

A SELF-ASSESSMENT MODEL IN TEACHING ACADEMIC WRITING FOR INDONESIAN EFL LEARNERS

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APA Citation: Taufiqulloh. (2014). A self-assessment model in teaching academic writing for Indonesian EFL learners. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 3(1), 50-58

Received: 19-10-2014

Accepted: 02-11-2014

Published: 01-12-2014

Abstract: This self-assessment model is developed to help EFL students improve their achievement in academic writing, more particularly essay writing. In English department of Pancasakti University Tegal, academic writing is the course subject which develops models and practices of essay writing in order that students are actively engaged in rhetorical problem-solving. The development of this self-assessment model was derived from the analysis of both theoretical and empirical studies of self-assessment in EFL writing. The self-assessment model developed in this study consists of four kinds of self-assessment instruments: self-edit checklist of writing dimensions (CWD), checklist of writing strategies (CWS), survey questionnaire of writing interest and awareness (SWIA), and questionnaire of learning monitoring strategies (QLMS). This self-assessment model can be an alternative model in teaching academic writing to EFL students at university level, more particularly the students of English Department, Pancasakti University Tegal.

Keywords: self-assessment model, academic writing, Indonesian EFL learners

INTRODUCTION

It is generally acknowledged that in the field of EFL learning, students of any English department in Indonesian colleges or universities should be able to pursue good performance in writing as producing a piece of scientific work is a part of the crucial requirements in completing their study. It has been widely known that writing in foreign language teaching has become more important today as it is not only an object of study but a system of communication (Weigle, 2000). Writing is different from spoken language in form and use. In essay writing, for example, learners are required to not only invent, express and organize ideas as well as translate them into readable texts, but also to make use of correct grammar and sentence patterns. In

higher education, assessment plays an important role to the success of the teaching and learning process. It shapes the experience of the students and influences their behavior more than the teaching they receive. (Bloxam & Boyd, 2007 and Orsmond, Merry and Reiling, 2000:24). In other words, selecting effective assessment method or model is of value to the teaching itself.

The self-assessment model developed in this study is considered as alternative technique in teaching academic writing to university students which is more student-centered. Through this model, students are expected to do effective self-editing strategies in writing, figure out their writing interest and awareness, learning monitoring strategies which result to better writing achievement.

This self-assessment model was developed on the basis of metacognitive theory in which metacognitive skills are important in developing autonomous learning skills. The metacognitive skills cover self-regulation, self-monitoring and self-assessment. Metacognition essentially means cognition about cognition; that is, it refers to second order cognitions: thoughts about thoughts, knowledge about knowledge or reflections about actions (Eleonora and Louca, 2008:15).

Self-assessment encourages the learners to recognize their strengths and weaknesses in learning, and cope with various learning problems. It promotes learning, raises learner's awareness of their own learning, improve the goal orientation of individual learners, reduces teacher's burdens of assessment and entails a long-term effect on the learner's autonomy (Oscarson, 1989:62). Brown (2004:270) defines self-assessment as one of the primary foundation stones of successful learning. The ability to set one's own goals both within and beyond the structure of a classroom curriculum, to pursue them without the presence of an external prod, and to independently monitor that pursuit all keys to success. According Blanche and Merino (1989:313) cited in Oscarson (2009:63), self-assessment accuracy is a precondition for learner autonomy. Students need to be able to appraise their performance accurately for themselves so that they themselves understand what more they need to learn and do not become dependent on their teachers.

Illes (2012:509) defines learner autonomy as the capacity to become competent speakers of the target language who are able to exploit the linguistic and other resources at their disposal effectively and creatively. In writing, self-assessment enables learners

to monitor their progress in learning to write and set their own learning goals. In other words, it encourages the learners the reflection needed to gain increased control as writers (O'Malley and Pierce, 1996:151). Self-assessment is a process through which students must be led (O'Malley and Pierce, 1996:39). Teaching students to evaluate their progress begins with realizing that students will be learning new skills and it can be carried out with these four steps: setting criteria, applying criteria, setting and working towards goals.

