

ANALYSIS OF STUDENT ATTITUDES TO DEVELOP A SELF-ASSESSMENT MODEL OF GENRE-BASED WRITING CLASS

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to develop learners' autonomy in English as Foreign Language (EFL) writing class, in particular, it was applying self-assessment. It enabled learners to raise their awareness in learning and to improve the goal orientation. The research also helped teachers to reduce their burdens of assessment and entailed a long-term effect on the learner's autonomy. The objective of this research was to figure out student attitudes in developing a self-assessment model of genre-based writing class. Quantitative and qualitative analysis were utilized to draw the findings of this research. It was conducted at the English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training, Pancasakti University in the even semester of the academic year 2016/2017. The data were collected from a questionnaire, classroom observation, and focus group discussions. The results of this research present students' problems, perceptions, and needs toward the teaching and learning process of genre-based writing classes attended as preliminary research to develop a self-assessment model of EFL writing.

Keywords: student attitudes, self-assessment model, genre-based writing

INTRODUCTION

In the EFL (English as Foreign Language) learning, writing is one of the important subjects learners must do. Students of any English department in Indonesian colleges or universities, for instance, should be able to pursue good performance in writing to meet daily course assignments or even to complete their study (Taufiqulloh, 2014). However, for lecturers, teaching writing is often assumed to be a frustrating task due to its complexity in many aspects from format, mechanics, content, organization, grammar, and sentence structures. Also, they have often tied in the situations that the students are reluctant to write, and do not know how to start their writing. Many still think that writing is about the talent. This opinion is not entirely incorrect. Moreover, writing activities become not only normal parts of classroom life but also the opportunities for the students to achieve almost instant success in improving their writing skill. To create such a situation, selecting or developing an appropriate model or method of teaching writing is necessary based on students' and teacher's needs. This research presents the needs analysis in developing a self-assessment model of genre-based writing class.

Self-assessment is also aimed at promoting learners' autonomy as this issue has received many concerns from many teachers, practitioners, and researchers from many

parts of the world. Learner autonomy is one of the issues that need to be addressed when the focus is on the learner in present-day ELT (English Language Teaching) (Illés, 2012). Self-assessment drives learners not only need to be competent but also to be autonomous in learning. The principle of autonomy stands out as one of the first foundation stones of successful learning. The ability to set one's own goals both within and beyond the structure of a classroom curriculum, to pursue them without the presence of an external prod, and to independently monitor that pursuit all keys to success (Brown, 2004). According to Illés (2012), learner autonomy can be defined as the capacity to become competent speakers of the target language who can exploit the linguistic and other resources at their disposal effectively and creatively. So, it can be drawn that autonomous learners are independent in problem-solving and decision-making process.

From the background previously described, it can be said that self-assessment is considered to be a practical tool in promoting learner autonomy in EFL class. Some studies claimed the effectiveness of self-assessment in EFL/ESL writing class; Birjandi, (2010), Matsuno (2009), Wang and Wang (2007), Oscarson (2009), and Taufiqulloh, (2015). However, such researches are not derived from the results of needs or attitudes analysis of the lecturers and or students. This research analyzes the student attitudes as the initial

step in developing a self-assessment model in EFL genre-based writing class. It aims at exploring students' problems, perceptions, on the writing classes they attended. It also presents the students' perceptions about self-assessment in EFL writing and what kind of self-assessment model needed in genre-based writing instruction in particular.

Self-assessment offer independent learning to students to promote learners' autonomy which becomes the trends of present-day ELT. It is a key issue in autonomous learning and enables students to set goals and to monitor and evaluate their learning. According to Oscarson (2009), a fundamental reason for self-assessment is then to help the learner becomes aware of achievement reached at any given time and over a longer term, and in this way enhance learning. However, self-assessment is effective since it involves the students and enables them to see possibilities for reflection, redirection, and confirmation of their learning efforts. Students often need support in understanding the importance of self-assessment, in becoming independent evaluators of their progress, and in setting goals for future learning.

Self-assessment in writing, in particular, enables students to gain more control as writers. They could write within a series of steps of writing: planning, outlining, drafting, polishing, and writing the final copy. Self-assessment could be embedded in some or whole steps of the writing process. Throughout this way, students can identify their strengths and weaknesses in writing and find out how to cope with them. Self-assessment encourages the learners to recognize their strengths and weaknesses in learning, and cope with various learning problems (Taufiqulloh, 2014).

