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Writing English Composition and Roundtable Teaching Technique

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Abstract

Roundtable is a technique that consists of two-step cooperative learning structures. In step one, the teacher asks a question with many possible answers, and in step two the students respond in turn to make a list of possible answers for the questions. Writing composition is an advanced process that allows writers to explore thoughts and ideas and make them visible and concrete. It is a form of thinking. Although, the brains process ideas in different ways: mathematically, musically and visually; the use of language is the basis of all thinking (Nazario et al ,2010:5).

This research sheds light on the importance of using roundtable technique in teaching writing composition for EFL students. It consists of three sections: section one is related to writing composition, section two deals with the skill of English composition, and section

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three is related to Roundtable technique. Finally, the researcher ends up with some conclusions.

Key words: English composition, Teaching Technique, Roundtable Teaching Technique, Teaching Writing Composition.

كتابة الانشاء باللغة الإنجليزية وتقنية تدريس الطاولة المستديرة

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المستخلص

الطاولة المستديرة هي تقنية تتكون من هياكل التعلم التعاوني المكونة من خطوتين. في الخطوة الأولى، يطرح المعلم سؤالاً به العديد من الإجابات المحتملة وفي الخطوة الثانية يجيب الطلبة بدورهم لإعداد قائمة بالإجابات المحتملة للأسئلة.

تعتبر كتابة الانشاء عملية متقدمة تسمح للكتاب باستكشاف الأفكار وجعلها مرئية وملموسة. وهي شكل من أشكال التفكير. على الرغم من أن العقول تعالج الأفكار بطرق مختلفة؛ رياضياً وموسيقياً وبصرياً، لكن استخدام اللغة هو أساس كل تفكير.

يسلط هذا البحث الضوء على أهمية استخدام تقنية الطاولة المستديرة في تعليم كيفية كتابة الانشاء داخل الفصل. لذلك، فهو يتكون من ثلاث اقسام، القسم الأول يتضمن معلومات حول كتابة الانشاء والقسم الثاني يتعلق بمهارة الانشاء في اللغة الانكليزية والقسم الثالث يتعلق بتقنية الطاولة المستديرة. أخيراً، ينتهي الباحث ببعض الاستنتاجات.

الكلمات الدالة: الانشاء، تقنية التدريس، الطاولة التدريسية المستديرة، تعليم كتابة الانشاء.

Section One : The Process of Writing

1.1 Nature of Writing Skill

Language skills can be separated into listening, speaking, reading and writing. Among the four skills, listening and reading are grouped as "receptive skills", speaking and writing are branded as "productive or expressive skills". Customarily, the productive skill is taken as an active skill. And the receptive skill may be a passive one (Cai, 1999: 279). Writing is one of the four basic skills to be taught for the students. It is one way for the students to express their ideas. Through writing the students can transfer their experiences and knowledge to other people. So, they should be able to produce sentences and develop them into paragraphs, essays, and papers. To make a good writing, a writer has to master the components of language: idea, spelling, vocabulary, punctuation and grammar. That is why the students should pay attention to the diction used and should be able to arrange their ideas or feelings in good arrangement. In other words, the students should determine the rhetorical structure of the text in writing (Wahyuni, 2017: 88).

Writing is the important skill that should be mastered by the students, beside speaking, reading, and listening. It is an active thinking process of the students to plan, arrange, and express the ideas in order it can be understood by the reader. A good writing helps to avoid misunderstanding between the writer's ideas with the reader's opinion (ibid). Before to start writing, the writer should know and understand about the given topic. An effective writing focuses on the topic and does not include certain unessential or loosely related information. It has an organizational pattern that enables the reader to follow the flow of ideas. It contains supporting details that are developed through the use of details, examples, vivid language and mature word choice (Hellen and Hafizh, 2014: 40).

1.2 Importance of Writing Skill

Writing is very essential for many fields such as, education, business, government, and scientific. In business world, the importance of writing is used for appointment letter, memos, and application letters. In education, writing English is one of the four skills that have to be achieved by students at secondary, high schools, and universities (Hapsari, 2011: 10). There is a close relationship between writing and thinking and this gives a great importance to writing in language. There are specific components to producing a clear and effective written text: content, the writer's process, audience, purpose, word choice, organization, mechanics, grammar and syntax (Raimes, 1983: 6).

In schools, writing plays two isolated but complementary parts. First, it may be aptitude that depends on the utilize of procedures (such as, planning, assessing, and looking into content) to achieve a variety of goals such as, writing a report or expressing an opinion backed by prove. Secondly, writing could be a means of spreading and developing information in students. It acts as a subject – learning instrument (Shanahan, 2004: 66) Klimova (2012: 9) adds that writing skill is very important because it provides many benefits for students to:

- express one's personality;
- foster communication;
- develop thinking skills;
- make logical and persuasive arguments;
- provide a chance to afterward reflect ideas and re – evaluate them;
- provide and receive feedback; and
- prepare for school and employment.

