

An Evaluation of Process-Based Academic Writing Textbook

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ABSTRACT: *For the sake of finding the appropriate teaching material on EFL writing, the writer analyzes the process-based academic writing textbook which has been used at the English Education Department of Central Java. In this textbook analysis, the writer used three phases of the in-depth method (Widodo, 2007; McGrath, 2002). The phases are: (1) goal and organization, (2) contents, (3) suitability of the textbook. The chosen book was the book which was used to teach students of three universities at Central Java (IKIP PGRI Semarang, University of Muria Kudus and University of Tidar Magelang). The book analyzed showed the strengths and the weaknesses. Then, the result of this analysis could be applied for the lecturer of the academic writing.*

Keywords: *evaluation, academic writing, textbook, process-based approach*

INTRODUCTION

Textbook can be seen as a central to teaching and learning, and the quality of the textbook is also a determining factor in improving the quality of a language activity (Munir, 2013: 1; Karamouzian, 2010: 25). Therefore, the selection of a textbook must have several considerations. The considerations can be taken based on textbook analysis results. In learning EFL, writing is considered as one of the most difficult skills for a learner especially to master academic writing. Moreover, EFL textbook with the process of writing is not easy to find in Central Java, Indonesia. Therefore, selection of text book must be carried out in order to enhance writing skills.

METHODS

This study used a qualitative approach to analyze or evaluate a textbook. In this textbook analysis, the writer used three phases of the in-depth method (Widodo, 2007; McGrath, 2002). The phases are: (1) goal and organization, (2) contents, (3) suitability of the textbook. The three phases of the in-depth method conveys the goals and the content of the teaching materials, students'/learners' needs, teachers' interest and the function of the teaching materials as the core of the teaching learning process. In other words, phases of textbook analysis consists of goal and organization in the first phase, contents including inputs, models and exercise in the second phase, and in the third or last phase, suitability including goal, Writing teaching belief, and roles of textbook, teacher and students.

In this textbook analysis, the chosen textbook analyzed is Writing Academic English written by Oshima, A and Hogue A. This textbook was published by Pearson Education, Inc in 2006 as the fourth edition with the ISBN of 0-13-152359-7. It has been chosen based on the writer's teaching experience in teaching writing and the textbook which has

been used by lecturers in the three universities of Central Java, as examples of the population. The three universities are IKIP PGRI Semarang, University of Muria Kudus and University of Tidar Magelang.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The textbook analysis is carried out three phases, (1) Goal and Organization, (2) Contents, (3) Suitability. In other words, the first phase analysis focuses on the goal and organization of the textbook. The second phase analysis deals with contents of the textbook and the third phase analysis discusses suitability.

The First Phase: Goal and Organization

The goal of the textbook can be seen in the preface of the book. The author declares that *Writing Academic English, Fourth Edition* will help high-intermediate to advance English language learners master writing using a step-by-step approach (pp. ix). The statement indicates that the textbook is one of the available process-based writing textbooks. Moreover, writing itself is considered as a process. The textbook also provides the process of Academic Writing in Appendix A. The process of academic writing encompasses steps such as prewriting, planning (outlining), writing and polishing. In addition, many practices or assignments provided in the textbook giving a series of activities or a process. In conclusion, the goal of the textbook is clearly stated that the learners master academic writing based on a process or step-by-step activities.

The organization of the textbook is systematically well designed. The textbook consists of three parts accompanied by six appendixes. The first part brings about *Writing A Paragraph*. The second part discusses *Writing An Essay*, and *Sentence Structure* in the third part. Then, the appendixes draw up *the process of academic writing, Punctuation Rules, Charts of Connecting Words and Transition Signals, Editing Symbols, Research and Documentation of Sources, and Self-Editing and Peer-Editing Worksheets*.

The first part of the textbook is divided into three chapters (*Paragraph Structure, Unity and Coherence, and Supporting Details: Facts, Quotations, and Statistics*); each sub-chapter is consistently accompanied with some arguments.

The second part of the textbook comprises six chapters (*From Paragraph to Essay, Chronological Order: Process Essays, Cause/Effect Essays, Comparison/Contrast Essays, Paraphrase and Summary, and Argumentative Essays*) in which each pattern of essay development focuses on a brief explanation, an essay organization (introduction, body, conclusion), and writing practices.

The third part is structured into six chapters (*Types of Sentences, Using Parallel Structures and Fixing Sentence Problems, Noun Clauses, Adverb Clauses, Adjective Clauses, and Participial Phrases*).

With such skills, the author has a great expectation on improving students writing skills by providing step-by-step activities of writing, which could encourage the students to learn writing skills from the the beginning to the advance level (from sentences to essays). Each description of the skills is consistently accompanied with models and activities.

To sum up, the textbook is systematically and clearly well organized with several practices/exercises which motivate students/learners to do them better than before. In

other words, the organization of the textbook reflects its goal of the process-based academic writing for university students who are learning academic writing.

The Second Phase: Content

In the second phase, an in-depth analysis is used to investigate the contents of the selected textbook. As previously mentioned, the textbook is divided into three parts accompanied by six appendixes. The first part brings about *Writing A Paragraph*. The second part discusses *Writing An Essay*, and *Sentence Structure* in the third part.

