The Teaching of Writing in EFL Classes

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Abstract

Writing plays important roles in the context of English teaching as a foreign language in Indonesia. Writing is a communicative way of sharing observation, information, thoughts, or ideas with ourselves and others. Through writing, the language learners learn to communicate with other people, to understand them, to read what they have written, and to write to them. Writing as one of the language skills is not acquired naturally. Writing is considered the most difficult and complicated language skill to be learned compared to other language skills. Learning to write fluently and expressively is the most difficult of four language skills for all students. In the teaching of writing, the English teacher should pay attention on some elements, they are: (1) understanding the purposes of teaching writing, (2) teaching five main stages in producing a writing; pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing and publishing, (3) teaching how to develop a paragraph which consists of three major structural parts: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence, (4) employing appropriate techniques, such as brainstorming, quetioning, and clustering in their teaching, and (5) introducing some text type to the students, such as: narration, description, procedure, news item, report, recount, anecdote, hortatory exposition, analytical exposition, commentary, discussion, and explanation.

Keywords: writing, teaching of writing, text type

A. PENDAHULUAN

Writing is a tool for the creation of ideas and the consolidation of the linguistic system by using it for communicative objectives in an interactive way. From this perspective, writing implies the successful transmission of ideas from an addresser to an addressee via a text, and this exchange of information becomes a powerful means to motivate and encourage the development of language skills. According to Harmer (2004), by having the writing skills the students are expected to have the ability to write letters, to put written reports together, to replay to advertisements, etc. Alternatively the students are expected to be able to know some special convention

in writing (punctuation, paragraph, construction, etc.). Just as they need to know how to produce spoken English appropriately.

In addition, Harmer (2004) states that the reason for teaching writing to students of English as a foreign language are for reinforement, language development, learning style, and most importantly writing is a basic skill. Writing plays important roles in the context of English teaching as a foreign language in Indonesia. Writing is a communicative act, a way of sharing observation, information, thoughts, or ideas with ourselves and others.

Supporting those statements above, Raimes (1983) argues that through writing, the language learners learn to communicate with other people, to understand them, to read what they have written, and to write to them. Writing also creates reading. It creates a permanent and visible record of ideas for readers. Hence, it can be concluded that students benefit a lot from the act of writing.

To have the writing skill, the students should do some writing activities, such as filling out forms, writing telephne message, letters, post cards, writing narrative compositions, reports, articels and so on. More activities in writing will make the students are able to understand many ways in learning writing. The English teacher of writing should pay attention on it. Brown (2001) states that the teachers should use some strategies that enable students to do those activities. First, the teaching of writing should be developed. In this case, the teachers should employ appropriate techniques, such as brainstorming, quetioning, and clustering in their teaching. It is important to improve or increase the teaching of writing. In the addition, the teachers, as facilitators should offer guidance in helping students to engange in thinking process of compossing. Second, the use of some instructional media, pictures for instance, should be increased.

B. THE PURPOSE OF WRITING

O'Malley and Pierce (1996) describe that there are at least three purposes in writing; informative writing, expressive/narrative writing, and persuasive writing. Informative writing is used to share knowledge and give information, directions, or ideas. The writer can used this type of writing to write biography about well-known person or someone from the writers' life. Writers use expressive narrative writing as a personal or imaginative expression in which the writers produce stories or essays. This kind of writing is often used for intertainment, pleasure, and discovery or, simply, as fun writing, and can include poems and short plays. In persuasive writing, writers try to influence people and introduce action or change. This type of writing can include evaluation of a book, a movie, a consumer product, or a controversial issue or problem.

Other purposes of writing is stated by Nunan (1999), that is, written language can be used for action (for example, public signs, product levels, TV and radio guides, bills,

news, telephone directions, ballot papers, computer manuals), information (for example, newspapers, current affair magazines, advertisements, political pamphlets) and entertainment (for example, comic strips, fiction books, poetry and drama, newspaper features film subtitles).

Harmer (2004:79) states that some reasons for teaching writing to the students of English as a foreign language include reinforcement, language development, learning style, and writing as a basic language skill. This means that in order to have a writing skill, student should write. In line with Harmer, Raimes (1983:36) highlights that there are six purposes of teaching writing: writing for reinforcement, training, imitation, communication, fluency, and learning. Furthermore, Raimes (1983:3) highlights that teaching writing helps students learn to use language.