Some empirical studies claimed the effectiveness of self-assessment in English language learning. Sadek (2011) investigated the effect of self-assessment on the EFL-learners' expository essay writing. Birjandi (2010) also explored the role of journal writing as a self-assessment technique in promoting Iranian EFL learners' motivation. Taufiqulloh (2010) conducted a classroom research with two learning cycles on implementing the model of self-editing checklist in the writing process of essay from Oshima and Hogue (2006). Moreover, Oscarson (2009) explored a study on how upper secondary school students perceived their own general and specific writing abilities regarding syllabus goals and whether these perceptions were affected by self-assessment practices. Wang and Wang (2007) introduced both affect test and self-assessment into the traditional assessment scheme of non-English major post-graduates ESL writing classes. Brown (2005:85), conducted a small study of students on an independent learning program. In addition to that, Ferris (1995) developed and used a semester-long editing process approach to help advanced ESL writing students become more self-sufficient as editors.

The results of the study showed that self-editing contributed a positive effect in improving student's ability in writing.

DEVELOPING SELF-ASSESSMENT MODEL

This self-assessment model was developed on the basis of needs analysis and the results of theoretical and empirical review on self-assessment practices in the context of EFL learning, particularly in academic writing instruction. The needs analysis was conducted at the English Department of Pancasakti University Tegal, intended to gather information relating to the teaching and learning process of academic writing.

Empirical review was also conducted to develop the model of this study. It was found that there was a model of self-assessment practices in essay writing instruction developed by Oshima and Hogue (2006). They developed a model of self-editing instrument which can be applied in the polishing stage of the writing process of essay. This model was then tested using a classroom action research to the students of English Department, Pancasakti University attending academic writing class. The result showed that such a model was effective in teaching essay writing: students' writing achievement improved from pre-cycle to the last cycle.

Instead, some drawbacks were found regarding the implementation of the model. Teacher didn't set criteria before students were involved in self-practices in the classroom. Another problem found that such self-assessment instrument contains more general information about assessing the aspects of essay such as format, mechanics, content, organization, grammar and sentence structures, so that teacher worked hard on providing more

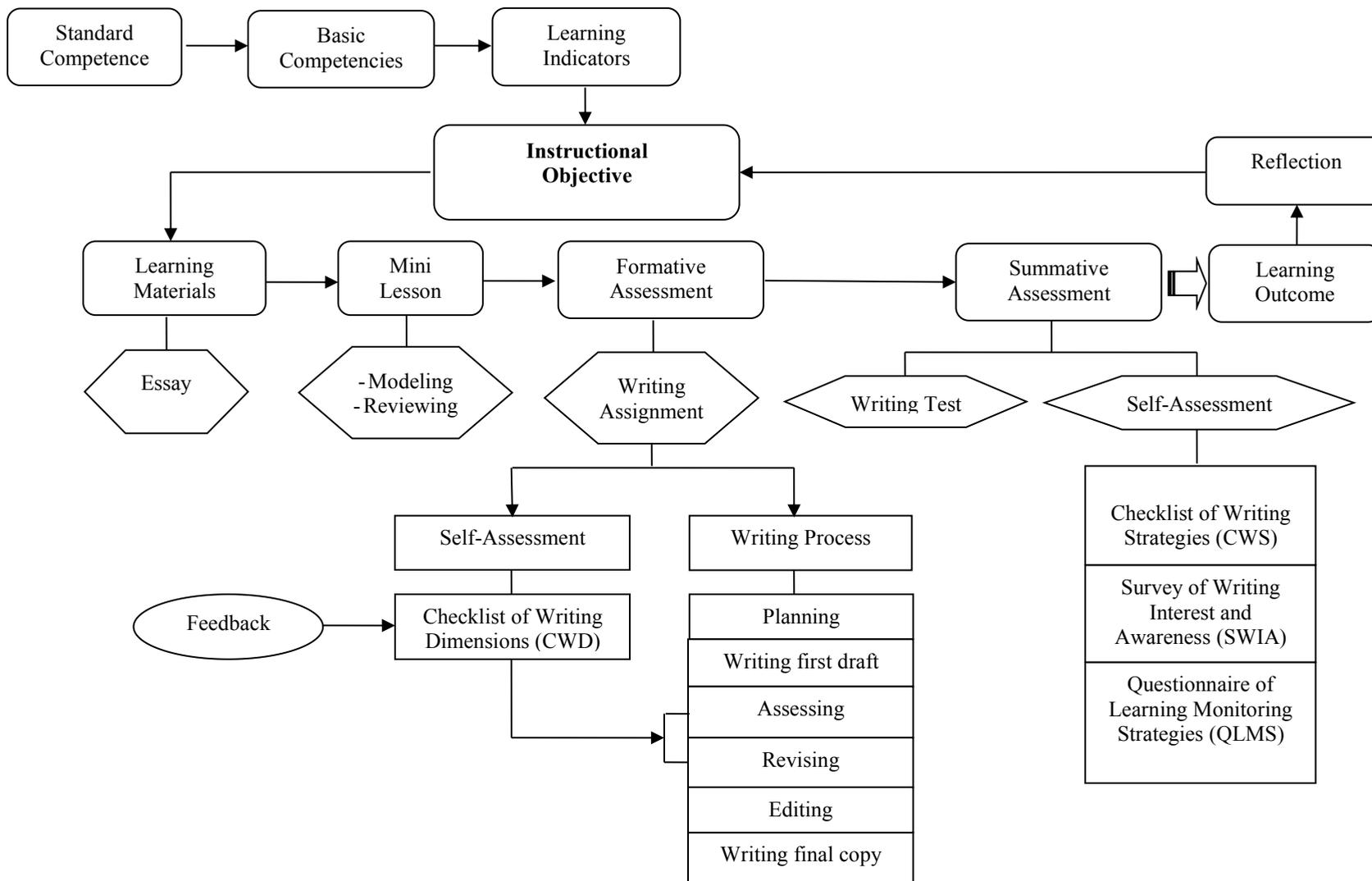
detailed information on it. Moreover, the form of self-edit checklist was dichotomous. Students were only asked to write yes or no in the checklist without giving further explanation to their answers as they were supposed to do in responding to such checklist.

