

TALK-WRITE: A GROUNDBREAKING TECHNIQUE FOR SHAPING THE STUDENTS' ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING SKILLS ON DISCUSSION ESSAYS

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Abstract

Since argumentative writing skills play an indispensable role in higher educational contexts, the students are required to produce academic works representing their academic insights and critical perspectives towards problematized issues around them. Conversely, the students may frequently encounter intricacies while applying complicated syntactic forms and proper aspects during writing Discussion essays as one of the argumentative writing genres. For this reason, the current study aimed at exploring how *Talk-Write* technique facilitates the students in writing *Discussion essays*. This study involved 30 EFL students and an experienced writing teacher at a university in Indonesia. The data were analyzed through thematic analysis following the notions of *Talk-Write* (Meyers, 1985; Ling, 1986; Radcliffe: Crasnick & Lumbelli, 2005). The findings indicated that *Talk-Write* technique enables the students to produce the Discussion essays. Besides, it stimulated them to speak actively in English while negotiating ideas, exchanging debatable arguments and positioning stance and voice. Briefly, *Talk-Write* technique can facilitate the students in exchanging vocal to scribal dialogue, gaining pivotal and desired ideas and fostering professional competencies as the *talkers* and the *writers* and personal styles.

Keywords: Talk-Write technique, Discussion essays, Argumentative writing skills

INTRODUCTION

Writing has been considered as one of the most important skills in second or foreign language learning. The paradigm of teaching writing has gradually shifted from the traditional product-oriented writing to the process-oriented writing (Zamel, 1982; Ling, 1984^a; Ling, 1986^b; Hyland, 2003^b; Harmer, 2004; Brown, 2007; Clark, 2012). The process-oriented writing views learning L2 writing as the acquisition of flourishing writing strategies because learning L2 writing basically involves macro strategies (e.g. planning, drafting and revising) and micro strategies (e.g. content, words & syntax) (Cumming, 2001). A good comprehension on the concept of writing processes enables the teachers to facilitate the students in fostering their effective invention, drafting & revising strategies, awareness & control, expressivity and fluency (Casanave, 2004:76). Thus, the process-oriented writing concentrates not only on the texts (products) as the ultimate goal of writing but also the writers' activities (process) as a journey to reach such a goal.

Argumentative essays might be claimed as one of the most difficult types of writing, particularly for the students at the primary to the tertiary levels of education (Crasnich & Lumbelli, 2005; Gárate & Melero, 2005). This phenomenon takes place because of some reasons. Initially, designing an argumentative discourse necessitates the speakers or writers to act in two diverse deeds, namely (1) applying their arguments to determine their positions (2) negotiating the discourse aspects for considering the interlocutors' (addressees') perspectives. In other words, since the the addressees' mind may be influenced by the writers' arguments, negotiation might be a tricky activity in producing argumentative essays (Crasnich & Lumbelli, 2005:181-182). Compared to the other types of writing, argumentative essays have some particular features making them longer in their period of acquisition so that only a few students who might be able to reach such prerequisites (Coirier, Andriessen & Chanquoy as cited in Gárate & Melero, 2005:324). Further, producing an argumentative essays possibly needs the involvement and sychronization of various cognitive processes like retrieving a schema and encoding information from the resources. Unfortunately, there might not be a typical model of how the writers write an argumentative essay (Wolfe, et. al., 2009:184). For these reasons, the use of appropriate writing techniques is inavitably required to solve such problems and facilitate the students in writing.

Numerous studies have been conducted to response the students' problems in writing the argumentative essays. Hyland (1990) focused his study on the description argumentative writing, notably on an indispensable kind of written discourse and an initial descriptive framework of its rhetorical structure. Tandiana (2014) analyzed the students' errors in argumentative writing. His study investigated the types of errors done by the students of the third grade of English Department in writing an argumentative writing. Hillocks Jr (2010) scrutinized how teaching argument could affect the development of critical thinking and writing. Tandiana (2015) investigated the influence of mind mapping, journal writing teaching techniques and critical thinking ability on the students' writing skill in argumentative writing. However, there might be a little attention given to the investigations of a technique enabling the students to communicate meaningfully and collaboratively with their classmates in a less stressful and anxious learning situation. Such a technique is generally called as Talk-Write (Talk-Write Pedagogy) (Ling, 1986^b:58; Walters, 1991).

