PROCESS-BASED ACADEMIC ESSAY WRITING INSTRUCTION IN AN EFL CONTEXT

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Abstract: Although a process-based approach to writing instruction is not a new concept, its merits in the teaching of EFL are unequivocal. It has been apparent that many EFL teachers, particularly in Indonesia, are still practicing product-oriented teaching of writing in which emphasis is given to grammatical and lexical accuracy in students' compositions (i.e., essays). For this reason, this article argues that EFL teachers need to consider implementing process-based academic writing instruction, particularly, at the college level. Within the process-based framework, writing is viewed as process which involves pre-writing, drafting, responding, revising, editing, and post-writing through which students recursively and reflectively reel.

Keywords: Process-based approach, writing process, academic writing, EFL

Writing is not only a tool forcommunication, but also it serves as a means of learning, thinking, and organizing knowledge or ideas. In other words, writing is a complex activity involving some stages of composition task completion (Chen, 2002; Watskins, 2004). Undoubtedly, this skill particularly in an EFL context (i.e., Indonesia) has been considered one of the most difficult skills for learners to master. The difficulty is due not only to the need to generate and organize ideas using the appropriate choices of vocabulary, sentence, and paragraph organization but also to turn such ideas into a readable text along with a particular rhetoric pattern (Richards & Renandya, 2002). Moreover, Indonesian learners often encounter difficulties in transferring ideas from their native language--Indonesian into the target language--English. This case calls for teachers' greater attention to help the learners to be successful in a writing skill.

Therefore, teaching writing should be viewed in both cognitive and humanistic perspectives, as Foong (1999) points out. In the cognitive perspective, writing is thought of as a process of forming concepts and forging the new structure of ideas on the basis of certain purpose, audience, and language use (Kirszner & Mandell, 2000). In this sense, writing is considered as the process of writing, involving such activities as pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing in which the activities are reflective and recursive. In the humanistic view, writing is seen as an expressive mode through which student writers use writing as a means of exploring and discovering meaning by themselves and develop their own voices. In this regard, the students are encouraged to

generate their own ideas by writing freely so that they can express their ideas without interruption in which a teacher acts as a facilitator whose task is to promote a supportive learning atmosphere, which provides students opportunities to write about their own ideas and discover their voices rather than acts as a judge whose task is to identify students' errors. In this regard, EFL teachers should not consider writing as a product in which they greatly emphasize grammatical and lexical accuracy in students' compositions, but they are required to allow students to focus on their ideas and then encourage the students to work on that accuracy in the revision stage.

On the basis of the two perspectives above, in this paper, a process-based approach to teaching academic essay writing is highlighted particularly at a college level in an EFL context--Indonesia. Within the process-based framework, teachers focus not merely on finished writing products (e.g., essays), but also on writing processes that encourage student's active class participation during the entire writing process so that teacher-student and student-student interactions optimally occur in the classroom.

PROCESS-BASED WRITING INSTRUCTION

Since the early 1970's, writing instruction has made a steady turn from emphasizing the finished product to the writing process. Although process-based writing has long been implemented in English language composition and ESL courses, in recent years, it has been adopted in foreign language classes (Deng, 2005). Unfortunately, many teachers in an EFL context still view writing as exercises in perfecting grammar and vocabulary (Muncie, 2002). In other words, teachers deemphasize how students complete certain writing tasks in writing processes such as pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing.

Therefore, many educators advocate a process-based approach to teaching writing because it is concerned with the various stages from pre-writing, drafting, responding, revising, editing, to evaluating that allow students to go through such stages so as to complete particular writing tasks (i.e., Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Harmer, 2007). Further, some authors (e.g., Dirby, Kirby, & Liner, 2004; Seow, 2002; Terrible, 1996) suggest that process-oriented writing when implemented in the classroom incorporate another stage externally imposed on students by a teacher. Such a stage includes post-writing (e.g., reading aloud, displaying, or publishing) in which teacher and peer reviews are also included because both have central roles in the successful implementation of process-based writing instruction. More crucially, in such activities, students have opportunities to improve their compositions, may be motivated to write better, and are trained to think critically.