In addition, other reasons to write include to thank a friend or collegue for doing a favor, wish someone a happy birthday, or tell others about how we feel (Gebhard, 2000). Writers also write when they want to convience administrators to change policy, collegues to change attitudes, or agencies to give money. Even when we write to ourselves, through a diary, we have a purpose, perhaps to know our selves or the world around us differently.

From some description above, it can be concluded that English teachers have to give a lot of writing practices to their students with different types and topics of writing in order to help them become efficient and effective writers.

C. THE PROCESS OF WRITING

Process of writing refers to everything a writer does, from the moment he or she starts thinking about what to write, until he completes writing it. It is broadly seen as comprising five main stages: pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing and publishing.

Pre-writing is the preparation or planning for students to write. There are some pre-writing techniques that the students can use to generate their ideas, among others are brainstorming, clustering, outlining and free-writing. Brainstorming is a way of generating ideas. Raimes (1983) explains that brainstorming is an activity to produce words, phrases, ideas as rapidly as possible as without concern for appropriateness, order or accuracy. Clustering (or word mapping) is also a popular pre-writing activity that can be used to generate ideas. Clustering is drawing a map of what students have in their thought using circles or balloons, narrows, lines, and words. Outlining is one of the most frequent techniques writers use to discover ideas and relationships among them (Gardener, 2005).

The second stage of writing is drafting. The focus of this stage is to write anything coming up in the mind without paying too much attention of doing mistakes in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Smalley (2001) explains that while writing first draft, the students focus on getting meaning down on paper, do not be overly concerned with grammatical correctness. It can be stated that in the process of

writing a draft, it is determined whether the information the students got can be written down in their writings. In other words, the students practice in assorting information, arranging and rearranging the information so that they can produce a coherent and unity draft of writing.

The third stage in writing process is revising. Revising is an activity to reexamine the compositions or paragraphs the students have just written. In this stage, the students may rethink, add, delete, or change ideas in their writings (Calderonello & Edwards, 1986). In the revising stage, the students may add something such as word, phrase, or sentence to support or connect the ideas, they may throw away the parts which are not relevant to the topic, or they may change the order of sentences or paragraphs. The revising sometimes reconstruct the draft of the writing.

The fourth stage is editing. In this stage, the students edit their draft. The editing is focused on checking the grammar, spelling, capitalization, and also punctuation. One activity that can be done in editing is proofreading. In this activity, the students read their writing slowly and concentrate on the conventional features; grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

 The last stage of writing process is publishing. When the students think that their writing is final with no more editing, then the writing is ready to be published. The publishing can be done in the terms of writing a sarjana thesis, a post graduate thesis, or dissertation, or an article for a scientific journal. This is the way to share the ideas or thought of writer.

D. PARAGRAPH WRITING

Oshima and Hogue (2007) explains that paragraph is a basic unit of organization in writing in which a group of related sentences develops one main idea. The purpose of paragraph is to explain things in brief unit of communication using a relatively fixed form. They state that a paragraph has three major structural parts: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence.

A topic sentence states the main idea of the paragraph. It is not only names of topic of the paragraph, but it also limits the topic to one or two areas that can be discussed completely in the space of a single paragraph. Butler (1978) explains that the topic sentence should provide the reader with a complete idea of what a paragraph will say. It must tell what the topic is and what aspect of the topic will be covered in the paragraph. When the main idea of a paragraph comes first, deductive reasoning is being used. Deductive reason is a natural thought pattern that starts with general statement and moves to specific details.

The second part of paragraph is supporting sentences. Oshima & Hogue (2007) states that supporting sentences develop the topic sentences, that is, they explain the topic sentence by giving reasons, examples, facts, and statistics. The primary function of supporting sentences is to support the main idea stated in the topic sentence.

The last part of a paragraph is the concluding sentences. The concluding sentence signals the end of a paragraph and leaves the reader with important points to remember. It repeats what the writer has said in the topic sentences or offers a final comment on the topic (Brown, et al., 1984). Ways to conclude a paragraph is to restate the topic sentence or summarize the contents of the paragraphs. An effective concluding sentence draws a conclusion and gives a sense of completeness in a paragraph.

