STUDENT RESPONSES ON A LEARNING OF PARAGRAPH-BASED WRITING THROUGH CIRCLE THE SAGE BASED ON CRITICAL THINKING

Testiana Deni Wijayatiningsih
testiana@unimus.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Writing is one of English skills that students should master. There are some levels of writing described as follows: word-based writing, sentence-based writing, paragraph-based writing, genre-based writing and academic writing. Due to the above statements, students find it difficult to organize sentences into a coherent paragraph. Thus, the researcher conducts a research on analysis of student responses on a paragraph based writing course which uses a method of circle the sage based on critical thinking. This research uses a method of descriptive analysis. The data are collected using questionnaires to obtain the student responses on course learning of paragraph based writing through a method of circle the sage based on critical thinking. A descriptive-qualitative data analysis is used to analyze the learning achievement of a paragraph-based writing course through a method of circle the sage based on critical thinking. From the research results, it shows that lecturers are expected to use more applicable methods or techniques to enable students to have critical thinking to put their ideas in writing a paragraph.

Keywords: student responses, circle the sage, critical thinking

INTRODUCTION

Writing skill is an integral part in English acquisition. Writing is the integration of speaking, reading, and listening skill. The levels of writing skills described in the curriculum of English Education undergraduate program of Muhammadiyah University of Semarang requires students to master five basic writing skills, including; word-based writing, sentence-based writing, paragraph-based writing, genre-based writing, and academic writing. Of those five levels of writing courses, the researcher focuses on paragraph-based writing course which discusses the students'

ability to write a paragraph including the use of punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and hyphenation that a paragraph is coherently organized.

Based on the research preliminary observations, the second-year (third semester) students of English Education undergraduate program of Muhammadiyah University of Semarang have different educational background. Those different backgrounds also lead to different competences, especially in writing skill. Nearly half of the students have difficulties in combining three sentences into a paragraph which are caused by a lack of vocabulary acquisition. Thus, the average score in writing courses decreases. On the other side, the lecturers are required to pay attention more on each student's actual ability which may not be done in one period of lectures. The lecturers conventionally teach the without any teaching innovations adapted to the students' ability. In teaching writing, the lecturers use handouts, media, and methods such as discussions and demonstrations which are not quite various and creative.

In line with those complex obstacles above, it is essential to conduct alternative reflections and actions upon a method combined with an attractive learning model. Changes and reflections are conducted through the use of a method of circle the sage based on critical thinking in a course learning of paragraph-based writing by analyzing the student responses on that learning method.

Research Problem

The problem of this research is formulated as follows:

How are student responses on a course learning of paragraph-based writing through circle the sage based on critical thinking?

Paragraph-Based Writing

Writing skill is a very essential part in language acquisition. Writing is as an attempt to create or recreate the existing ones (Barli Bram (2002: 7). From the definition, it can be concluded that writing is an activity to create a record or information on a medium by using scripts. Writing is usually made on paper by using tools such as pen or pencil.

In line with the above definition, Hyland (2004: 7) states that writing is a skill which is supported by situations, conditions, and teachers who provide supports yet are not directly involved.

Boardman (2002: 11) also argues that writing is a repeated series of processes starting from planning, organizing, writing, editing, revising, and finalizing called writing.

From above explanations, it can be concluded that writing is an integrated part and a sequence which requires vocabulary and ability to arrange words into sentences, sentences into paragraphs to create a text.

Paragraph is a composition consisting of some sentences which are totally interrelated and integrated to create a thinking unity. A paragraph consists of several elements, such as a topic sentence which is also called a main sentence supporting sentences which also called explanatory sentences.

The main function of a paragraph is to show new ideas and develop the previous ideas further.

A good paragraph should meet three criteria: coherent, unity, and complete. It is considered coherent if all sentences in a paragraph are logically connected using the appropriate conjunctions. There are two types of conjunctions: intra-sentence conjunctions to connect sub-clauses with main clauses and inter-sentence conjunctions to connect one sentence to the other sentences.