In the process-based writing instruction, a teacher and students play pivotal roles. For a teacher, she or he serves as resource, facilitator, motivator, and feedback provider and evaluator. First, as a resource, the teacher provides some input that is learnable or comprehensible for the students by selecting useful tasks or activities for the students. In addition, she or he should provide advice to the students in a constructive and tactful way (Harmer, 2007). As a monitor, the teacher is required to monitor students' activities because there are varied activities that are to be done by the students. As a motivator, inasmuch as the students go through intense activities, the teacher needs to motivate the students to complete writing tasks assigned. As feedback provider and evaluator, before the teacher evaluates the students' performance as a whole, he or she provides feedback on the students' work or responds positively and encouragingly to the content of it, as Harmer (2007) emphasizes. Then, the teacher can assess the stu-

dents' work as a result of the feedback given.

For students, they serve as competent planners, writers, feedback providers of their peers' work in a peer review activity, and editors for their own compositions. In other words, the students can serve not only as planners and writers but also as feedback providers in addition to the teacher. Students' involvements in providing feedback mean empowering them in thinking critically, but objectively providing constructive feedback to their peers. As editors, they are encouraged to edit their own pieces of writing upon the completion of the revision phase (Brown, 2007). This can encourage the students to assume a responsibility for their composition improvement. In addition to such four roles, since the students are encouraged to reflect on what they have learned during the class periods, the students are trained to be reflective students so that they are aware of their own learning practice.

To sum up, the process-based writing instruction involves the step-by-step activities that enable students to complete writing tasks assigned in which the teacher and students play crucial roles in working on such tasks.

IMPLEMENTING PROCESS-BASED ACADEMIC ESSAY WRITING IN AN EFL COLLEGE CLASS

This process-based academic essay writing class involves a series of activities such as pre-writing, drafting, responding, revising and editing, assessing, and post-writing as previously mentioned. In addition to the seven main activities, a reflection stage for students is aimed to encourage them to reflect on what they have learned during the writing process and in turn can promote their awareness of writing practice.

Pre-writing

Activating schemata is essential for a teacher to get students to know possible topics that they can develop into complete essays easily. Activating the students' schemata can be done through pre-writing or planning activity (Anderson, 2003). It is any activity in the classroom, encouraging the students to write. This stage is geared to stimulate ideas or thoughts for the students to get started. Pre-writing also assists student writers in deciding what to write about so that they can organize their thoughts. In short, the purpose of this stage is to enable student writers to explore certain topics in an unstructured and non-threatening way before working on formal essays. For novice student writers, pre-writing is thought of as a prerequisite for producing good essays.

In this writing class, student writers have three main jobs such as (1) choosing a topic that interests the students, (2) narrowing the topic chosen that fits a writing task, and (3) collecting information and developing ideas (Oshima & Hogue, 2006). For instance, suppose a student is interested in "culture," which is very large topic, she or he should narrow it perhaps into "culture shock." Writing such a topic is still too large because it may include *communication problems*, *working habits*, *social environment* or *milieu*, *family life*, *traffic regulations*, and so on. Therefore, the student needs to narrow or narrower the topic possibly into *two main communication problems faced by international students in the USA*. After that, she or he needs to develop the narrow topics into supporting details. In doing so, the student is required to apply strategies for generating ideas. Roughly speaking, there are six main techniques for generating ideas or brainstorming like journal writing, free writing, w-h questions, listing, clustering, and outlining.

In other words, the main goals of pre-writing are to help the students organize their ideas and to train the students to plan what they are going to write so that they can

develop their ideas into completed essays easily and precisely (Widodo, 2006a).

Drafting

Once students have written down sufficient ideas at the pre-writing stage, they proceed to a drafting phase. In this case, student writers need to focus on the fluency of writing, not on the grammatical accuracy. In this phase, the students are encouraged to develop their ideas into rough drafts without considering the grammatical accuracy first. As previously described, in the process-based writing, the grammatical accuracy will be emphasized during the revising stage. In other words, rough drafts are not supposed to be perfect pertaining to grammatical accuracy in that this process-based writing class is a continuous process of discovery, and promotes the fluency of ideas so that a certain writing task can smoothly be completed.

Responding

Responding to students' essays by both the teacher and students themselves plays indispensable roles in the successful implementation of the process-based writing (Ferris, 2003). Responding or giving feedback is primarily intended to see students' first or second drafts. It is suggested that in this feedback session a teacher use the transparency projector, text viewers, or LCD projectors connected with the computer so that the students can view each others' drafts (Widodo, 2006b). Shortly, a responding activity is geared to encourage students to participate actively in the class, get involved in an authentic communicative context, and develop critical reading skills. To facilitate the peer review, the review guideline should be provided (See Appendix A for a Sample Guideline for a Peer Essay Review).

To sum up, involving students in providing feedback means empowering the students in thinking critically and participating actively in the class in which the goal is to encourage the students to write better.

