Promoting Academic Writing Students' Skills through "Process Writing" Strategy

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Writing in a second language is complex, and complicated, mainly because of by the addition of new resources and norms (new structural elements of the new language, new rhetorical conventions, and some other things). Teachers therefore, whether they like it or not, have to select the most appropriate teaching methods and strategies in their writing classes, one strategy that teachers can apply in their *Academic Writing* class is *Process Writing* strategy. This study shows information on a teaching strategy named *Process Writing* which was applied to one group of *Academic Writing* class in Semester II, 2016-2017. Research took place from January to April 2016. This group was taught using *Process writing* teaching strategy, with the hope of helping students improve in both their reading and writing skills. There were 20 students altogether in this group. One central question to be answered in this study is: *How effective is Process writing strategy when it is used to teach Academic Writing students?* Instruments used were pre-tests, post-tests, direct observation, video-recording; and weekly journals that students had to write every time they passed a stage of the Process Writing. From the statistical analysis as well as from students' perceptions, one main conclusion can be drawn, that is, *Process writing* is effective to teach *Academic Writing*. Another conclusion which is not less significant is that *Process Writing* can be used to teach any level of education, not to mention in tertiary education, provided that lecturers adjust the materials as well as level of difficulty. One last conclusion is that every strategy that teachers will apply in their classroom is very context-dependent. That is, it depends on the class situation, which varies from one class to another. The context, atmosphere, as well as situation of the class became the factors that contribute to the effectiveness and success of a strategy. This piece of research is hoped to benefit both lecturers as well as students of second language writing. Pedagogically, this research can enrich another source of literature in terms of teacher strategy in teaching second language writing.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is an activity which involves a number of things to be mastered, namely lexical and grammatical knowledge, coherence, cohesion, and mechanics. We also have to think about ideas as well as the logical organization of ideas. Writing is the result of employing strategies to manage the composing process. There are some activities involved in writing. To write well, one has to practice a lot. "First, I write one sentence. Then I write another. That's how I write. And so I go on. But I have a feeling writing out to be like running through a field" (Strachey, in Hedge, 2003, p.299). The quotation above shows us that to write, we really need great energy to think just like what we do when we run through a field.

Tribble (2012, p.12) adds that learning to write is not a question of developing a set of mechanical orthographic skills: it also involves learning a new set of cognitive and social relations. Tribble further states, "…for a variety of practical reasons, it is through the mastery of writing that the individual comes to be fully effective in intellectual or-ganization, not only in the management of everyday affairs, but also in the expression of ideas and arguments" (Tribble, 2012).

Learning the statements above, it can be concluded that writing can be powerful, and writing can be associated with control of information, as well as people, as Hedge states in his book, *Writing* (Hedge, 2012). In writing activity, precision is one requirement that must be fulfilled. Hedge (2003, p.302) states that, "One of the most important facts about composing process…is that the process that creates precision is itself messy." Writing in native language is of course different from writing in a second or foreign language. Hedge further states that writing in a second language is more complicated and difficult.

Writing in a second or foreign language is more difficult than writing in the first language or mother tongue. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers understand that there are many differences between L1 and L2 writing (Brown, 2001:339). As mentioned previously. Kern (2000) explains that L2 writing is complexified by the addition of new re-

sources and norms, that is, new structural elements of the new language, new rhetorical conventions, and some other things. Writing in second language will be more difficult\ less effective than writing in native language, if learner is less familiar with these new resources and less confident in the use (Kern, 2000, p.177). L2 writers have to read a lot in order to write well.

This is also strengthened by Simon et al. (2009). They mention that it is intuitively obvious, that one cannot learn to write until one has learnt to read. Kress (in Grainger, 2004) also claims that reading and writing are always socially embedded activities involving relationships, shared assumptions, and conventions as well as individual, personal acts involving imagination, creativity, and emotions. Reading and exposure to lots of academic writing like research are two, among others, keys to successful L2 academic writing. One of the strategies that can be applied in teaching *Academic Writing* is through Process Writing.

