue that students' self-assessment is an important aspect of and contributor to greater self-regulation of learning. Thus, the students in this study applied self assessment effectively because they improve their participation during teaching and learning, their confidence, their awareness to learn regularly, and their writing on cause and effect essay.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

To improve students writing skill, the lecturer has to employ the appropriate strategy. The lecturer needs to explain the students the importance of composing a good essay. To create

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a good essay absolutely needs time and several steps such as prewriting, editing, revising, and publishing. In editing and revising step, self assessment is appropriate instrument to measure the progress of their writing. Besides, the lecturer also needs to act as a facilitator who guide and explain them the benefits of evaluate their writing by using self assessment before they publish it. Furthermore, the lecturer should give opportunity for students to discuss their essay with lecturer and friend to get fruitful feedback.

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