According to Youngman (1984) cited in Cohen, et.al., (2005) Youngman (1984:163) suggests that it is a natural human tendency to agree with a statement rather than to disagree with it; this suggests that a simple dichotomous question might build in respondent bias. The similar phenomenon was also found in research conducted by Sadek (2011). She developed a model of self-editing instrument that was associated with the polishing stage of the writing process.. This instrument doesn't provide detailed information about assessing all aspects of essay. She also developed another self-assessment intended to measure students' attitude during academic writing instruction. In its implementation, it was not measured for its validity and reliability that resulted in biased evaluation. Criteria was also not set before implementing self-assessment practices. Considering some phenomena previously described, this self-assessment model in teaching academic writing for EFL learners was developed.

Components of the Model

The components of self-assessment model in teaching academic writing for EFL learners is described in the following figure:

Figure 1: Self-Assessment Model in Teaching Academic Writing for EFL Learners



Drawn from the figure, this model encompasses twelve components: standard competence, basic competencies, learning indicators, instructional objective, learning materials, mini lesson, self-assessment instruments, feedback, writing process, formative assessment, summative assessments, learning outcome, and reflection.

Mini lesson (criteria) is an important part in self-assessment. Teacher should provide criteria or standards students must follow in order that they can make judgment on their own. This is a key element of self-assessment. According to Boud (1986:1) criterion is a requirement of self-assessment to be able to engage with and if possible involve students in both discussion and understanding of criteria and/or formulating the criteria used in assessment. While O'Malley and Pierce (1996) added that in order to carry out self-assessment, students must be led. This mini lesson is carried out by two activities: modeling and reviewing. Teacher presents some models of essay to be critically reviewed in terms of strengths and weaknesses. Three self-assessment instruments developed are *Checklist of Writing Dimension (CWD)*, *Checklist of Writing Strategies (CWS)*, *Survey of Writing Interest and Awareness (SWIA)* and *Questionnaire of Learning Monitoring Strategies (QLMS)*.