One central research question to be answered in this study is: *How effective is Process writing strategy when it is used to teach Academic Writing students?* This study is thus aimed at finding answers on the effectiveness of Process Writing Strategy in teaching *Academic Writing*. The goals of this study are to share findings of this piece of research to other lecturers of writing, and to add literature in the field of second language writing, especially in the area of teaching-learning strategies. This study reveals the implementation of *Process Writing* strategy in *Academic Writing* class in Semester II/2016-2017 Academic Year. Further elaboration on the theories, methodology, as well as discussion, are presented below.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How effective is Process writing strategy when it is used to teach *Academic Writing* students?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Process Writing refers to an approach of writing which is influenced by the task-environment and writer's long-term memory. Some of the main features of this approach are: writers have goals; all works can be reviewed, evaluated, and revised; planning, drafting, revising, and editing are interactive and simultaneous. In short, process writing perceives writing process as a wide range of mental activities that occur during the composing process and this might be explained by the interaction of a number of small processes (Hyland, 2002, p.25).

It must be understood that in the field of writing, there are some important terms like *writing process*, *process writing*, and *writing product*. According to Seow (2002, pp. 315-20) writing process refers to an activity that consists of four main steps: planning, drafting, revising, and editing. *Process writing*, however, is described as a writing process approach to teach writing. The underlying idea behind this approach is to lead students to construct *process-oriented writing instruction* that will affect performance. In this kind of effective performance-oriented program, teachers need to systemat-

ically teach problem-solving skills to students, which are connected with writing process. Hence, learners are able to realize specific goals at each writing stage. In this way, Seow (2002) claims that in-class writing process can be interpreted as an instructional program that provides a series pf planned experiences in learning, and gradually, students will understand the nature of writing at every point. As a classroom activity, process writing combines four basic stages of writing – *planning* or *pre-writing* (including group brainstorming), *revising* or *drafting*, and *editing*.

Talking about writing process and products, Brown (2001, pp. 335-7) mentions that about fifty years ago, however, emphasis was given on writing product rather than the process. Teachers paid attention to what the product, that is, the essay, report, or story, should look like. Compositions should meet the standards of English rhetorical style, should reflect accurate grammar, and should be well organized according to the convention. It was what happened in the past; the modern time, nonetheless, has brought much change, content has been given more attention, as Brown (2001, pp. 335) explains further in the next statement.

> In due course or time, we became better attuned to the advantage given to learners when they were seen as creators of language, when they were allowed to focus on content and message, and when their individual intrinsic motives were put at the centre of learning.

Process approach to writing focuses on the writing process that leads to the final product and it helps student writers understand their own composing process. Students are also given time to write, rewrite, and place central importance on the process of revision. Teachers should let students find out what they want to say as they write; in other words, students are given a chance to think as they write. In other words, writing is seen as a *thinking process*. Feedback from the teacher as well as peers is encouraged throughout the composing process, not only in the final product. Individual consultation between the teacher and students are included in this approach during the writing process.

Elbow (1973), as cited by Brown (2001, p. 337), emphasizes the importance of "grilling" meaning in the writing process:

> Meaning is not what you start out with but what you end up with. Control, coherence, and knowing your mind are not what you start out with but what you end up with. Think of writing, then, not as a way to transmit a message, but as a way to grow and cook a message. Writing is a way to end up thinking something you couldn't have started out thinking.

Brown then concludes that both writing process and product are important. Both should be given emphasis. There should be a balance between them. Writing product is the ultimate goal, it is the reason we go through the process of writing. Process is not the end, but a means to reach the end.

One thing to bear in mind is that *process-oriented* teaching is usually *leaner-centered*. Process-oriented writing today is characterized by *collaborative brainstorming, free writing, peer-group editing, drafting, revising*, and *editing*. During the 1990's, *genre-based approaches*, which empha-

sized the role of social context or discourse communities in shaping written communication, emerged. The focus is to make students aware of the characteristics of the ways people use language in the community in order to fulfill communicative purposes.

Prewriting

The first step in writing an academic essay is of course choose a topic. When learners have chosen their own topic, they should always choose a topic that interests them and fits their assignment. Narrow down a topic is always suggested. Figure 1 is an example of how students can narrow down their topic.

