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The Eclectic Approach for the EFL Writing Classroom: Practices and Perspectives at a University in Indonesia

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Introduction

The discussions of EFL writing instruction have mostly embraced the ways it is probably approached effectively and how the latest techniques and technology should be introduced in writing classes (Leki, 2001; Zhang, Sheng, & Li, 2014). It has scarcely emphasized what should be done and what the implications might be for learners. Grounded by the view that the eclectic approach renders better learning environments in which to write, it is imperative to explore how teachers create a combination of teaching methods in the response to particular needs of EFL writing and the learners' perceptions toward its enactment. This brief paper reports on a descriptive case study of eclectic practices in EFL writing instruction at a university in Jakarta, Indonesia and informs the learners' perspectives of its enactment. Data collection through teaching documents and questionnaires, the findings show that EFL writing instruction employs a process approach and a genre-based approach, known as a process-genre approach, and integrates with incorporated teaching strategies: modified jigsaw, modified SQ2R, and group discussion. In general, EFL learners perceive that the teaching approaches/strategies used to be considerably effective in making students write. Therefore, it indicates their positive attitude to the practices of the eclectic approach into their EFL writing classroom.

Literature Review

Teaching EFL Writing Class

Writing activity is not a natural process which indicates that one has to be taught by others to be able to write. Writing, as one of productive skills, requires complex cognitive processes involving understanding written symbols, recognition of letters, words, formats, mechanics, and making meaning (Nunan, 2001; Rao, 2007). Given the insight on writing as an academic discipline, Soles suggested that "writing is a craft, a recursive cognitive process, and a social transaction" (2003, p. 12). Despite the fact that writing plays an indispensable role in English learning and teaching (Hyland, 2013; Rao, 2007), learning to write

fluently and expressively is regarded as cumbersome and teaching it is a perplexing job (Widiati & Cahyono, 2006). Employed by Bhowmik's (2009) working definition of EFL as English usage taught as a subject in educational institutions, the major foci of EFL writing instruction lie on the adoption of teaching approaches underpinned by product, process and genre perspectives (Badger & White, 2000) to the differentiated, heterogenous class of FL learners (Alzaanin, 2014) assigned to produce error-free composition (Bhowmik, 2009) within a *red pen* phenomenon (Webb, 2015).

Both writing teacher and writing learners probably suffer from the responsibility of handling writing instruction and producing good writing products. Indeed, effective writing teachers have the ability to demonstrate an integrated knowledge base about writing and the teaching of writing (Lee & Yuan, 2020), and writing learners are expected to write writing products based on the prescribed writing syllabus. On the other hand, in most cases, Rao (2007) illustrated that learners find an uncertain linguistic strategy with lack of ideas and topics; while the teachers could not find the best way to stimulate their learners to write. The everyday difficulties of writing teachers are the issues related to institutional constraints and logistical problems (Bhowmik, 2009), such as large class sizes, unavailability of writing course books, lack of teaching and learning experiences (Leki, 2007), and lack of writing practices (Pujianto, Emilia, & Sudarsono, 2014). Correcting writing and giving useful, and multiple drafts of feedback to a large number of learners are time-consuming and simply impossible (Leki, 2007). Moreover, in countries with no tradition of teaching L1 writing, novice EFL writing teachers would easily get lost on how to apply writing instruction, and the learners may not find much sense of what is involved in creating and composing text (Leki, 2007). Besides, the writing block and writing anxiety, other issues on learning writing, may result from misapplication or ignorance of the composing process (Lee, 2003). In university/college settings in Asia, EFL writing instruction predominantly has encountered a lot of major problems concerning emphasis on linguistic accuracy, focus on product-oriented writing, lack of genre knowledge (Shuo, 2000), and a need for diverse feedback (Kim & Kim, 2005).