Based on McDonough and Shaw's suggestion (cited in Widodo, 2007:116; Lee, 2003:174), the analysis of the content can be carried out by examining at least two chapters/units/parts of the materials/the textbook. Part I and Part II have been chosen to analyze.

In this case, Part I is divided into three chapters, including (1) *Paragraph Structure* explaining the pattern of the paragraph and the types of the paragraph frequently appeared in an academic essay writing; (2) *Unity and Coherence* explaining unity and coherence as the elements of the good paragraph; and (3) *Supporting Details: Facts, Quotations, and Statistics* showing that academic writing normally requires facts, statistics and quotations to support ideas constructed or arranged in the paragraphs or essays.

Part II comprises six chapters, including (1) *From Paragraph to Essay* discussing parts of an essay including an introduction, a body and a conclusion; (2) *Chronological Order: Process Essays* showing a way of organizing ideas in the order of their occurrence in time (Oshima, 2006:81); (3) *Cause/Effect Essays* showing the organization of cause/effect essays; (4) *Comparison/Contrast Essays* presenting how to organize comparison/contrast essays; (5) *Paraphrase and Summary* discussing the importance of the differences between paraphrase and summary; and (6) *Argumentative Essays* discussing the argumentative essay type.

Part I gives the basic understanding to the students what elements needed in writing paragraphs. Then, the paragraphs can be constructed into an effective academic essay. It is committed to the author's goal that help students master how to write good paragraph before writing an academic essay.

Part II gives the understanding to the students the essay types and the organization of each essay type. Unfortunately, process of writing is provided in Appendix A and it could not be found in each chapter of essay in Part II. Moreover, the core materials of Part II are the types of essay development.

To sum up, in Part I and II, the author divides Part I into three chapters dealing with the elements of paragraphs. Then in Part II, the author emphasizes sequential steps for developing patterns of essays based on the types. Unfortunately the process of writing has not been included in each chapter of essay types. Therefore, the students/learners should read Appendix A in order to write an academic essay based on the process.

The Third Phase: Suitability

In this last phase, as Widodo (2007); and Richards (2001) emphasize, suitability which includes the goal, beliefs about writing, the roles of the teacher, the role of students, and the roles of the textbook is explained.

Goal

The goal of the textbook is to help high-intermediate to advance English language learners master writing using a step-by-step approach and to develop students academic writing of different essay types. Process-based approach in the textbook seems vividly applied. Therefore, the learners starts to write from part 1 of the textbook conveying how to write an academic paragraph. In other words, the learners start from the easiest form and continue to write an academic essay of different types in part 2 of the textbook.

The author of the textbook believes that the learners could be independent of doing assignments provided in the textbook and he believes that writing should be considered as a process and the written form made on the basis of certain purpose and audience.

From the two parts, Part I and Part II, it could be viewed that the textbook is recommended and it is committed to the goal prescribed in the preface of the textbook.

Belief about Writing

The author believes that writing as a process is used to achieve the creation and to develop a set of strategies for planning, drafting, revising, and editing. In Part I and II, students should take the steps as part of process of writing. The textbook will help the students to develop patterns of essays through intensive and effective writing work. In other words, the author's belief about writing is compatible with the context of EFL on the basis of purpose and audience (Widodo, 2007).

The Roles of the Lecturer

A lecturer plays important roles when he/she brings the textbook to his/her classroom. The lecturer acknowledges the textbook to the students and he/she serves as a facilitator, moderator, motivator, advisor or commentator, and evaluator. Therefore, students are convinient and motivated to read the textbook; and apply the information/input, model and examples/exercises in the students' works. The lecturer should serve as the students need to solve the problems found in the textbook. To sum up, this textbook provides clear models which are internationally standardized, and could motivate the lecturers to develop writing materials.

The Roles of Students

Students play important roles when they begin writing an academic essay. They apply the concept, models, thesis statement which is provided through examples of the textbook when they write an academic essay. Expressing the ideas, organizing the materials, revising and editing the essay are carried out. Then, the process of writing occurs here. Obviously, the students have applied the information provided in the textbook through step-by-step activities acknowledged by the textbook. In other words, the author believes that the students could think critically and attempts to inspire the students to produce the effective academic writing.

The Roles of the Textbook

The roles of the textbook are important since the clear instructions and clues, models, examples, vivid explanation and practices are provided. The textbook become a source of information and a useful guide for the writing learners to facilitate the teaching learning process wherever the learners are. Briefly, the role of the textbook is to lead the learners

comprehend the academic writing through the process of writing, especially writing academic essays in EFL context.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the textbook can be used in teaching academic writing based on the process or steps. It can be recommended to the lecturers who are teaching EFL writing courses. In this textbook analysis, three phases of the in-depth method used to analyse the textbook indicate that the author has applied vivid goal and organization in the first phase; has conveyed the clear message in the contents of the textbook including inputs, models, exercises and writing assignments in the second phase; and in the third phase, has acknowledged that the textbook is suitable to teach process-based academic writing class. Therefore, the results of this analysis encourage teachers and students to get more effective writing.

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