Brainstorming

This is a kind of brainstorming activity in which learners feel free about a topic, and they are looking for a specific focus. One idea will spark or invite another. The purpose is to generate as many ideas as possible and write them down without worrying about appropriateness, grammar, spelling, logic, and organization.

Planning, or some call it brainstorming, is one of the most famous tools for creative thinking and problem solving (Isaken, 1998). The word "brainstorming" has some meanings. For some people, it means to get together and have a discussion to get some new ideas. For some others, it solely means generating new ideas, and some believe that it is similar to creative problem solving. For this research, brainstorming is defined as efforts to get or generate ideas, to explore possible topics and ideas to be developed in the essay, and to start thinking of finding information on it.

Clustering

This is another brainstorming activity that can be used to generate ideas. Some writers skip this activity, but this is worth trying especially when writers are stuck in finding ideas. Below is an example of clustering activity (Oshima and Hogue, 2006, p. 86). In this example, the writer wants to develop the big topic of communication. It is then narrowed down into new ways of communication. The writer then thinks of all matters related to new ways of communication. This can be seen in Figure 2. It is clearly shown how the writer relates other ideas into hers/his.
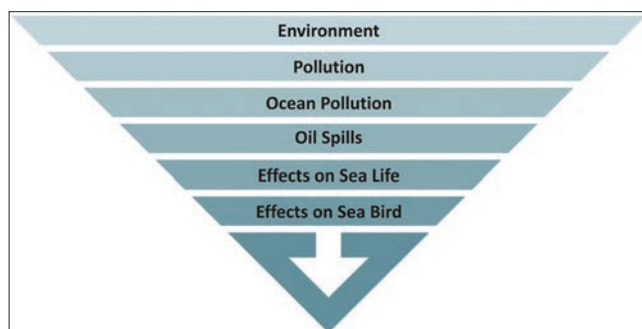

Figure 1. An example of how to narrow down a topic (Original Idea: Oshima and Hogue, 2006)

Outlining and Drafting

As the first step previously discussed, learners should choose their topic and narrow it down. Later, they have generate ideas by brainstorming. In the later step, they should start organizing their ideas and put them into an outline.

This next step after brainstorming is called drafting. In this step, writers start writing their first draft. In this phase, writers should start developing their topics, getting their ideas on their paper, and organize their ideas well. Shown in Figure 2 is an example of clustering. Students may not make bubbles and lines exactly this way. It is just an example of how they can find other relevant sub-topics and supports for their central topic. In this example the central topic is new ways to communicate. The bubbles are the sub-topics related to new ways to communicate, like email, cell phones, video phones, and internet phoning. The words connected to the bubbles by the broken lines are the features of the ways of communication.

After making an outline of what to write, students will go to the next phase of Process Writing. The next steps in Process Writing are respectively writing the first draft, sharing with other students in form of peer review, revising the content, and editing the language. Publication will be the last optional stage. For academic growth, publication is a good step for students to prove their academic writing competence.

Academic writing

Academic writing refers to all writing which is created for the purpose of study (Chin, et.al. 2012). All university students will be especially evaluated based on their writing, so writing skills are essential for students' academic success. Chan (2013) strengthens this idea, saying that when we write argumentative essays, our goal is to persuade others to adopt our view. We do that not by twisting the audience's arms, absolutely, but by putting forward convincing evidence, sensible reasoning, and effective rebuttals.