The Eclectic Approach in EFL Writing Pedagogy

There is no best method for all learning situations because each group of learners has specific characteristics and particular needs. As a result, a writing teacher has to create an attractive pedagogical technique (Soles, 2003). As one technique is inadequate and insufficient to make the learners learn and achieve the desired learning goals, the use of various techniques/methods has become essential for effective teaching (Reid, 2001). The practice of the eclectic approach, as stated by Larsen-Freeman (2000), is when teachers decide from among the various methods to create their mixture of teaching methods for their classrooms with systematic, and logical considerations. The flexibility, as the significant feature of the eclectic system, on selecting methods the teacher finds best for their classrooms offers a solution to local needs and problems in a particular teaching and learning style (Popova, 2001). Such a variety of learners' learning style (Soles, 2003), writing ability (Ahmed, 2010), and certain social and academic contexts (Kim & Kim, 2005) may lead writing teachers to combine teaching methods/techniques or to mix classroom procedures.

The most well-known, widely used approaches for EFL writing instruction are product-oriented approach, process-oriented approach, and genre-based approach (Badger & White, 2000; Paltridge, 2004, 2014). Despite the positive claims and criticisms, these approaches have been extensively accepted and commonly applied in writing classrooms. However, EFL writing contexts are very diverse with unique characteristics (Bhowmik, 2009). Therefore, it needs to emphasize more on the processes of writing or combining the two approaches to response context-specific features of EFL. Then, process-genre approach came into light as a synthesis of the three approaches (Badger & White, 2000). Informed by learning style differences, Soles (2003) argued that the adoption of an eclectic approach can facilitate the variety of learning styles. Through classroom observation, Biloon (2016) demonstrated the need to base teacher's classroom activities, tasks and skill learning on an eclectic approach to build an inclusive, diverse learning environment.

Furthermore, principled eclecticism is also proposed when the teacher chooses their teaching methodology by blending aspects of the other methods in a principled manner (Larsen-Freeman, 2000) involving various language learning activities as requested by learner needs and style (Shuo, 2000). As far as classroom practice is concerned, Min (2009) implemented a principled eclectic approach guided by the three parameters of Kumaravadivelu's macro-strategic framework: particularity, practicality, and possibility. This method appears to be a feasible solution to cope with diversified EFL writing learners. From Indonesian contexts, the eclectic approach has been adopted in the development of writing materials, particularly for teaching essay writing at university level (Kurniasih & Rahmawati, 2018). Motivated by the eclectic system, the process-genre approach has helped to improve genre knowledge in writing report texts (Pujianto et al., 2014) and narrative text (Al Azhar & Maolida, 2019) at secondary schools.

Given the importance and merits, an eclectic approach should be taken into account on EFL writing teachers' teaching repertoire to connect and interact to all learner needs (Soles, 2003). Even though the previous studies dealing with the use of the eclectic system have been extensively conducted, the eclectic approach seems consistently worth applying in EFL writing instruction, and the learners' attitudes deserve more attention. Therefore, this present research reported the practices of eclecticism and the learners' perspectives in the EFL writing classroom at university level. The study addressed the following research questions:

1) What are the eclectic practices applied in the EFL writing classroom at the university level in Indonesia?
2) How do the EFL writing learners at university perceive the enactment of the eclectic approach in their classroom?

Method

Employing a descriptive design of a single case study (Creswell, 2012; Nunan, 2013), this current study aims at exploring the eclectic practices and the learners' perspectives on its application in the EFL writing classroom at university level. The research was administered to one academic writing class in the English Education department at a private university in Jakarta, Indonesia. The course consisted of fourteen meetings from September 2019 to January 2020. It was held once a week for ninety minutes. Weekly writing tasks and assignments were submitted to Google Classroom. Based on the course description, the course goals are to enable the learners to recognize essay and paragraph organization and develop several types of essays: cause-effect, comparison/contrast, and argumentative essays, including the topics of paraphrasing and summarizing. The coursebook *Writing Academic English Fourth Edition* by Alice Oshima and Ann Hogue (2006) was used for the writing content/materials and sample texts. In total, thirty-seven EFL learners (23 female and 14 male) who registered in and attended an academic writing course were recruited to take part in the study. Meanwhile, the writing teacher, 35 years old female, designed the writing course syllabus and classroom procedures. She acted as both participant-researcher and first author. The teacher and learners speak Bahasa Indonesia as their native language.