Revising and Editing

When revising the drafts, the students review their work on the basis of the feedback given in the responding stage. They re-examine what has been written to view how effectively they have communicated their meanings to readers. It is important to note that revising does not simply involve looking at language errors but also addresses the global content and organization of ideas so that the writer's intent is made clearer to the reader.

In editing, students get involved in fine-tuning their own drafts as they prepare the final drafts for a product assessment by the teacher. In this regard, the students are required to check minor mistakes related to grammar (i.e., *tenses* or *subject-verb agreements*), spellings, punctuations, dictions, and contractions. Thus, the goal of this activity is to produce well-written essays before the students submit the work to the teacher.

Assessing

In this phase, the teacher assesses the students' essays in which the goal is to see how well each student or each group has completed the work. In doing so, the teacher has two options for scoring or grading systems--either analytical on the basis of the specific aspects of writing ability or holistic based upon the global interpretation of the effectiveness of the compositions (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). In this process-based academic essay writing instruction, the analytic scoring system may be more rewarding for students to allow them to look at what aspects they lack in detail. For this reason, a teacher needs to design a marking scheme for students' essay assessment (See Appendix B for the Marking Scheme of Writing Assessment).

Post-Writing

Post-writing is any classroom activity that the teacher and students can do with the completed essays. This may encompass publishing online or displaying the finished essays on notice boards, sharing with one another, or reading aloud. The post-writing stage is a medium of appreciating students' work. In other words, this is a reward for the work done well and can encourage students to endeavor to write better (Widodo, 2006b).

Reflection

Once they have gone through the process-based academic essay writing stages, the students are required to reflect on what they have learned during the entire writing process. This encourages the students to self-evaluate their strengths and weaknesses of their writing abilities and to think of how they will make further improvements for their writing skills. To assist the students in carrying out reflection, the teacher should provide students reflection sheets so that the intended goals of reflection can be accomplished (See Appendix C for a Student Reflection Sheet). This reflection record can help the teacher look at what the students have accomplished and what they need to improve so that she or he can help the students make further improvements for their future work assigned.

CONCLUSION

Because the process-based academic essay writing instruction involves the various stages that are time-consuming, a teacher is required to pay great attention to focused writing activity, good classroom management, and student's equal involvement. It is also important to ensure that classroom learning and writing experience help students become confident and independent student writers. More crucially, the teacher should build the solid community of writing practice in the classroom. In short, within the process-based framework, the teacher focuses not merely on finished essays, but also on writing processes that maximize student class participation in which the teacher should consistently carry out the overall writing activities (See Appendix D for the Process-Based Writing Cycle).

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APPENDIX A
A Sample Guideline for Peer Essay Review

A Guideline for Peer Essay Review

Writers : _____ Reviewers : _____
Topic : _____ Type of Essay : _____

Form
Does the essay consist of?

Points	*Yes*	*No*
1. General Information		
2. Thesis		
3. Body		
4. Concluding Paragraph		

Content
1. Is general information interesting and readable?
Comments: _____
_____

2. Is the thesis clear?
Comments:_____
_____

3. Does the body develop the thesis?
Comments: _____
_____
_____

4. Does the concluding paragraph summarize the body?
Comments:_____
_____

***Coherence* & Cohesion**
1. Do all of the supporting sentences develop main ideas in each paragraph?
_____

2. Are there transitional signals (phrases or sentences) connecting sentences or paragraphs?
_____

3. Are the ideas arranged in logical order?
_____

Grammar
1. Are there any mistakes in tenses?
_____
_____

2. Are there any mistakes in modals?
_____
_____

3. Are there any mistakes in agreement?
_____
_____
_____

4. Are there any other grammatical mistakes? Please specify.
_____
_____

Vocabulary
1. Is word choice appropriate?
_____
_____

2. Is word choice reader friendly?
_____
_____

Mechanics
1. Is there any mistake in spelling
_____
_____

2. Is there any mistake in punctuation?
_____
_____

(Widodo,2006)

APPENDIX B
The Marking Scheme of Writing Assessment

No.	Criteria	Marks	Rating Scales*				
			Excellent	*Good*	*Fair*	*Poor*	*Very Poor*
1.	Content	**40**	32-40	24-31	16-23	8-15	0-7
2.	Organization of Ideas	**30**	28-30	21-27	14-20	7-13	0-6
3.	Language	**20**	18-20	14-17	9-13	4-8	0-3
4.	Style	**10**	10	7-9	5-7	2-4	0-2
	TOTAL	**100**					