However, students cannot stand by themselves in applying practices of self-assessment in the classroom. They must be led. Teachers or lecturers play an important role in directing students in implementing the instruments of self-assessment in EFL writing class. Students must be endorsed to raise their critical thinking in learning to write through self-assessment. Thus, teacher feedback is beneficial for directing students in implementing self-assessment practices in the EFL writing. In writing instruction, feedback is usually given by the teacher when the writing process is implemented. Teacher gives comments or suggestions on the students' writing relating to various aspects of writing such as format, mechanics, content, organization, grammar, and sentence structures (Taufiqulloh, Yuvita, and Yuliarto, 2016). Beside teacher feedback, peer feedback is also a crucial part in implementing self-assessment practices for students in the classroom. It is a type of assessment performed by equal status learners. The assessor finds and discusses the strengths of weaknesses of students' writing performance for further improvement.

Meanwhile, self-assessment itself can also be implemented in other types of writing including genre-based writing as raised in this research. The term "genre" is used nowadays in many contexts. In EFL writing, it relates to how the writer groups texts together and typically use language in certain situations. According to Hyland (2007), genre refers to abstract, socially recognized ways of using language. It is based on the idea that members of a community usually have little difficulty in recognizing similarities in the texts they use frequently and are able to draw on their repeated experiences with such texts to read, understand, and perhaps write them relatively easily.

Learning to develop genre-based writing works enables students to produce their writing as the social and cultural practice. Also, they can develop their social

communicative competence by including the rhetorical understanding of a text. The focus will be on the language and discourse features of particular texts and the context in which the text is used. The students are expected to comprehend the social function, the generic structure, and the language feature of a text.

To reach the goals of genre-based instruction an appropriate approach or model is required. The teaching of writing utilizing a teacher-centered approach today is often considered as a frustrating task and many ends in failure. This research presents the needs analysis in designing a model of self-assessment in the genre-based writing class for EFL learners, the students of English Education department of Pancasakti University. The results of this research are used as the bases in developing a model in genre-based writing class focusing on student-centered approach and promoting learner autonomy.

Needs analysis is one of the crucial parts when teachers plan to design curriculum, syllabus, and implement a model or method in EFL classroom. It also relates to the goals and content of the instruction. As Nation & Macalister (2010) have stated that needs analysis is directed mainly at the goals and content of a course and it examines what the learners know already and what they need to know. One of the issues raised in this research is to collect information students, in particular, in developing a self-assessment model as a part of writing instruction. It is carried out to find out the information about the students' goals in learning genre-based writing, their obstacles or barriers, and its alternative solutions. It is also to explore the comprehension of both lectures and students on the concepts and practices of self-assessment EFL writing.

METHODS

This is a descriptive qualitative study that aims at exploring the students' attitudes in EFL genre-based writing class. The data are gathered from a questionnaire, classroom observation, and focus group discussions that intended to explore the students' perception during attending genre-based writing class, problems encountered, and their perceptions on self-assessment in genre-based writing. The establishment of the questionnaire, in particular, is based on the objective of this research. Initially, the objective of this research is identified to formulate the content of the questionnaire; making statements and determining the options (answers) in or order that it reaches its content validity. A try-out is also conducted to a group of students to test its validity and reliability. The results show that the questionnaire is valid and reliable.

To collect the data of this research, the questionnaire is distributed to distributed to 60 students of English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Pancasakti University, who attend genre-writing classes, in the even semester of the academic year 2016/2017. Throughout the questionnaire, students' learning experiences in learning genre-based writing are collected including their personal goals, the objectives of instruction, the learning materials and methods, assessment processes, and learning outcomes.

The first part of the questionnaire contains 12 closed statements. Students write their answers on scale 1 – 4 indicating the different type of responses (1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=agree somewhat, and 4=disagree). The second part contains five open-ended questions for students

to answer indicating the problems or obstacles in learning genre-based writing, the efforts they made to deal with these, and their future expectations in learning. The last part of the questionnaire also consists of 5 open-ended questions indicating students' perceptions on self-assessment in writing, the types of self-assessment needed in the genre-based writing class, and problems may occur in utilizing self-assessment in writing. The data are also collected from the classroom observation intended to match the information collected from the questionnaire and the field conditions. So focus group discussion also conducts with writing and students relating to self-assessment in genre-based writing and involved three writing lecturers and 20 students.