For data collection, documentation and questionnaires were employed to obtain information about the practices of the eclectic approach and the learners' perspectives. At first, teaching documents, including the course syllabus, PowerPoint slides, sample texts, writing activities and tasks were systematically collected, named and categorized based on the planned teaching methods/techniques that the teacher had decided upon. The collection and categorization of the data lasted from meeting two to fourteen. Next, when the course had ended, the online questionnaire was distributed to the learners as a course evaluation. It was comprised of 10 Likert scale items. The items covered several criteria: the difficulty level of content/material, the learners' confidence in accomplishing writing tasks, and the effectiveness of teaching methods/techniques, writing activities/task, and teacher competence. In this study, only items

dealing with the practice and perspectives of the eclectic approach were taken into account for further analysis. Lastly both data from the teaching documents and questionnaire were analyzed and interpreted to answer the research questions.

Finding and Discussion

In this section, we present the findings in response to the research questions. The findings address two major issues: the practice of the eclectic approach and the learners' perspectives towards it in the EFL writing classroom.

The Practices of Eclectic Approach

As the teaching documents revealed, this EFL writing classroom was guided by the steps of the genre-based approach and process approach heading to a process-genre approach. In general, each content/topic of genre involved the procedures of building the context, modelling the text, joint construction of the text, and independent construction of the which required pre-writing steps. When building the context, the writing teacher decided to apply several strategies, such as modified jigsaw, modified SQ2R, and group discussion.

On meeting 3, the teacher employed a modified SQ2R to immerse the students in the topic of paraphrasing and summarizing. Originally SQ4R covered the survey, the questions, read, recite/respond, reflect, and review (Iswan, Herwina, & Fitrianto, 2019; Pauk, 1984). Due to limited time, the teacher chose to perform only two Rs: reading and reviewing. The learners were assigned to survey the coursebook for three to five minutes. To shorten this stage, the teacher prepared a list of questions so learners could read the text and respond to the questions by recording notes (Fig.1). During the review, the 10 Likert scale items were directly delivered through PowerPoint slides, and the learners responded by looking at the notes, not the course book, as a comprehension check. Next, given several sentences and a short text, the learners jointly paraphrased and summarized them together facilitated by the teachers. At the stage of independent construction, they were independently assigned to do a writing task as a follow-up activity.
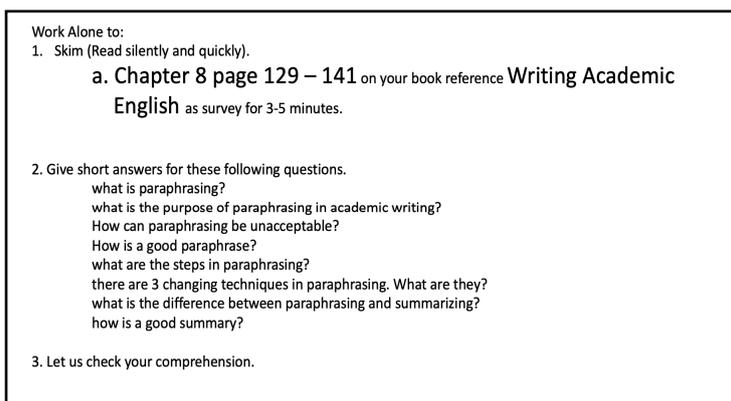

Figure 1. A sample direction in modified SQ2R.