CWD was developed from the model of self-edit checklist from Oshima and Hogue (2006). Through this checklist, students learn to self-edit several aspects of their essay writing including format, mechanics, content, organization, grammar and sentence structures. They self-edit their essay draft to have good format, correct spelling, punctuation and other mechanical skills. They also learn to assess whether their writing is interesting or not to read, and whether their writing is produced with care and thought or not,

and whether or not their essay has a good organization. Furthermore, students are able to recognize their mistakes on several grammatical aspects in their writing such as tenses, conjunctions, etc. In addition, since writing is an art, using various types of sentences in writing is artful. CWS was developed from materials produced by the Georgetown University Evaluation Assistance Center (EAC) East (1990) cited in O'Malley (1996:154) cited in O'Malley and Pierce (1996). Through this checklist, students assess their strategies before, during and after writing. Pre-writing strategies focus on topic review and organization. Students learn to recognize the strategies in generating ideas about the topic and making outline or semantic map of the topic. Strategies used during writing focus on the content. After writing, students identify their strategies in rereading, editing and revising their essays. Meanwhile, SWIA was developed from materials produced by the Georgetown University Evaluation Assistance Center (EAC) East (1990) cited in O'Malley (1996:154). It is employed to determine the students attitude toward academic writing. Students are asked to identify their interest and awareness which include their perceptions, care, and seriousness in learning to write essay. Simply, students are asked to indicate their attitudes in learning academic writing and gauge their improvement as writers. And QLMS is employed to find out the ways the students monitor their own learning after they accomplish a certain task.

Feedback is another important part of self-assessment. It is merely an approach which determine the effectiveness of self-assessment practices. Tutor feedback and student learning are inseparable (Osmond., et.al., 2000). It is an essential component of virtually of every model of the writing process as it

motivates the writers to improve their next draft (Hall, 1990:43). Feedback during writing process improves not only student attitude to writing but writing performance if students are given unlimited opportunities to respond to teacher feedback and continue writing. (Ferris,1995). Thus, Students do not rely on themselves in coping with their learning problems.

The writing process in the model consists of planning, writing the first draft (drafting), assessing, revising, editing, and writing the final draft. Relating to formative Assessment, It includes all activities that provide information that is used as feedback to adapt teaching and learning in the classroom. Brown (2004:6) said that formative assessment refers to a process assessment which is given during the course of instruction to show which aspect of the materials the students have mastered and where the remedial work is necessary. It is also called assessment of learning, used to improve learning by giving the student information on his or her learning progress while still learning. Self-assessment plays a very important role in this kind of assessment. Assessment is also called learning itself. The teaching and learning process of academic writing class in this study is more about assigning the students to practice writing essays on some given topics using the steps of writing process in this model. Using self-edit checklist of writing dimensions (CWD), they practice editing and revising their essays by gathering feedback from their peers and teacher. Through this activities, students are able to recognize their problems or barriers in writing and figure out the ways to cope with them. Meanwhile, summative assessment In this model is conducted by giving writing test at the end of instruction to

see overall progress of learning during learning to write through self-assessment practices. Students' writing strategies, interest and awareness as well as monitoring strategies, are also figured out through this type of assessment.

Finally, reflection should be carried out by both teacher and students regarding the learning outcome to set up the next instructional objectives.

MODEL IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURE

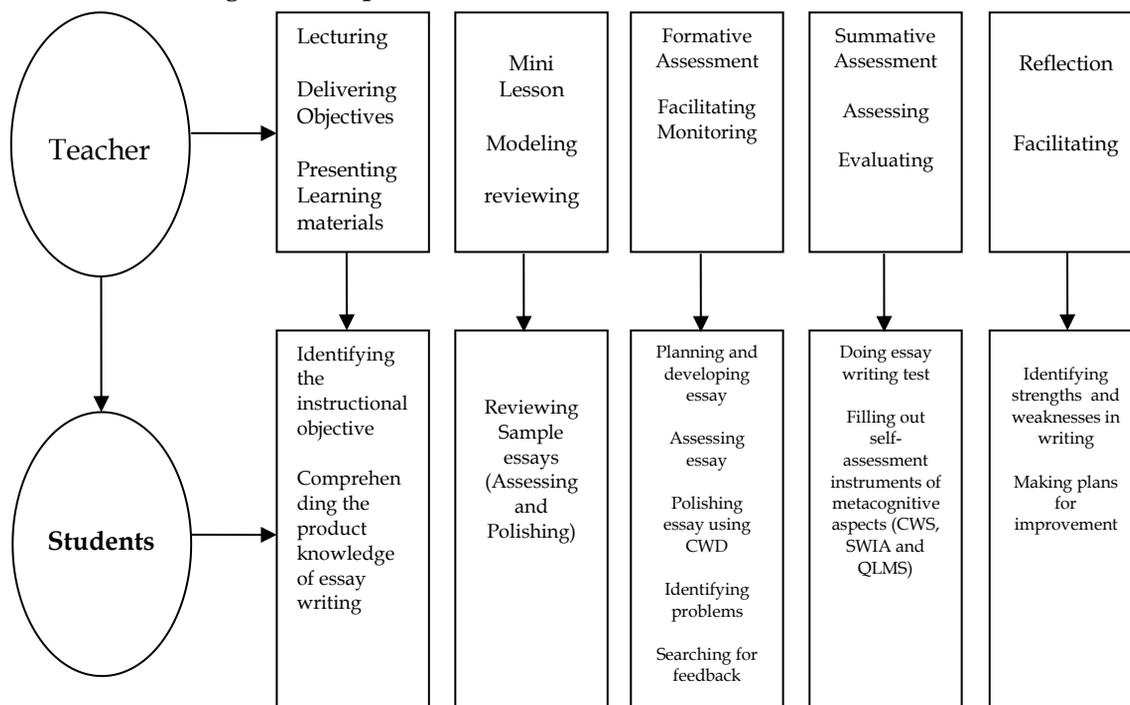
The part presents a set of activities of both teacher and students in implementing self-assessment model in academic writing class. (See figure 2).