For data analysis, editing and tabulating technique are used. Editing is to verify the data collected from the questionnaire, observation sheet, and focus group discussion. The data are then tabulated or displayed in tables completed with its degrees of frequency and then analyzed thoroughly. The results of the analysis become the finding of this research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Quantitative and qualitative analysis are utilized to draw the findings of this research. Descriptive statistics are used for any quantitative data. The data from open-ended questions are collected into some categories. The order of the results concerning with the needs analysis of this research is the results and analysis of survey questionnaire on students' perceptions of genre-based writing class, students' answers on open-ended questions, classroom observation, and focus group discussion.

Using SPSS 22, the results of the survey questionnaire relating to students' perception after attending genre-based writing class are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 shows the perception of students in attending the genre-based writing class. 56,7% of students respond to their agreement on the materials which are easy to follow. 73,4% of the students chose strongly agree and agree to the statement 6 that during writing course, they are assigned to more writing exercises. In statement 7,70% of students choose to strongly agree and agree that they learned the writing process when doing their writing exercises. 56% of them also gather the feedback from their peers and lecturers after they finish their writing. Moreover, 51,6% chose strongly agree and agree that the learning outcome is shared. However, it seems that students have more negative responses to such a survey questionnaire. 60% chose to agree somewhat and disagree that the instructional are communicated thoroughly at the beginning of the course. 56,7% of them disagree that the course materials are sufficient enough, contain much weight. 81,7% of students think that the presentation of the materials is not interactive. Also, 61,7% students have stated that they are not led by their lecturers to figure out their problems and share with others to deal. Moreover, 55,3% students respond that the class does not motivate them to write better. The results described in Table 1 that students have positive and negative responses regarding their experience during attending the teaching and learning process of genre-based writing class they attended. To conclude, students have more negative responses to such genre-based writing instruction.

Table 1 Students' Perception of Genre-based Writing Class

No	Statements	N	1	2	3	4
1	The instructional goals were communicated thoroughly	60	0	40	55	5
2	The materials contained much weight	60	3,3	40	55	1,7
3	The materials were easy to follow	60	1,7	55	40	3,3
4	The presentations of materials were structured and systematic	60	6,7	40	48,3	5
5	The presentation of materials was interactive	60	0	18,3	70	11,7
6	Students were assigned to do more writing exercises	60	36,7	36,7	26,7	0
7	Students learned writing process	60	13,3	56,7	25	5
8	Students figured out their problems and shared with others	60	15	23,3	60	1,7
9	Students gathered feedback from others	60	6,7	50	38,3	5
10	The class made use of technology such as computer and internet	60	1,7	41,7	15	41,7
11	Learning outcome was shared	60	13,3	48,3	28,3	10
12	The class motivated students to write better	60	11,7	25	43,3	20
Mean			9,2	39,6	42,1	9,2

1 strongly agree, 2 agree, 3 agree somewhat, 4 disagree

The survey questionnaire of this research also figures out problems commonly faced by students during writing course instructions, their efforts to deal with, and their expectation for future learning. The results are presented in Table 2.

As described in Table 2, the second part of the survey questionnaire of this research contains five open-ended questions for the students to respond. The answers are then collected and analyzed based on its level of frequency. In statement 1, 15% of students write that they lack ideas when starting their writing as the most. This problem is the most dominant one faced by the students when doing writing tasks. They could not elaborate their ideas to enrich the content of their writing. 22% of students respond that they are often tied to the students that they are unable to start their writing. Some techniques or methods implemented by teachers in the class does not enable them to write their writing easily. This is also another dominant problem students faced. Moreover, the problems in writing are also caused by poor mastery in vocabulary (20%), inaccuracies in grammar (17%), and difficulties to use mechanical aspects of writing (8%). Moreover, many of their writing works do not meet unity and coherence either (8%).

Responding to the problems encountered during attending the writing course, students make some efforts to deal with. Drawn from Table 2, it is found that 28% of them write that they have to do more writing exercises to improve their writing. 22% of them write that they have to learn more to master vocabulary, 20% write they have to do more

exercises in grammar, 13% respond to study more with friends, and 8% write that they have to build up motivation and read a lot of writing texts. The most interesting here is that students need to build up motivation in writing. It is one of the important factors students must have in writing. Otherwise, it will end in failure.