The jigsaw technique was modified to build background knowledge of essay organization. This technique basically requires team-building activities between the home-group and the expert group (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In this EFL writing lesson, the class was divided into several groups of 5 to 6 people. Each group member was responsible to read intensively specific selected pages. Member number one had to read page 56 to 59 (the three parts of an essay), and page 59 to 64 (the introductory paragraph) was allocated by member number two, and so on. Next, they shared the information with each

other in groups. They responded to each question on slides to check their comprehension. Directly after that, they worked on sample texts to deconstruct their generic structure and linguistic features (M-4-1-12).

To develop argumentative essay, on meeting 9 and 10 of the course, they were presented with the steps of the process-genre approach to produce the reviewed-first draft (M-9-1-9, w3). At first, the teacher provided illustrations and a sample text to situate each activity by getting the learners to recognize the generic structures and linguistic features of the text and how the text functions in real life. A model text of an argumentative essay from the coursebook entitled 'Separating the Sexes, Just for the Tough Year' pages 144-145 was selected to engage the learner in modelling and deconstructing how the text achieved its function. Given other sample text and its outline, the learners were assigned to familiarize to the generic structure and linguistic features of an argumentative essay by identifying the thesis statement, arguments, evidence, signal words/transitional marker, and many more (Fig 2).

Figure 2. Sample directions for argumentative essay writing.

Next, in a group activity, they discussed a given topic, brainstormed ideas for arguments and drew an outline, as independent construction was informed by a pre-writing activity. The teacher assigned them to complete the outline for the next meeting. However, they submitted an objection to do group work. Then, flexibility and negotiation were used to complete it as an individual assignment. On Meeting 10, each learner entered the session with the outline. Then they sat for sixty minutes to develop it into a 5-paragraph argumentative essay. After that, they freely chose a peer to interchange and review the draft guided by a rubric from the coursebook and gave it back to the writer-learner for revision. Finally, the revised version was submitted to the teacher (Table 1). In an almost similar procedure, modelling and deconstructing of the text and making an outline were also used to compose a cause-effect essay (M-5-1-11) and a comparison/contrast essay (M-8-9).

TABLE 1
The Sample Steps of Eclectic Practices/Process-genre Approach

Meeting	The Steps	Descriptions
Meeting 9	Building the context	Brainstorming ideas related to the debatable and arguable issues, giving two samples of topics and arising some questions: which one is better? Do you agree with?
	Modelling the text	Read the sample text, identify and analyze the features (thesis statement, part and function)
	Joint construction	Led by the teacher, read the outline and the sample text
	Independent construction – Pre-Writing	In group, the students brainstorm and discuss arguments related to one given topic.
Meeting 10	Outlining	The student individually makes the outline on the given topic
	Writing	The students write their first drafts.
	Reviewing and revising	The student reviews his peer's essay in the class. After that, he gives it back.

The Learners' Perspectives on Eclectic Practices

The data from the online questionnaire reported on how the EFL writing learners perceived the eclectic practices during the writing sessions. As the data suggested, eclectic practices were integrated through a process-genre approach and some incorporated-teaching strategies: modified jigsaw, modified SQ2R, and group discussion. In general, the learners expressed positives attitude to these eclectic practices. They thought that teaching approaches/strategies were *effective* and *very effective* with very considerable percentages. Making an outline and process writing (drafting, reviewing, revising, and submitting) received the highest positive responses with 35.1% and 29.7% respectively. Table 2 shows the percentages of each teaching approach/strategy.