Talk-Write technique is a writing technique giving the students an opportunity to think aloud (e.g. talking and reflecting ideas before writing), so that they could express their ideas into a written form effortlessly (Ling, 1986^b). In other words, the students are led to perform a number of activities like speaking and listening before writing. Briefly, it can be assumed that the students may be able to produce a text easily if they have undergone the oral cycle (Maulidah, et. al. 2013:50).

Dealing with the issues identified previously, the present study aims at investigating the enhancement of the students' writing skills on Discussion essay through employing Talk-Write technique at the English Education Department of a university in Tasikmalaya.

METHOD

The present study aimed at investigating the enhancement of the students' argumentative writing skills on Discussion essays employing Talk-Write technique at a higher education level. Specifically, this study utilized Action Research (AR) as a research method since it is deemed as a method of reflecting and analyzing the teachers' teaching performances through scientifically data collection procedures based on the daily teaching practices to gain an innovative and effective solution for better teaching practices (Mackey & Gass, 2005:216). The study was conducted at the English Education Department of a University in Tasikmalaya. The reasons why conducting this study at this university was the research focus on the enhancement of the students' argumentative writing skills on discussion essays through employing Talk-Write technique still remained under-researched at this University. Thus, conducting this investigation could fill such a gap. The data sources of this study were 30 students and one of English Education Department teacher. The students were selected from one of the four classes consisting of 30 students (24 females and 6 males) chosen by purposive sampling technique. The students' ages range from 19 to 21 years old. The teacher is an experienced teacher at the English Education Department of this University. He is 46 years old with Doctoral degree in Language Education. This study utilized three types of instruments of collecting the data. They were observation sheet adopted from the Ling's Talk-Write technique (Ling, 1986^b:60), written English test adopted from Fahim & Mirzaii's English written test (2014), and semi structured questionnaire using Likert Scale.

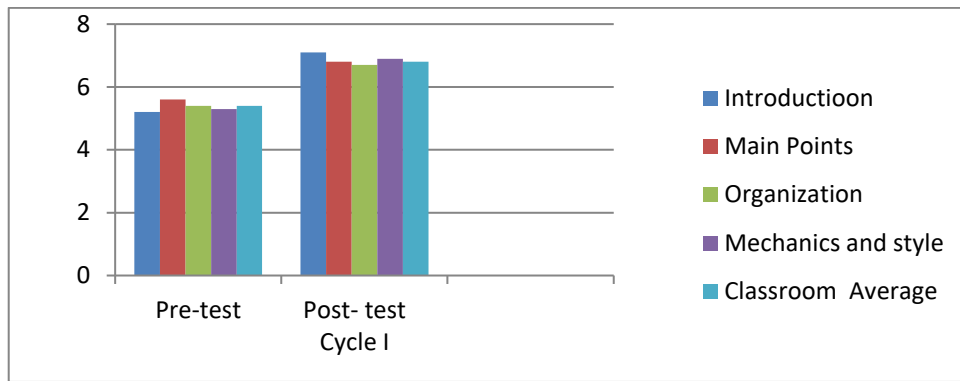
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the first cycle showed that there were enhancements of the students' argumentative writing skills on Discussion essays compared to their previous ones as shown from the results of pre-test. The results of pre-test and first cycle post-test can be noticed at the following summary.

Table 1.2 The Results of Pre-test and First Cycle Post Test Summary

Test	Aspects				Classroom Average Score
	Introduction	Main Points	Organization	Mechanics and style	
Pre-test	5.2	5.6	5.4	5.3	5.4
Post test	7.1	6.8	6.7	6.9	6.9

The enhancement can be figured out by the picture 1.1.