Table 2 Students' Problems in Writing Class, Their Efforts to Deal with, and Their Expectation in Future Learning

No	Questions	Answers	Percentage
1	What problems do you usually face in writing?	- Lack of ideas	25
		- Difficult to start writing	22
		- Lack of vocabulary	20
		- Grammar inaccuracies	17
		- Improper use of writing mechanical aspects (punctuation, capitalization, diction, spelling, etc)	8
2	Of the problems previously mentioned, what is the most dominant one?	- Less coherent and united writing	8
		- Lack of ideas	58
3	What efforts have you have made in dealing with your learning problems?	- Difficult to start writing	42
		- Do more writing exercises	28
		- Learn more about vocabulary	22
		- Study more about grammar	20
		- Study writing more with friends	13
4	What kind of learning goals do you want to achieve in the future learning of genre-based writing?	- Build motivation to write	8
		- Read a lot of writing texts	8
		- To be able to write with good content	58
5	In your opinion, what kind of genre-based writing class should be an ideal one for you?	- To be able to write with good grammar and vocabulary	42
		- Should be more student-centered	58
		- Should involve students more in assessment practices	25
		- I have no ideas about it	17

Table 2 also presents students' expectation in the future writing course. Among the many parts of needs analysis in this research, this should be put into major consideration to plan future writing course. 58% of them write that the future writing course should be more student-centered and 25% write that they have to be more involved in their writing assessment. This indicates that during the writing course instruction, students do not involve in the assessment of their writing. Teachers still play a central role

in assessing their students' writing works. And 17% of them have no ideas about the type of genre-based writing class that should be ideal for them.

The last part of the questionnaire indicates students perceptions about some issues related to self-assessment. The results are described in Table 3.

As seen in Table 3, it is found that 83% of students do not know about self-assessment in writing. 17% of them write that they know a bit about self-assessment and never implement it in their writing. It indicates that students are not familiar with the concepts and practices of self-assessment in general. However, after the concepts of self-assessment are introduced, 50% of students are quite sure that self-assessment enables them to write well. 33% of students still feel doubtful since they never implement it and 17% of students have no ideas about it. Table 3 also shows the importance of self-assessment when it is implemented in a writing course instruction. 67% of students believe that self-assessment enables them to write better. Throughout self-assessment, they think they can practice polishing (editing and revising) their writing draft. 25% of students believe that self-assessment can promote learner autonomy, and 8% of students have no ideas about it. For the implementation of self-assessment in a writing course instruction, most students agree that it should be implemented during the writing course. Table 3 also figures out when students can implement self-assessment in a genre-based writing class or course. 67% of students chose during the writing course, 17% of students chose after the course, and the rest have no ideas about it. Finally, Table 3 shows students still feel doubtful whether or not they can implement self-assessment due to their low ability to write.

Table 3 Students' Perception and Needs about Self-Assessment in EFL Writing

No	Questions	Answers	Percentage
1	What do you know about self-assessment in EFL writing?	- I don't know about self-assessment	83
		- I know a little about of self-assessment (definition) but never implement it in my writing	17
2	Do you think that self-assessment will be useful for you in learning to write? If yes, state your reasons?	- Yes, sure. It will	50
		- Yes, but I am sure whether it will improve my writing	33
		- Not at all	17
3	What kinds of self-assessment do you need in learning genre-based writing?	- Self-assessment that enables me to write better	67
		- I can write more by myself (promote learner autonomy)	25
		- I have no ideas about it	8
4	When do you think you can use self-assessment in the genre-based writing class?	- During the writing course	67
		- After the writing course	17
		- I have no ideas about it	17

Table 3 Students' Perception and Needs about Self-Assessment in EFL Writing (Continued)

No	Questions	Answers	Percentage
5	What problems will you probably face when using self-assessment in your writing?	- I am not sure whether I can assess my writing because my writing skill is not good - I have no ideas about it	67 33

After a survey questionnaire is distributed to 60 students as the participants of this research, the collected answers or responses are analyzed using descriptive statistics as previously described. The classroom observation is conducted during May 2017, once in a week with 100 minutes (duration) of each. It is intended to find out the supplementary data regarding needs of students and lecturers in writing course instruction, genre-based writing in particular. The results are similar to those of the questionnaire.

The results show that at the beginning of the course, the instructional goals are not well communicated by lecturers to the students. Also, lecturers only present the concepts of writing, after that assign the students to create a writing task by selecting one of the given topics or type of text, and ask them to submit their works. Lecturer plays the central role in assessment. If this happens continuously, the writing instruction will end in failure because it does not give more opportunities to the students to evaluate their writing. The use of a single assessment in performance tests like writing test certainly is inappropriate because it can result in potentially biased evaluations (Matsumo, 2009).