1.3 Stages of Writing

A writing process is a complicated process, because the writing process needs cognitive abilities in recognizing some parts of languages to produce a qualified writing. In general it is done through two stages: exploring ideas and processing the ideas into readable texts (Hanum,2018:10). According to Harmer (2006:5-6) the stages of writing are represented in this way:

Planning → drafting → editing → final draft

Harmer also points out to the so-called the process wheel ,as shown in figure(1), which shows the importance of moving between all stages of writing to ensure the correctness and accuracy of what has been written.



Figure(1) The Process Wheel of Writing Stages(Harmer,ibid)

According to Richards and Renandya (2002:314-319)and Peha (2010:40) Writing process as a private activity includes five main stages, they are, pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing and publishing. The writing process in the classroom should be highly structured because it requires regular teaching. Teachers sometimes plan classroom activities that support learning writing skill at each stage. These stages are as follows:

1. Pre – Writing

The pre – writing stage is the planning stage of the writing process. In this stage writers have to decide what to write about. Pre-Writing will engage students in activities such as, giving pictures, a list containing words related to the required topic or using illustrative tools by the teacher that help them organize or generate an ideas for their composition. This stage is very important because it is the first step to writing any text, and if it is not good for the reader, it does not give him importance to continue reading.

2. Drafting

In this stage, students start writing by taking the activities mentioned in the pre-writing stage as ideas and organizing their ideas into written texts. In Drafting process students can work together or with the teacher to write focused notes for the writer to be more scholarly and accurate. Gray(1987:30) considers drafting as the process which acts of transforming ideas that are taken from pre-writing to print. In drafting process pre-writing materials is used as inspiration, the writer writes and writes some more to get everything done on paper as quickly and as easily as possible.

According to Nunan(2003:98) writing process has three stages :drafting, feedback, and revising. For example, when the students want to write a HET, they think about what they are going to write. After they have developed their themes and ideas, they should make a draft. The drafting is the order of the points around the topic to be developed. After that, they should note the grammar, punctuation and spelling. After the draft is submitted, the teacher comments on the text and also can benefit from peer feedback. Finally, the students revise their text after receiving instructions from the teacher to make it a good text and a final copy.

3. Revising

In this stage students review their writing. This stage focuses on improving students' writing by rethinking, paraphrasing, and revising their writing. Students apply their knowledge of language and sentence structure for better writing. Features of effective review are: word choice, paragraph structure, and organization. These features help the writer that its text is coherent and written accurately. Students keep the old version to compare their writing in order to make improvements to the idea.

4. Editing

Editing is a complex and demanding task. In this stage the draft should make flawless. Editing may be varied and can include proofreading, revising, paraphrasing to check the text and correct errors, make words clearer, and complete sentences more informative. The editing process may include different strategies, such as adding, deleting, and rearranging elements.

5. Publishing

Publishing entails the final preparation of a piece of writing for the intended audience and may involve preparing a neatly handwritten copy of the final draft and the addition of illustrations or other graphic elements. Publishing may extend to a multimedia presentation or lead to a public performance such as, a speech or debate .The presentation trait is emphasized during this stage of the writing process as the writer works to make the piece attractive to the audience.

1.4 Characteristics of Good Writing

Hapsari(2011:10-12) states that learners in writing should concern at least five aspects for good writing namely : unity, organization, grammar, word choice, and mechanics, as follows:

1.Unity

Unity is an important element of the text to make it attractive for reading. If the text is about a specific thing or object, then all the sentences in the paragraph should talk about this object to express the paragraph in the appropriate meaning. It means that all the sentences refer to the main idea, or the topic sentence of the paragraph. The supporting

sentences which support the main idea should be interrelated and relevant to the topic sentence.

2. Organization

When writing a text, three main parts should be used: an introduction, a body (at least one, but usually two or more paragraphs), and a concluding paragraph. In this part, concern with organization of HET consisting of the thesis, arguments, and recommendation.

3. Grammar

Good writing must show correct grammar patterns ;When writing a specific text, such as writing HET the rules for grammar which are related to this genre of writing should be used.

Word choice should have the correct vocabularies and correct word forms. Students have to choose appropriate words to express ideas in their writings.

5. Mechanics

They consist of punctuation marks, indentation, and capitalization of letters. When writing a paragraph, we must use correct punctuation marks. In order to use the correct punctuation marks, learners must concern with sentence structures. They also must concern with the indentation and capital letters. For example, indentation is used when making a new paragraph and a capital letter is used to start a sentence.