In academic writing, students will learn about the fundamentals or a good argument. They learn how to find mistakes, fallacies, or inconsistencies in others' arguments, so that they will not be easily deceived. They will also learn how to formulate their own arguments and influence or persuade others to agree with their opinions. Clear ideas in analysis, synthesis, and evaluation will make students stay in a good, strong stance with consistency and good reasoning. Elements graded in an academic essay are generally the focus of the essay, organization, structure, development, supports, elaboration, critical thinking, style, and mechanics.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is basically quantitative in nature. The design is "The One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design" (Tuckman,1978, p. 129); Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000, p. 212); Ary, Jacobs, and Ravazieh (2002, p. 316); Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007); Cresswell (2009). In this kind of model, the pretest provides some information about the selected students' initial state or condition, while the posttest describes the condition after the treatment. The diagram can be described as follows:
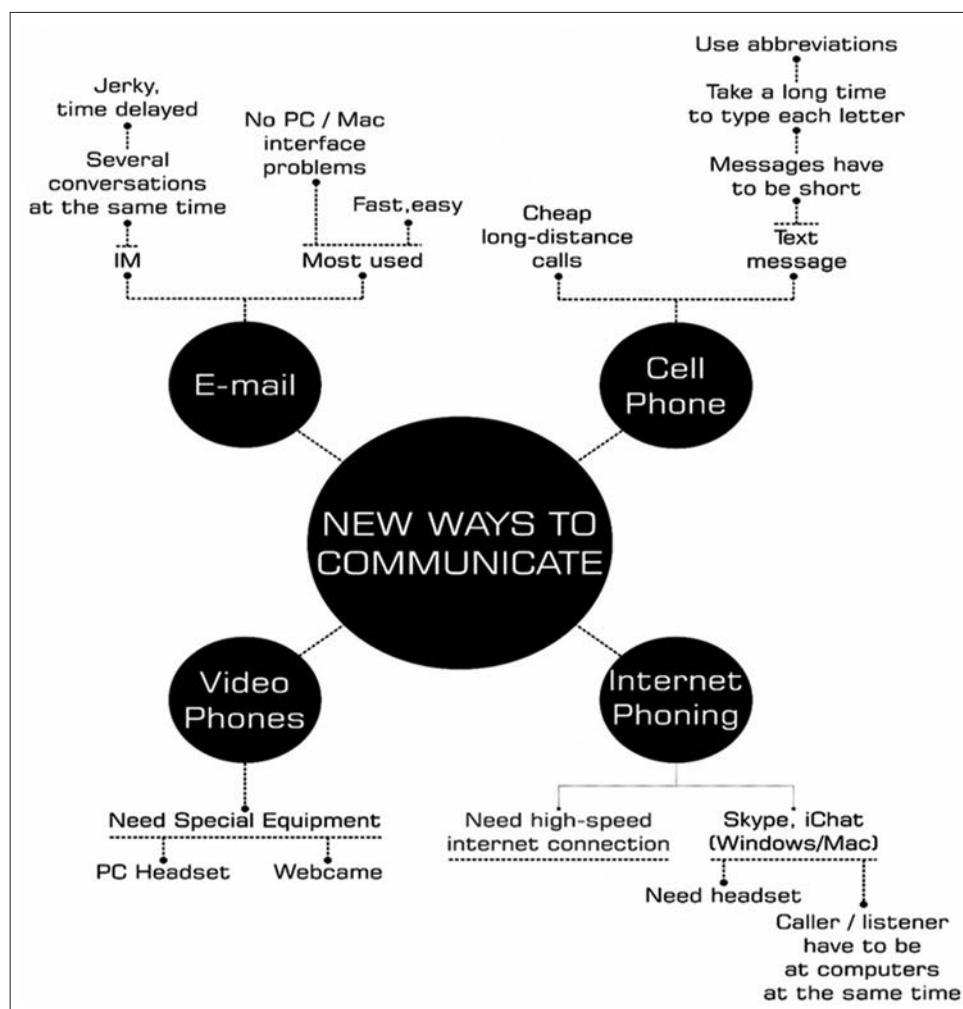
Figure 2. An example of clustering activity
(Original Idea: Oshima and Hogue, 2006)

O₁ refers to the initial condition of the students, while X the treatment or manipulation given, can be a teaching method or perhaps interest which is aroused by a curriculum innovation, or another reveal that the researcher manipulates to a certain dependent group. O₂ refers to the condition after the treatment; that is, after the researcher re-measures the group's attitudes, interest, or condition. Afterwards, the researcher moves on to compare the pretest and posttest scores. However, there are some parts where qualitative data are employed. Halliday (2002, p. 69) mentions that qualitative data records what happens in a particular social setting, that is, in a particular place or among a group of people. The type of qualitative data that is used in this study is included as "Account": what people say or write to the researcher, using the participants' actual words. This can be done using participants' diary, which is in the form of journal in this study.