From the above explanation, it can be conclude that a paragraph has three major structural parts: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. Those parts of a paragraph make sure whether a paragraph can be judged as a good paragraph or a bad one.

E. THE TEACHING OF WRITING IN EFL CLASSES

Relating to the teaching of writing, Heaton (1991:135) states that writing skills are complex and sometimes difficult to teach, requiring mastery not only of grammatical and rhetorical devices but also of conceptual and judgmental elements. The many and varied skills are necessary for writing good prose. There are five general components or main areas that should be considered in producing or writing a good prose namely; language use, mechanical skills, treatment of content, stylistic skills, and judgment skills.

Nunan (1999:271) states that in terms of skills, producing a coherent, fluent, and extended piece of writing is probably the most difficult thing to do in learning a foreign language. However, writing is a way of sharing personal meaning and writing courses emphasize the power of the individual to construct his or her own views on a topic (Hyland, 2003:8). Those become the reasons why the teaching of writing is important.

In addition, Raimes (1983) states that there are two reasons why writing needs to be taught. Firstly, writing helps students communicate with others. Secondly, writing helps students learn. This indicates that writing encourages students to apply the grammatical structures, idioms, and vocabulary that they have learnt. When the students write, they also have a chance to be adventurous with the language and they necessary become very involved with the new language.

Olshtain, Raimes, and White in Gebhard (1996:224) stated that teachers generally agree that beginning-level EFL writers need to learn the basic conventions of writing. This includes the ability to identify and write down letters, words and simple sentences, as well as the learning of spelling and punctuation conventions. Futhermore, Gebhard (1996:244) elaborates a number of activities the teachers use to teach these conventions. First, the teachers teach students how to trace letter, words and sentences. Second, the teachers teach the students how to copy a passege and then change one aspect of the passage, for instances, to change the

subject from "he" to "she" and make accompanying changes, or to change grammatical pattern and functional rules.

Rivers (1981:293) elaborates three forms of the writing activities, which can be conducted in the classroom. First, in its simple form, writing may be just notation, that is copying in its conventional graphic form something already written, or reproducing in written form something which has been read or heard. Second, writing can be practice of writing in which it moves from the more guided types of exercises where elements of structure and vocabulary are manipulated, expanded, transformed, and restated in various ways, to more flexible production in writing where the students begin from the material provide and developed it out in an individual way. Third, in its most highly developed form, writing refers to expressive writing or composition.

In EFL context, Cahyono (2001:52) examines the students, productivity in writing through the application of responded thematic writing. This study revealed that responded thematic writing could improve students' productivity as indicated by the number of paragraphs, the number of the focused writing, develpoment of ideas in supporting paragraph, and the sense of purpose writing.

Writing, as productive skills besides speaking, is considered a complicated skill for high school students to master. It is a complex activity requiring a variety of skills. Mukminatien (1991) reports that writing is not a simple matter because when one is to write, she/he demonstrates not only her/his competence in grammar of English, but also her/his knowledge of the acceptable English rhetoric or the communicative aspects of writing in English. To help students to be able to write, a teacher should be more creative to find out the appropriate techniques in teaching writing. It is important that the teacher improve his/her techniques in teaching writing and offer guidance in helping students to engage in the thinking process of composing. Besides, the application of some instructional media such as pictures also should be developed.

F. TYPES OF WRITING PARAGRAPH

In the context of the teaching writing of EFL students in Indonesia and based on KTSP English curriculum, the program of teaching and learning English as a foreign language is focus on objectives to develop students' skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The students are expected to achieve competencies to communicate orally and in written form. The student are also expected to write and speak using suitable variation, fluently and accurately, in a dilaog or monologue in the form of twelve genres, namely: narration, description, procedure, news item, report, recount, anecdote, hortatory exposition, analytical exposition, commentary, discussion, and explanation.

Procedure

Anderson and Anderson (2003:50) define procedure as a type of paragraph in which writers give a piece of text that gives someone instructions to follow or to ask the readers to do something. An instruction on how to make a model, program a video recorder, or cook instant noodles can use this kind of text types. In addition, Anderson & Anderson (2003:51) states that there are some steps in construction a procedure text: a) an introductory statement that gives the aim or goal, b) a list of the materials that will be needed for completing the procedure, and c) a sequence of steps in the order they need to be done.