TABLE 2.
Students' Perspectives Towards Variety of the Used Approach/Strategies

Teaching Approach/Strategies	Very effective	Effective	Slightly effective	Not effective at all
Modified Jigsaw	10.8%	78.4%	10.8%	
Modified SQ2R	10.8%	83.8%	5.4%	
Group Discussion	18.9%	64.9%	10.8%	5.4%
Outlining	35.1%	56.8%	8.1%	
Process Writing	29.7%	59.5%	10.8%	
Modelling Text	16.2%	73%	10.8%	
Independent Construction	18.9%	70.3%	10.8%	

In response to the statement related to the quality of teaching approaches/techniques used in the EFL writing classroom, the majority of the learners perceived that it was as *excellent*, *very good*, and *good* selected teaching approaches/strategies, with 45.9%, 35.1%, 18.9% respectively, as seen in Figure 3. It may indicate that the EFL learners agree with a combination of teaching approaches/strategies. They expressed positive tendency towards eclectic practices in EFL writing instruction.
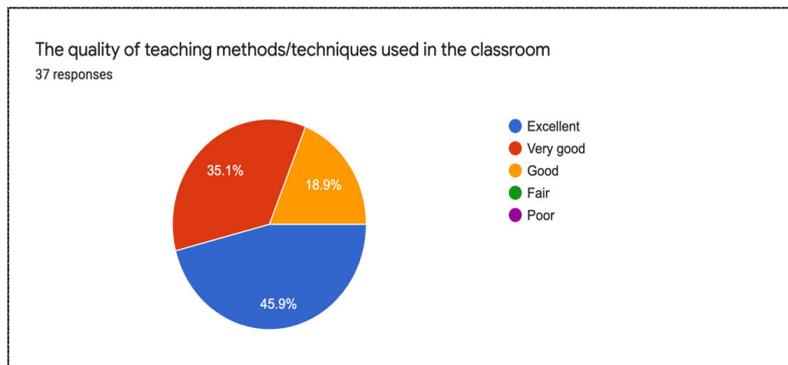

Figure 3. Learners' perception on the quality of the used teaching approach/strategy.

The eclecticism allows teachers to flexibly mix their classroom procedures with logic consideration (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). In this case, EFL writing instruction combined the steps of the genre-based approach directly followed by process writing, a so-called process-genre approach, as proposed by Badger and White (2000). At the stage of building knowledge, jigsaw technique and SQ4R which embrace reading comprehension were applied to augment reading-before-writing activity. Soles (2003) suggested that writing teachers can tailor reading and writing in their writing class. Moreover, reading before writing benefits the learners to recognize the standard of good writing and to define steps to improve their writing products (Yin, 2019). They thus get a more in-depth insight into the expected text they need to write. Through reading at any step of writing, the element of writing competencies can be achieved (Jennifer & Ponniah, 2019).

However, in this study, the writing teacher slightly simplified the steps of the jigsaw technique and SQ2R to meet the teaching situations. Time constraints and learner objections become considerations for the teacher to modify teaching approaches/strategies and negotiate the assignments. Indeed, teaching writing should consider what the learner needs to be able to do with writing, what they can do, and what they want to do (Nation, 2008). As its primary concern, eclecticism comes to satisfy the particular learners' needs in a specific teaching situation. Flexibility, hence, becomes a salient feature of the eclectic approach (Mwanza, 2017).

The EFL learners in this study responded that the teaching approaches/strategies used are effective and very effective to foster them to write. This indicates that the eclectic approach receives positive agreement and a favorable opinion in EFL writing instruction. Findings reveal as well that the process-genre approach has grounded the entire writing activity during the sessions which supports the view that this approach, to some extent, helps the learners to develop their writing skills (Pujianto et al., 2014), to situate learning to write gradually and systematically (Dirgeyasa, 2016), and to enhance academic writing performance (Alabere & Shapii, 2019).

Conclusion

This brief report describes a study of the eclectic practices in EFL writing instruction at a university level and the EFL learners' perspectives towards its enactment. The findings have revealed that this writing instruction has eclectically combined the process genre approach and incorporated certain teaching strategies (i.e., modified jigsaw, modified SQ2R, group discussion). Simplification and modification are undertaken to cope with classroom constraints and to meet the learner needs. Moreover, EFL learners have positive perspectives towards the eclectic approach in writing instruction.

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