In this study, I had double roles both as the researcher as well as the teacher of both classes. In order to avoid subjectivity, all the teaching-learning processes were video-recorded and reviewed right after the classes took place. A second way to avoid subjectivity is by having two inter-raters whose task was to score students' pre-tests and post-tests. These two inter-raters were lecturers of writing courses at the English Department of Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Salatiga, Indonesia.

Seen from the numerical quantities and data, as Grix (2004) mentions, this study is mainly quantitative. The sample of this study is 1 class of *Academic Writing* students who were purposively selected. Questionnaires were distributed one semester before the implementation of the research, that is, in Semester I, 2015-2016 to the population of Argumentative Writing, a kind of Preparatory Class for *Academic Writing*. These students of the English Department of UKSW had to pass grammar classes, like *Basic Grammar* and *Intermediate Grammar*. Also, they had to pass four previous writing classes, they are *Creative Writing, Procedural Writing, Narrative Writing,* and *Writing for the Media*. Out of 102 students, 20 students were selected with a GPA ranging from 2.96 to 3.86.

In order to obtain data, some instruments were used. Pretests and Posttests were given to the students at the beginning and the end of the semester in order to get the scores on the students' writing. Pretests were given to find out students' initial scores on the elements of their academic, argumentative essays, while posttests were to find out the final scores on the elements after the treatment. Besides that, video-recording was also done during the semester. This is to see the implementation of the treatment. Journals were also made by the students in order to find out their opinions on the stages

of *Process Writing*. During the Teaching Learning Process (TLP) for implementing the treatment and for data collection, video-recording was done in Micro Teaching Room, in E Building of Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana (UKSW) Salatiga, Indonesia.

DISCUSSIONS AND ANALYSIS

In this section, findings and discussion will be discussed. In the first part, the distribution of the sample will be tested using One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test. Data needed for this test are Pre-test and Post-test from both classes. There are two hypotheses proposed: Null Hypothesis – If the samples have normal distribution and Alternative Hypothesis, if the samples do not have the normal distribution.

For the significance level, α = 0.05 is used, and the statistics used is Kosmogorov-Smirnov. The Null Hypothesis will be rejected if p-value is less than (<) 0.05. On the other hand, if it is more than (>) 0.05, the Null Hypothesis will be accepted.

From the statistical analysis using One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, it is apparent that *p-value* for Pre-test and Posttest from this Process Writing (PW) Group respectively are 0.925 and 0.967. It means that all the *p-values* are more than 0.05. It means that all the samples have normal distribution.

To see whether there was an increase in the post-test of this group, Paired-Sample Test was used. It will be found out whether or not the averages of the Pre-test and Post-test of this group are the same or not.

There are two hypotheses:
- The Null Hypothesis (H0): the average of the Pre-test is equal to the Post-test (μPre = μPost)
- Alternative Hypothesis, or H1: the average of the Pre-test is not equal to the Post-test (μPre ≠ μPost)

From Table 1 and Table 2, it is clearly seen that the *p value* is 0.048, which is smaller than 0.05, the H0 hypothesis is rejected. As a result, the average of the Pre-test of this class, that is, *Process Writing* Group, is significantly different from the average of the Post-test of this Group. In this case, the average of the Pre-test of *Process Writing* Group is 58.68, while the average of the Post-test of Group C is 63.08. It can be further interpreted that the learning process in *Process Writing* Group significantly increased students' writing competence, seen from the improvement of the averages.

From statistical analysis, it is found that there is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the two group. It means that Process Writing is effective to teach *Academic Writing*.

Different writers may apply different stages of writing process in his/her writing. Commonly, writers go through these stages, commonly known as the process of writing, or some may call it process writing. First, they go through a stage called pre-writing, then they go to drafting, next writing, which becomes the core of the writing process. The next step is usually peer review or feedback, in which students share their works with their peer students, and they also respond to their peers' comments or suggestions. The last two stages are revising (for the content) and editing (the language). Finally, students will produce the final draft, or, they may end up publishing their written works. The summarized stages The figure is shown in Figure 3.