1. Descriptive

Description is a type of paragraphs the junior high school students should be able to write. Descriptive paragraph is a paragraph in which the writers draw their ideas and thought vividly based on their senses on the objects they see. Stanley (1988:148) mentions that description presents the appearance of things that occupy apace, whether they are objects, people, building, or cities. The aim of description is to convey to the reader what something look like. It attempts to paint a picture with word.

Descriptive paragraph, according to Tompkins (1994:111), is painting pictures with words. Writers use spesific techniques in descriptive writing to create vivid, multy sensory word pictures. First, the writers should add specific information and details by identifying specific activities and behaviors, naming the characters, identifying the setting, and listing atributes. Second, they should create sensory images. Third, they should make comparisons. Good comparisons go beyond the conventional use of words. Fourth, they should add dialogue to their writing instead of summarizing about what the characters talked.

2. Recount

Recount is a type of text that tells past events such as interesting experiences, diary, historical event, personal letter, biography, and autobiography by the purpose of informing or entertaining (Peperonity.com). According to Anderson & Anderson (2003), a recount is a piece of text that retells past events, usually in the order in which they occurred by the purpose of providing the audience with a description of what occurred and when it occurred. In English Online (1998), it states that the purpose of a recount is to list and describe past experiences by retelling events in the order in which they happened (chronological order). Recounts are written to retell events with the purpose of either informing or entertaining their audience (or both).

Some language features are also used in constructing the recount text. The language features usually found in a recount are (1) proper nouns to identify those involved in the words, (2) descriptive words to give detail explanation about who, what, when, where, and how, (3) the use of past tense to retell the events, and (4) words that show the order of events (for example, first, next, then, finally).

3. Narrative

O'Malley and Pierce (1996:137) state that a narrative or expressive writing is a personal or imaginative expression in which the writer produces stories or essay. It is often based on observations of people, objects, and places and may include creative speculations and interpretations.

The generic structures of narrative text are orientation, complication, resolution, and re-orientation. A more detailed generic structure of a narrative text has been proposed by Anderson and Anderson (2003:8) who argue that a narrative text includes (1) orientation that sets the scene (when & where) and introduces participants/character (who), (2) complication where a crisis arises and something happened unexpectedly, (3) resolution when the crisis is resolved in which the characters finally sort out the complication, and (4) a coda which is closing to the narrative (optional).

4. Report

Anderson & Anderson (2003:86) states that report is a piece of text that present information about a subject. An information report usually contains facts about the subject, a description and information on its parts, behavior and qualities. In addition, Anderson & Anderson (2003:87) states that there are some steps in construction a report: a) a general opening statement that introduces the subject of the report, b) a series of paragraphs about the subject, and c) a conclusion that summaries the information presented and signals the end of the report.

5. News item

News item is a text which informs readers about events of the day. The events are considered newsworthy or important. Doddy, Ahmad et al. (2008:161) state that news items is objected to inform readers, listeners or viewers about events of the day which are considered news worthy or important. In the English online of text-types.com (April; 2012) published that in news item text, the language feature usually occurs are:

a) Short, telegraphic information about story captured in headline.
b) Use of material processes/action verbs to retell the story or event
c) Use of projecting verbal processes in "Source" stage (e.g. the police said…; the witness thought …) Using adverb like: badly injured, the most beautiful bride in the world.
d) Focus on circumstances (e.g. last night, just this morning, at that time, etc)

6. Anecdote

Anecdote text is a text that has social function to share an unusual or amusing incident. The writer share his/her or one's experience which has a unique event. In the English online of typeoftext.blogspot.com (April; 2012) displayed that an

anecdote is a type of spoken or written text that deals with past incidents. The function is to retell an account or story of unusual or amusing incident. The incident happened in the past. The purposes are sharing with others an usual or amusing incident and entertaining others. The generic structure of anecdote text usually has five components and one is optional, they are:

1. Abstract: Signals the retelling of an unusual or amusing incident
2. Orientation: Sets the scene
3. Crisis: Provides details of the unusual incident.
4. Reaction: Reaction to the crisis
5. Coda (optional) : Reflection on or evaluation of the incident.