Picture 1.2 Diagram of Learning Achievement Improvement of Pre-Test Result and Cycle I Post-Test Result.

The results of pre-test revealed that the students' previous argumentative writing skills on Discussion essays were still low. The classroom average score was 5.4. It was under the criteria of success $n > 7.0$. The students encountered some obstacles in clarifying the issue and stating their arguments. Some of them seemingly did not write in a good text organization in which the ideas were not developed well. Grammatical errors, mismatching lexical uses were a few problems of the students while producing a Discussion essays.

The data of the test results in cycle I indicated significant enhancements compared to the results of pre-test. The students' scores increased in the entire aspects being assessed. Briefly, talk-write technique enriches the students' ideas to write, exchanging debatable ideas and positioning stance and voice personally. The interaction among the teachers and the students through dialogues could facilitate the students to obtain fruitful ideas before writing (Brown, 2003:5). However, the classroom scores average was 6.9 under the criteria of success ($n > 7.0$). In addition, the teacher's presentations may not be effective, for the teaching materials were enriching the basic knowledge of discussion essays without practicing to implement Talk Write technique in the first meeting because of restricted time availability. Concerning with teacher-students interaction, the teacher did not make personal interaction with the students to monitor their comprehension and to identify their problems in writing. Some students seem confused to write their own essays.

In Cycle II, the findings displayed that there were significant improvement of students' argumentative writing skills through Talk-Write technique in teaching writing at the third semester of English Education Department. The data also described that none of the students' scores achieved under the criteria of success in which they have to reach at least. The teaching and learning process ran effectively. Moreover, the classroom atmosphere indicated a cheerful and interactive situation so that the students were apparently motivated to learn and participate in the teaching and learning process. With this in mind, the cycle of this study was terminated in cycle II for the criteria of success have been attained. More specifically, the findings illustrated that the use of Talk-Write technique could enhance the students' argumentative writing skills and facilitate them in producing Discussion essays. Furthermore, Talk-Write technique is not only able to enhance their argumentative writing skills but also speaking ones. Also, it could set up dialogues in the classroom effectively and such dialogues can possibly improve the students' writing skills (Meyers as cited in Brown, 2003:6).

On the other side, the students' perception on the use of Talk-Write technique in teaching Discussion essay indicated a positive response. To illustrate, they strongly agreed with the statement that *Talk-Write is helpful in teaching writing Discussion essays*. In the similar vein, most of them assumed that Talk-Write technique can facilitate them in expressing ideas orally. Likewise, Talk-Write technique offers them a healthier and more positive attitude during the process of writing in the classroom since they were guided to help and encourage each other in order to avoid being nervous or blocked writers (Ling, 1986). Eventually, it can create a joyful, facilitative and cooperative classroom sphere while performing English language teaching, primarily in terms of teaching argumentative writing.

Overall, the implications of Talk Write technique are to facilitate the students in generating their ideas and shaping their reasonable arguments during writing argumentatively, guide them to have a sense of cooperation, interrelate their writing and speaking skills simultaneously. In short, being a writer anchored in meaning-making process commonly actualized through dialogic actions (Bakhtin, 1986; Hong, 2015).

However, the current study has not completely encompassed other variables of teaching argumentative writing, such as accentuating on the writer's voices, the quality of the writers' arguments and the interplay of the writers' arguments and their critical thinking skills. In addition, the use of more sophisticated techniques and instructional media to teaching writing is highly recommended, particularly writing approaches based on digital, multimodal and discursive perspectives. Therefore, the subsequent studies are expected to cover such recommended aspects for creating a new direction of teaching argumentative writing.

CONCLUSION

The findings indicated that *Talk-Write* technique enables the students to produce the Discussion essays in a blissful and cooperative classroom situation. Also, it stimulated them to speak actively in English when negotiating ideas, exchanging debatable arguments and positioning stance and voice. In short, *Talk-Write* technique can facilitate the students in exchanging vocal to scribal dialogue, obtaining pivotal and desired ideas and developing professional competencies as the *talkers* and the *writers* and personal styles.

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