
Improving a Student's Writing Skill in Argumentative Text by Using Clustering Technique

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to find out the effect of using clustering technique toward an English Foreign Learner's writing skill, especially in writing argumentative text. The study was conducted by using action research design because it used a technique to improve one of the EFL's skills. Target of the study was an EFL majoring in Economics. Data collection would be included pre-test, post-test, observation checklist, fieldnotes, and interview. Data analysis used in this study were quantitative and qualitative analysis. Quantitative analysis would be used to analyze the student's writing skill by using Oklahoma analytical scoring rubric, while qualitative analysis were used to indicate the success of the research. The researcher measured two indications: (1) the student was able to reach the standard score of ≥ 36 and (2) the implementation of clustering technique could improve the students' writing skill.

Keywords: Argumentative Text, Clustering Technique, Writing Skill

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the important skills in learning English. It is included in productive skill. It means that the students have to be able to write well. Besides, writing is the ability to put pen and paper to express ideas through symbols. In this way, representations on the paper will have meaning and content that could be communicated to other people by the writer. It means that the students must be able to deliver the message to the other people so that they understand what the writer means. Writing is one of the fundamental importance to learning, to development of the person in each learner, and to success in the educational system. The idea of teaching writing is a process, not a product (Harris, 1997). It means that it is a must for the students to be able to write to succeed in the educational system. They must be also guided by the teacher.

Writing is difficult for the students because they cannot brainstorm and select ideas well. They are also confused what to write first. Based on the survey done on Thursday, 14 April 2016, it was found that the student had some difficulties in improving her writing skill. The researchers found that the student could not write paragraphs using good ideas. Moreover, based on her writing, the researchers found that her writing was not organized well. It meant that the student felt that she had some difficulties in brainstorming and organizing their ideas becoming a good paragraph. She was confused what she wanted to write first. Besides, sometimes her ideas jumped out of the topic so that her ideas of one paragraph were not synchronic with ideas of another paragraph.

There are many ways to solve the problems. One of the techniques that can be used to solve the problem is using clustering technique. According to Oshima and Hogue in Rinansyah (2012), clustering is brainstorming activity that can be used to generate the

ideas. DePorter and Hernacki in Saragih and Sagita (2012) emphasize that clustering is the way to classify the ideas and share into a piece of paper by making the connection with the core of the idea. It means that the students write a noun or phrase to show the main idea. Then they draw some shapes or lines to connect the other ideas with the core. The purpose is to make the students focused with the topic. Moreover, clustering is a structured technique based on the same associative principles as brainstorming and listing. Clustering is distinct, however, because it involves a slightly more developed heuristic. It means that when the students write using clustering technique, they brainstorm and organize their ideas orderly. If they want to develop their ideas becoming good paragraphs, they will not be confused because they have focused in arranging the ideas.

Based on the explanation above, the researchers want to do a research entitled "Improving Students' Writing Skill by Using Clustering Technique."

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Oshima and Hogue in Rinansyah (2012), clustering technique can be used to generate ideas. Clustering is a technique that allows the writer to brainstorm and explore ideas as many as possible (Dawson & Essid, 2010). When writers start to form the cluster, they just need to keep brainstorming their ideas without considering questions, such as: what, who, where, when, why, and how.

According to Rico (1983), clustering is a technique to divide some ideas and write them in a piece of paper without considering the relevant, appropriate or valuable ideas. This technique can be also used any kind of writing texts, for example, report, essay, proposal, short story, or poem. Clustering is also an exploration of thoughts and conception which is related to the focus. De Porter and Hernacki (1999) also state that clustering technique is a way to classify ideas and write them in a piece of paper. Then the ideas are connected with the core.

Based on the definitions above, clustering is a technique to brainstorm and organize ideas well. The writers just need to keep exploring the ideas without considering the other parts like questions of what, who, where, when, why, and how. The technique also helps supporting ideas to be connected to the core.

2.1 Advantages of Clustering Technique

Clustering technique helps the writers to connect and develop each idea becoming good paragraphs. Clustering technique also helps the students making their paragraphs more coherent and organized. In addition, it is expected to improve the students' writing skill.

2.2 Steps of Clustering Technique

Clustering is a technique to brainstorm and organize ideas well where the writers connect the core and the supporting ideas. There are some steps in using clustering. First, create one topic in the middle of a piece of paper. Second, draw some shapes like lines or balloons to connect the supporting ideas with the core. Third, explore ideas in those lines or balloons.

3. METHODOLOGY

The design of this research was an action research because it used a technique to improve one of the students' skills. The results would be the students' improvement.

According to Watts in Ferrance (2000), an action research is a process where the participants examine their own educational practice systematically and carefully.

The instrument of this research was divided into three kinds of instruments: test, observation checklist and field notes, and interview.