From Flower & Hayes' study in 1981, Greenwald, Persky, Campbell and Mezzeo's study in 1999, Unger and Fleishman (2004), and National Center for Education Statistics (1996), it is indicated that writing process is one effective way to teach students to be good writers (in Kamehameha Schools, 2007). It is proven in this study; Academic Writing students improved in their post-test after being taught using process writing strategy.

Another study was conducted by Graham and Sandmel (2011) on Grade 1-12 students. This study was to examine whether process writing instruction improves the quality of students' writing and motivation to write. Results show that process writing instruction resulted in a statistically significant (but relatively modest) improvement in the overall quality of writing. What Graham and Sandmel (2011) found has been confirmed in this study. Though not significantly improving, students' post-tests increased from their pre-tests (58.08 to 63.08).

Citing from Graves (1983), Kamehameha Schools (2007) also mention that in some classrooms, students were taught to share their work with their peer students through writing workshops and peer editing. These students were also taught to recognize the value of writing, and the purposes of creating solid and substantial woks. Peer editing is a part of this process writing strategy, and in this study, it made students help one another. Though not all students were in favor of peer editing, 75% (15 students) liked this activity. It means that more than half of the class agreed with the significance of peer editing.

About pre-writing activity, or some people commonly call it planning or brainstorming what is to be written, there was research indicating that planning is an important step in writing, and counts for 70% of the writing time (Murray, 1982, in Kamehameha Schools, 2007). Research shows however, that student writers only spend about 3 minutes to plan what they

Table 1. The Difference in Averages of Pre-test and Post-test of Process Writing Group

Paired Samples Test								
	Paired Differences							
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1 PRED - POSTD	-4.39450	9.29003	2.07731	-8.74237	-.04663	-2.115	19	.048

Table 2. The average of Pre-test and Post-test of Process Writing Group

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PRED	58.6815	20	12.02710	2.68934
	POSTD	63.0760	20	11.17297	2.49835

O1 X O2

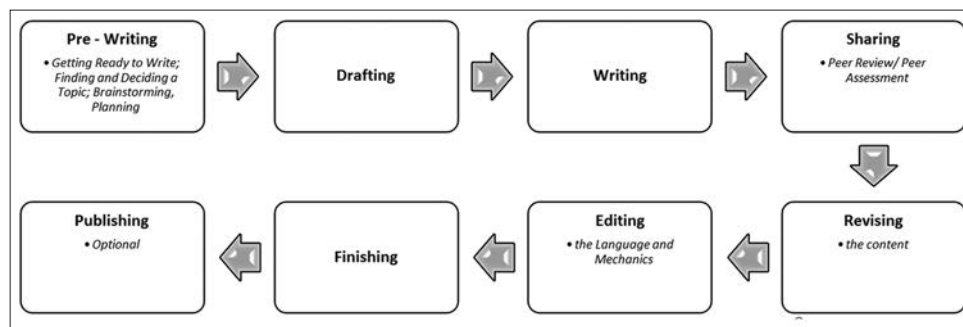**Figure 3.** The One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design

Figure 4. The Process of Process Writing

are going to write, which is very limited and very little. Therefore, they often cannot process information as well as ideas which may enhance their writing (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1996, as reported by Kemehameha Schools, 2007). Discussed below are the students' perspectives on the stages of process writing, starting from pre-writing activity.

From students' journals, which they submitted every time they passed a stage, various opinions were found. Presented here are their opinions on brainstorming, drafting, and peer review. About brainstorming, there were three students who thought that brainstorming was difficult, eight said that it was challenging and important to do. Two others had mixed opinions that brainstorming was both difficult but important, while the other eight had neutral opinions about it. The following is a student's opinion which stated that brainstorming was important.