During the classroom observation, it is found that the writing process is implemented in the writing course. Students should write throughout five stages; pre-writing, planning, writing (drafting), polishing, and writing the final draft. Writing is a process of creating, organizing, writing, and polishing. The steps of the process are creating ideas, organizing the ideas, writing a rough draft, and the last is polishing the rough draft by editing it and making revisions (Oshima & Hogue, 2006). However, during writing practices, students are not encouraged to search for feedback from peers and teachers. Feedback is an important part of self-assessment. Tutor feedback and student learning are inseparable.

Regarding self-assessment in writing, it is found that both lecturers and students are not familiar with the concepts and practices of self-assessment. They consider self-assessment as other types of assessment; peer-assessment, teacher-assessment, collaborative assessment, and others. They do not have a concern to implement self-assessment as an alternative technique in the writing class. For that reason, the concepts and sample practices of self-assessment in writing are presented in the classroom. Students are encouraged to get to know closer about what self-assessment looks like and how it is implemented in a writing course instruction.

Another technique employed in this research is the focus group discussion. It is intended to discuss the results of both the survey questionnaire and those of classroom observation conducted before. To this, the draft (prototype) of the self-assessment model in the genre-based writing class is presented. The results show that both lecturers and students agree that self-assessment could be used as

an alternative technique in the future genre-based writing instruction. The self-assessment model should measure both cognitive and metacognitive aspects of the students in learning. It does not only enable students to write using self-editing strategies but also serves them with some instruments to raise their awareness and motivation to do more writing exercises. Through self-assessment, students are encouraged to possess metacognitive skills such as self-regulation and self-monitoring, and it is important for the development of autonomous learning skills (Oscarson, 2009). The results also show that both lecturers and students agree that mini-lesson should be conducted as one of the important parts of the model that is a key element of self-assessment. Taufiqulloh (2015) has developed a model of self-assessment in EFL essay writing class.

Responding to the results of this research, the self-assessment model of a genre-based writing class that will be developed in the next study should contain mini-lesson. It consists of modeling and reviewing. It is about setting criteria with the involvement of the students so that self-assessment practices in the classroom can be worked out successfully. Throughout the mini-lesson, the teacher presents some models of well-organized writing works which have clarity in meaning, accuracy in format, mechanics, grammar, sentence structures, and clarity in content and organization. Another part of the mini-lesson is reviewing. Here the teacher provides some writing work to be reviewed with students in the classroom to figure out their strengths and weaknesses. Such a lesson enables students to comprehend various types of written texts critically. Students review the samples based on the concepts they have learned. It can be done continuously.

After this activity is done, students begin to write their works following the steps of the writing process (creating, drafting, assessing, polishing, and writing the final copy). In the creating stage, students generate the ideas about the topic assigned by the lecturer by employing some techniques such as clustering, listing, and brainstorming. The product of this stage is writing an outline. In the second stage, students begin to write their works following the outline, and they can write anything about the topic. After finishing this stage, students do self-assessment on their writing. They assess their writing regarding format, mechanics, content, organization, grammar, and sentence structures. Finally, they revise and submit the final draft. The self-assessment model that will be developed in the next study will contain some instruments measuring cognitive and meta-cognitive aspects that are embedded in all steps of the writing process.

CONCLUSIONS

To this point, it can be summarized that the results of students' attitude analysis show that the students, in general, have more negative responses on the genre-based writing class they attended relating to the presentation of learning materials, the instructional method or technique, assessment, etc. Moreover, students also have some problems in learning to write as poor ideas, weak grammar, difficulties to start their writing, etc. Relating to self-assessment, students agree that self-assessment can be an alternative solution to cope with the situations. Teaching and assessing genre-based writing tasks in the department are still teacher-centered that result in poor writing achievement of the students. Relating to draft or prototype of the model that is introduced and discussed with both lecturers and students, some important

feedback is gathered for the refinement of the model before it is implemented in the field.

The next research following this is developing a self-assessment model of EFL genre-based writing class. Meanwhile, as this research is conducted in the English Education Department, Pancasakti University Tegal, the results or findings of this research cannot be generalized. Hopefully, this research can give both theoretical and practical benefits to the students of the department.

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