*** Rating Scales**

Ratings	Descriptors
Excellent	• **Content:** Very clear and substantive understanding of the topic given in terms of the length/scope of the essay, well-developed, thoughtfully and thoroughly-supported, very reasonably and relevantly-presented, excellent awareness of audience and purpose • **Organization of Ideas:** A very convincing and clear thesis statement, very coherent and well-organized in an introduction, development, and a conclusion with excellent use of cohesive devices (paragraphs at the essay level; sentences at the paragraph level), very appropriate and logical structure both within the essay as a whole and within the paragraph, excellent main ideas at the paragraph level, very well-informed • **Language:** Excellent command of English, excellent control of language usage, very frequent use of excellent complex and compound sentences without any errors, impressive range of appropriate vocabulary and idiomatic language • **Style:** Evident stylistic control and display of impressive creativity and flair as well as originality throughout the essay
Good	• **Content:** Clear and substantial understanding of the topic given in terms of the length/scope of the essay, well-developed, thoughtfully and thoroughly-supported, reasonably and relevantly-presented, good awareness of audience and purpose • **Organization of Ideas:** A convincing and clear thesis statement, coherent and well-organized in an introduction, development, and a conclusion with good use of cohesive devices (paragraphs at the essay level; sentences at the paragraph level), appropriate and logical structure both within the essay as a whole and within the paragraph, good main ideas at the paragraph level, well-informed • **Language:** Good command of English, good control of language usage, frequent use of good complex and compound sentences with insignificant errors, good range of appropriate vocabulary and idiomatic language • **Style:** Good stylistic control and display of creativity and flair as well as originality throughout the essay

Ratings	Descriptors
Fair	• **Content:** Fairly clear and substantive understanding of the topic given in terms of the length/scope of the essay, sufficiently-developed, satisfactorily-supported and presented, satisfactory awareness of audience and purpose • **Organization of Ideas:** A fairly convincing and clear thesis statement, coherent and satisfactorily-organized in an introduction, development, and a conclusion with satisfactory use of cohesive devices (paragraphs at the essay level; sentences at the paragraph level), fairly appropriate and logical structure both within the essay as a whole and within the paragraph, satisfactory main ideas at the paragraph level, fairly-informed • **Language:** Satisfactory command of English, satisfactory control of language usage, fairly frequent use of satisfactory complex and compound sentences with a few errors, a satisfactory range of appropriate vocabulary and idiomatic language • **Style:** Satisfactory stylistic control and display of creativity and flair as well as originality throughout the essay
Poor	• **Content:** Poor understanding of the topic given in terms of the length/scope of the essay, occasionally irrelevant and poorly-developed as well as supported, dissatisfactory-presented, poor awareness of audience and purpose • **Organization of Ideas:** A barely convincing and less clear thesis statement, less coherent and poorly-organized in an introduction, development, and a conclusion with poor use of cohesive devices (paragraphs at the essay level; sentences at the paragraph level), less appropriate and logical structure both within the essay as a whole and within the paragraph, poor main ideas at the paragraph level, poorly-informed • **Language:** Poor command of English, poor control of language usage, frequent use of poor complex and compound sentences with many errors, poor range of appropriate vocabulary and idiomatic language • **Style:** Poor stylistic control and display of creativity and flair as well as originality throughout the essay
Very Poor	• **Content:** Barely clear understanding of the topic given in terms of the length/scope of the essay, irrelevant and lack of logic, little/no evidence of ability to generate ideas, little/no attempts to address appropriate audience and purpose • **Organization of Ideas:** A unclear thesis statement, incoherent and pointless in an introduction, development, and a conclusion without use of cohesive devices (paragraphs at the essay level; sentences at the paragraph level), inappropriate and illogical structure both within the essay as a whole and within the paragraph, no main ideas at the paragraph level • **Language:** Very poor command of English, very dissatisfactory control of language usage, very frequent use of very poor simple and compound sentences with numerous errors, a very considerable range of inappropriate vocabulary and idiomatic language • **Style:** Hardly any stylistic control and display of creativity and flair as well as originality throughout the essay

(Widodo, 2006a)

APPENDIX C
A Student Reflection Sheet

A Student Reflection Sheet

Name : _____
ID : _____
Class : _____
Instructor : _____

1. What have you learned during the entire essay writing process?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. What have you learned during the peer conferences?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. What did you achieve from the class?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. What did you not achieve from the class?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5. What will you need to improve?

_____
_____
_____

6. How will you make the improvements?

_____
_____
_____

APPENDIX D
A Process-Based Writing Cycle