Excerpt 1: Student's opinion on brainstorming
…This kind of activity can improve my motivation to work more effectively and productiv.Honestly, brainstorming and planning the ideas I should make for my writing is not easy actually. I had to choose what the topic I should use for my writing and I had to decide a topic that I like so that I can write with pleasure. Brainstorming helps us to find what we are going to write on our essay. Therefore, in order to present the essay good and well-organized we need to make some brainstorm so we will not lose some points we need ot write in our essay. (Student 1A's 2nd Journal, unedited)

About drafting, there were 5 different opinions from students. First, there were 9 students who thought that drafting was important and helped them in the later process of writing. Five others thought that it was difficult. The following is an example of a student's statement:

Excerpt 2: Student's opinion on drafting
My impression about drafting. Thesis Statement and outlining my essay is quite difficult. We do research first and write down then try finding the major problem of our essay that could be considered as Topic Sentences on each paragraph. At the first, it's not a big problem to find the major problem of my writing but when I try to elaborate the problem, each of the problems seems to be in the same topic. What I mean is the explanation or the discussion will explain the same idea with another idea. So, I have to be careful to discuss or explain one idea to another idea so that it won't be blended each other. (Student B's 4th Journal, unedited)

Only one student had mixed opinions that drafting was difficult but necessary in their writing steps. Three students showed neutral opinion, and the other five did not say anything about drafting.

Almost all students favored peer assessment. Out of twenty students, 15 students liked the idea of peer assessment, because they could learn from one another, and shared information. Only five students showed negative perception towards it. The main problems stated were schedule clashes, incompatible partners, and misunderstanding in interpreting peer's comments. Here is an example of a student's comment on peer review:

Excerpt 3: Student's opinion on peer feedback
"I honestly do not have any idea toward feedbacks I have got over my outline presentations. After that, I think peer assessment activity just so – so for me. There was nothing special there. I picked my partners randomly. Feedbacks I had got rarely ask about content. Therefore, I simply conclude that I had to use simpler language in order to lead readers in line with my idea." (Student C's Journal, unedited)

From both the statistical results as well as students' opinions on process writing, it can be seen that process writing instruction helped students underwent improvement in the overall quality of writing (Graham and Sandmel, 2011). All stages in this teaching strategy helped all Academic Writing students not only improve their own writing, but also improve their friends' through peer editing activity. As a whole, process writing is a useful and beneficial strategy in teaching *Academic Writing*, it is worth every effort that writing teachers have.

As previously mentioned, *Process Writing* refers to an approach of writing, which is influenced by the task-environment. Student writers' long-term memory is also involved here. Some of the main characteristics of this approach are: writers have goals; all works can be reviewed, evaluated, and revised; planning, drafting, revising, and editing are interactive and simultaneous. In short, process writing perceives writing process as a wide range of mental activities that occur during the composing process and this can be explained by the interaction of a number of small processes mentioned above (Hyland, 2002, p.25).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

From the discussion part above, several conclusions can be drawn. First, *Process Writing* is effective to teach *Academic*

Writing. Seen from the increase in the average of students' posttests, this teaching strategy can be considered effective to teach this particular course.

Another conclusion is *Process Writing* can be used to teach any level of education, even in tertiary education, considering that lecturers adjust the materials as well as level of difficulty. In this research, for example, *Process Writing* was used to teach *Academic Writing*, the highest level of writing to be taught at the English Department of Faculty of Language and Literature (FLA) of UKSW Salatiga, before students go to *Thesis Proposal* writing.

The last conclusion is that every strategy that teachers will apply is very context-dependent. That is, it depends on the class situation, which varies from one class to another. The context, atmosphere, as well as situation of the class became the factors that contribute to the effectiveness and success of a strategy. In this research, Process Writing was implemented to fourth-semester students who took *Academic Writing* class. Future researchers can conduct other pieces of research on other writing classes using the same strategy. Alternatively, they can conduct research with the same level of students and the same class, that is, *Academic Writing* class, with different strategies.

Related to its aim, this research has shared findings on the effectiveness of Process Writing Strategy in teaching *Academic Writing*. Students' average of the final grade was proven to increase from 58.08 to 63.08. This study has also shared the findings which are hoped to benefit other lecturers of writing, and to add literature in the field of second language writing, especially in the area of teaching-learning strategies.

Hopefully, this piece of research can benefit both lecturers as well as students of second language writing. The weakness of this research is that students with grade point average lower than 2.9 were not selected. Other researchers can select students with various academic competence, so that broader conclusions can be drawn.

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