3.1 Test

The written test was chosen by the researcher. It was designed by the researchers. Moreover, there were two kinds of written that would be used by the researchers. First, the researcher used writing preliminary data. The preliminary data was used before applying the clustering technique. In this case, the researchers let the student to write what she wanted. After the student was taught by using clustering technique, the real test was given to her. The researchers divided the scores of the test into grammar, organization, and content. The purpose was to know the improvement of their writing skill, whether they were better in writing by using good ideas and organization or not yet.

3.2 Observation Checklist and Field Notes

The observation was conducted by the researchers to observe what would happen during the teaching and learning process. The checklist and field notes of the research focus on the researchers' and the student's behavior that can support the data for the test score. It was taken for qualitative data source in analyzing the result.

3.3 Interview

The interview consists of ten questions. The researchers asked the student about her opinions in learning process by using clustering technique.

4. RESULT

The result showed that there was improvement in the student's writing skill in argumentative text. The first improvement can be proved by the increasing score. The next was the high motivation in speaking. The student's improvement can be seen from the tables below.

Table 1. Pre-test

Analytic traits	Weight		Trait Score	=	Weighted Trait Score	
Ideas & development	.30	X	3	=	0,9	
Organization, unity, & coherence	.25	X	3	=	0,75	
Sentences & paragraphs	.15	X	2	=	0,3	
Word choice	.15	X	3	=	0,45	
Grammar, usage, & mechanics	.15	X	3	=	0,45	
					=	2,85 (sum)
2,85 X 15 = 42,75 (composite [final] score)						

Table 2. Post-test

Analytic traits	Weight		Trait Score	=	Weighted Trait Score	
Ideas & development	.30	X	2	=	0.6	
Organization, unity, & coherence	.25	X	3	=	0.75	
Sentences & paragraphs	.15	X	2	=	0.3	
Word choice	.15	X	2	=	0.3	
Grammar, usage, & mechanics	.15	X	2	=	0.3	
					=	2.05 (sum)
2.15 X 15 = 30.75 (composite [final] score)						

After getting the data gathered by post-test, the researchers accounted the number of the student's writing score. The research would be successful if the score was ≥ 36 . Based on Oklahoma analytical scoring rubric, Unsatisfactory: 15-24; Limited Knowledge: 25-35; Satisfactory: 36-53; Advanced: 54-60.

5. DISCUSSION

Pre-test was given before clustering technique implented by the researchers. The purpose was to know the student's base score in argumentative text. Pre-test was also used to identify the student's problem. From the data of Pre-test above and the interview with the student, the researchers identified the major problem that the student got some difficulties in developing the ideas. The student is not an English student so that she had problems in grammar and organization of the text.

Considering the student's major problem was the difficulty in developing the ideas, the researchers decided to use clustering technique to improve the student's writing skill. The researchers also gave knowledge about grammar and organization of argumentative text.

In the next meeting, the researchers and the student discussed the student's pre- test. This step was done in order to help the student understood her lacks in writing argumentative text. By discussing the student's pre-test, either the researchers or the the student understood which parts were needed to be improved. They were ideas and development; organization, unity, and coherence; sentences and paragraphs; word choice; grammar, usage, and mechanic. By knowing this lacks, the researchers designed the steps in applying the technique.

After knowing the student's difficulties in the previous meeting, the researchers gave treatment started in the third meeting until the fifth meeting. The treatment was about to write an argumentative text by using clustering technique. The student was given knowledge about the argumentative text itself: its organization, unity, and coherence.

The researchers gave an example on how to construct an argumentative text by using clustering technique. Then, they explained to the student about how clustering technique could help the student write easily. After that, the student was asked to write an argumentative text by using clustering technique. The researchers and the student would analyze the writing and give comments.

The treatment ended in the fifth meeting. In the sixth meeting, the post-test was done by the student. The student was asked to write an argumentative text by using clustering technique. The time given was 60 minutes. The theme was freely chosen by the student. Then the student's writing of post-test was analyzed by the researcher by using Oklahoma Analytical Scoring Rubric.

Furthermore, in writing by using clustering technique, the student could motivate herself more in writing. The student was never taught by using clustering technique even when she took English in the first and the second semester. She was excited because she knew good and enjoyable steps in writing, especially for argumentative text. She also learnt how to develop ideas well, organize unity and coherence of sentences and paragraphs, choose appropriate words, and use good grammar.

6. CONCLUSION

In this study, it was found that clustering technique could improve the student's writing skill in argumentative text. Although the student did not have much improvement, the score of the writing test that the student got was increased: 30.75 (Limited Knowledge) – 42.75 (Satisfactory). It showed that clustering technique could help the student in organizing ideas and development, choosing words, and using grammar. Although there were some factors that make the student felt difficult in writing, she kept motivated in writing argumentative text.

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