7. Hortatory Exposition

Hortatory exposition is a text that describes a condition/problem comprehensively. The aim of this kind of text is asking people to do or not to do something. In the English online of typeoftext.blogspot.com (April; 2012) shown that a hortatory exposition is a type of spoken or written text that is intended to explain the listeners or readers that something should or should not happen or be done. To strengthen the explanation, the speaker or writer needs some arguments as the fundamental reasons of the given idea. In other words, this kind of text can be called as argumentation.

In the article of typeoftext.blogspot.com (April; 2012), it is also written that hortatory exposition text can be found in scientific books, journals, magazines, newspaper articles, academic speech or lectures, research report etc. Hortatory expositions are popular among science, academic community and educated people. The generic structure of hortatory exposition usually has three components: (1) Thesis, (2) Arguments and (3) Recommendation.

8. Analytical Exposition

An analytical exposition is a type of spoken or written text that is intended to persuade the listeners or readers that something is the case. To make the persuasion stronger, the speaker or writer gives some arguments as the fundamental reasons why something is the case. This type of text can be found in scientific books, journals, magazines, newspaper articles, academic speech or lectures, research report etc (www.typeoftext.blogspot.com, April; 2012).

Analytical expositions are popular among science, academic community and educated people. The generic structure of analytical exposition usually has three components are:

1. Thesis: Introduces the topic and shows speaker or writer's position. Outlines of the arguments are presented.

2. Arguments: It consists about Point and Elaboration. Point states the main argument while
Elaboration develops and supports each point of argument.
3. Conclusion: Reiteration (restatement), restates speaker or writer's position.

9. Commentary

A commentary text is not a summary of an issue. This text consists of 90 % from the writer's idea or opinion (www.typeoftext.blogspot.com, April; 2012). A commentary text structure consists of three (3) components. They are:

1. Title
2. General Statement
3. Stepped explanation

10. Discussion

A discussion can occurs in the spoken o written language. It is involving pro and contra side. Anderson & Anderson (2003:19) state that discussion text type gives the positive and negative, or the good points and the bad points. A discussion can be in spoken or written form. The purpose of a discussion is to present to the audience different opinions on a topic and, at the end, your opinion.

Example of discussion texts include:

a) Talkback radio
b) Debates
c) Current affairs interviews
d) Letters to the editor
e) Essays
f) Newspaper articles

Anderson & Anderson (2003:19-20) states that in constructing a discussion consists of some steps: a typical discussion text has an introductory paragraph that has a statement about the topic followed by a series of paragraph that give evidence, opinions or arguments for and against the topic. The end of the discussion text is signaled by a conclusion that gives a final point of view, either for against the topic. Discussion usually includes the following grammatical features:

a)   The use of generic terms related to the topic
b)   Words that show a comparison or a contrast
c)   World that link arguments.

11. Explanation

Anderson & Anderson (2003:14) state that an explanation text type tells how or why something occurs. Explanation can be spoken or written and their purpose is to tell each step of the process (the how) and to give reasons (the why) for it. Some

examples of the explanation text type are how something occurs, why something happened, why things are alike or different, and how to solve a problem.

Constructing an explanation text type usually involves three steps. First, there is the general statement about the event or thing. Next follows a series of paragraphs that tell how and why. The final step is a concluding paragraph. Anderson & Anderson (2003:14) also claim that explanations usually include the following grammatical features: (1) Technical language, (2) Words that show cause and effect, and (3) Use of the timeless present tense

G. CONCLUSION

Writing is important because it is a communicative way of sharing observation, information, thoughts, or ideas with ourselves and others. Through writing, the language learners learn to communicate with other people, to understand them, to read what they have written, and to write to them.

In the teaching of writing, the English teacher should pay attention on some elements, they are:

1) Understanding the purposes of teaching writing. At least, there are six purposes of teaching writing: writing for reinforcement, training, imitation, communication, fluency, and learning.
2) Teaching five main stages in producing a writing; pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing and publishing.
3) Teaching how to develop a paragraph which consists of three major structural parts: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence,
4) Employing appropriate techniques, such as brainstorming, quetioning, and clustering in their teaching.
5) Introducing some text type to the students, such as: narration, description, procedure, news item, report, recount, anecdote, hortatory exposition, analytical exposition, commentary, discussion, and explanation.

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