As shown in figure 2, both teacher and students are involved in the following activities in implementing self-assessment model in academic writing class:

Lecturing

At the beginning of instruction, teacher delivers the instructional objective of academic writing which was developed from the standard competence and basic competencies in the existing syllabus so that it enables students to figure out what to be achieved in learning academic writing, particularly essay writing. Teacher also prepares the materials of essay writing as the subjects matters taught in academic writing class. Regarding the instructional objective, the learning materials of essay embrace several aspects of essay writing such as the development of essay, types of essay, unity and coherence, sentence types and grammatical features in essay, rhetorical strategies, etc.

Figure 2: Implementation Procedure of Self-Assessment Model



Conducting mini lesson

Teacher plays a central role in applying mini lesson. This is about setting criteria with the involvement of the students so that self-assessment practices in the classroom can be worked out successfully. Defining characteristics of self-assessment is the involvement of students in identifying standards and/or criteria to apply to their work and making judgments about the extent to which they have met these criteria and standards (Boud 1995: 12). Through mini lesson, teacher presents some models of well-organized essays which have clarity in meaning, accuracy in format, mechanics, grammar and sentence structures, and clarity in content and organization. Another form of mini lesson is reviewing. Teacher provides sample essays to be reviewed with students in the classroom to figure out their strengths and weaknesses.

Conducting formative assessment

After mini lesson, teacher assigns students to develop essay within a number of topics. Using the steps of writing process developed in this model, teacher facilitates students to work in pairs or group to plan, and write, assess, revise, and refine their draft. Teacher also monitors the progress of students' works after doing self-revising and editing their draft and provides feedback for their writing problems. Feedback is mainly addressed to refine students' writing in terms of clarity in meaning (content and organization), accuracy in format, mechanics, language functions, unity and coherence.

Conducting summative assessment

At the end of the writing instruction, teacher administers essay writing test to the students to find out the effect of self-assessment practices during the teaching and learning process

of academic writing. This summative test is timed based in which students develop essay on the given topics. Teacher also distributes three types of self-assessment instruments: checklist of writing strategies (CWS), survey questionnaire of writing interest and awareness (SWIA) and questionnaire of learning monitoring strategy (QLMS).

Facilitating reflection

Learning outcome is then analyzed for reflecting or giving a meaning toward academic writing instruction with self-assessment practices. Things that have not been passed or achieved would be recognized. The strengths and the weaknesses of the students in learning academic writing will be the reference to reset the instructional goals.

CONCLUSION

This self-assessment model was developed from the results of needs analysis, theoretical and empirical review. It is different from the existing models in terms of content and implementation. The content embraces more self-assessment instruments that can be used to apply self-assessment practices in academic writing class in a wider domain, covering both cognitive and metacognitive learning aspects of the students. Through this model, students not only learn to produce well-organized essays, but also to figure out their attitude in terms of writing strategies, interest and awareness and learning monitoring strategies. Finally, this model is addressed to be implemented in academic writing class of English Department, Pancasakti University Tegal. Instead, it can be implemented widespread through adaptation or adjustment.

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