A paragraph may be considered unity if the paragraph has one main idea contained in the topic sentence. The other sentences are only supporting sentences which develop the topic sentence and just talk about the existing ideas in the topic sentence. A topic sentence has the following characteristics: containing an idea which is potential to be detailed and stand alone without using any conjunctions.

A paragraph may be considered complete if the paragraph has already had supporting sentences. The characteristics of supporting sentences are 1) containing details, explanations, or samples of the main idea contained in the topic sentence, 2). Having a meaning if connected with the other sentences in the paragraph, and 3). Requiring the assistance of conjunctions.

Circle the Sage

Cooperative learning method requires students to work in groups and be responsible for the groups. Cooperative means that students are required to be able to solve the problems in groups instead of

completing the work within a team or group discussion (Jacobs, *et al.*, 1997).

The goal of cooperative learning is different with that of traditional groups which implement a system of competition that individual success is emphasized upon others' failure. The purpose of cooperative learning is to create a situation in which individual success is determined or influenced by the success of a group (Slavin, 1994).

There are various methods in cooperative learning, including circle the sage (a wise man circle). Circle the sage (a wise man circle) is one of 72 models of cooperative learning which creates a discussion by choosing high competent students into one group and then share the information obtained to the other groups which require additional information on what are being discussed (Isro, 2013: 7).

Critical Thinking

Nowadays, critical thinking is very essential in our daily life because it may develop the other thinking skills, such as decision making and problem solving.

According to Gunawan (2003: 177-178) a complex thinking skill supported by the analytical and evaluative competences is called critical thinking.

Rahmat (2010: 1) also argues that decision making, logical thinking, careful planning based on scientific processes to solve the problem are a series of critical thinking.

While Juha (2010: 1) states that Critical thinking is reasonable, reflective thinking, focused on deciding what to believe or do.

According to Ruland (2003: 1-3) universal intellectual standards are the foundations of critical thinking.

From above definitions, it can be concluded that critical thinking is a mental activity conducted in a coherent planning to naturally solve the problems.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a method of descriptive analysis. The data are collected using questionnaires to obtain the student responses on course learning of paragraph based writing through a method of circle the sage based on critical thinking. A descriptive-qualitative data analysis is used to analyze the course learning achievement of paragraph-based writing through a method of circle the sage based on critical thinking.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study are based on student response analysis indicators in course learning of paragraph-based writing which use a method of circle the sage based on critical thinking, including; whether the learning conducted is interesting or not, the learning concept is easy to understand or not, students are motivated to learn or not, the learning encourages the students to work together or not, the media used help to understand the materials being taught or not, the tasks given are challenging or not, students are able to accomplish the assignments given by the lecturers or not, the questions given are in accordance with the teaching materials or not, students have difficulties in learning or not, and the tutorial methods help students' to understand or not.

From the results of analysis, it can be concluded that the students positively respond the course learning of paragraph-based writing through circle the sage based on critical thinking and are more motivated to join the class with an average percentage of 89.86%.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of analysis on student responses, it can be concluded that students positively respond a paragraph-based writing course using a method of circle the sage based on critical thinking that the students are motivated to join the course with an average percentage of 89.86%. Interesting teaching method selection in course learning of paragraph-based writing has a positive influence upon the students to improve their writing skills, especially in writing a paragraph.

REFERENCES

Boardman, Cyntia A. 2002. *Writing to Communicate Paragraphs and Essays* (2nd ed). New York: Longman.

George M. Jacobs, Gan Siowk Lee and Jessica Ball. 1997. *Learning Cooperative Learning via Cooperative Learning, A Sourcebook of Lesson Plans for Teacher Education.* Singapore: Kagan Sameo Regional Language Centre, P. 16.

Hyland, Ken. 2004. *Genre and Second Language Writing.* USA: The University of Michigan Press.

Juha, Mervat Amin. 2010. *Thinking Skills Critical Thinking- 2 Chapter. Zaid .IQ*