Laili(2019:16)adds two others characteristics for good writing, these are: coherence and cohesion .

1. Coherence

Sentences are structured so that the reader can easily understand thoughts. This means that the sentences must be organized in a logical way and they must follow a specific plan for development. That is, the transition from one sentence to another must be logical and smooth. There are four ways to achieve coherence . The first two ways involve repeating key nouns and using pronouns that refer back to key nouns . The third way is to use transition signals to show how one idea is related to the text . The last way to achieve coherence is to arrange all sentences in logical order.

2. Cohesion

To make the paragraph cohesion, the sentences must be connected to each other to support the ideas of the topic. Boardman and Fryden berg (2004:36) add that “a paragraph has cohesion when all the supporting sentences “stick together” in their support of the topic sentence. The methods of connecting sentences to each other are called cohesive devices”.

1.5 Students' Writing Problems and Difficulties

Saddler et al. (2004: 3) remark that “good writing is not only hard work, but it is also an extremely complex and challenging mental task”.

Students of EFL face many problems to develop a clear and perfect expression by writing. Written language may be regarded as the most difficult of all skills to gain since its development requires effective cooperation and harmony of many cognitive linguistic and psychomotor processes (Westwood,2008:56).

It is important to keep on exploring for techniques and strategies to reduce the obstacles that EFL students face and help them to overcome their fear of writing. Also the absence of prosodic features in writing creates problems for learners to compensate for the absence of these features. The writer has to write with a high degree of organization, careful

selection of vocabulary and the use of complex grammatical devices. These features are also compensated for by choosing appropriate structures using appropriate connecting devices so that the text can be interpreted on its own (Alfaki,2015:44).

According to Byrne(1988:4-5) and Alfaki(ibid:45-46) the problems that learners face in writing are:

1. Grammatical problems

Writing grammar is the way by which the writer states basic rules of writing like pronoun reference, parallelism, including unsuitable construction. Most of the students have problems with the use of grammar. They cannot decide what grammar is appropriate to be used in specific genre of text and as verbs take different forms depending on tense and subjects they are used with. Also there are other grammatical errors as: the order of words, agreement, tenses, prepositions, pronouns, articles, and parts of speech.

2.Cognitive Difficulties

Writing includes not only the language system but it enhances a considerable challenges of cognitive systems for thinking and memory. The cognitive difficulties are related to generating ideas and the problem of organization. Generating ideas is the first activity in the writing process which is concerned with, finding a topic, what is to say about most challenging and not expectable filling with examples, checklist, question and visually designed for enrich the topics.

The most common students' problems in paragraphing is either the paragraph is not limited to a single topic or the single topic is not developed or exemplified adequately. The problem of organization in learners' writing is the difficulty in distinguishing a topic and supporting ideas. Learners face difficulties in developing the topic, structuring the paragraph, and structuring discourse as a whole.

3.Sentence Structure Problems and Mechanical Difficulties

Sentences reflect various syntactic structures. However, incapable learners use run-on, incorrect, and fragmented sentences. Those students who have the problem of writing good sentence structures are unable to produce longer sentences. Requiring subordination and coordination, and cohesive devices are crucial in writing. However, the linking devices have been found to be problematic for English language students. Mechanics in writing refers to technical aspects of writing which include, spelling, punctuation, capitalization and abbreviations .

4. Problem of Word Choice

A good writing or composition should consist of appropriate and varied range of vocabularies used along with proper grammar and varied range of sentence structures. When the writer practices the choice of vocabulary that would reflect a concern for the reader and the purpose of writing, the composition written by the student would become sensible to his/her reader. However, writing in a second language using the appropriate words in the appropriate place is a problem for students. For example, usually students use "big words" in their essays to impress the reader, and their teacher. The effort to impress the reader leads to a problem of diction.

Writing vocabulary means choosing a word that is used to explain thoughts appropriately. The vocabulary involves: adequate arrangement and alteration, effective using or choice for a word or an idiom, the correct forms of words such as, compound words, word classes and so on.

6. Psychological Difficulties

Psychology difficulties involve feedback of the teacher and lack of motivation. If learners have the motivation and interest they will be encouraged to write, and the performance of most writers in writing skills are less quality if they are obliged to write about a subject they do not desire to write. The writing quality is higher when it is allowed for students to choose their topics or make some decisions about them. When teachers want to correct their students' mistakes, they must be positive correctors to enhance and give support for learning and learners.

Section Two: The Skill of English Composition

2.1 Activity of Composition

Composition is a writing activity which is intended to increase a person's skills or effectiveness as writer. The name for such an activity or subject in school is a piece of writing work produced to practice the skill and techniques of writing or to demonstrate a person's skill as a writer (Richard & Schmidt,2002:97).

Composition is an advanced stage of learning to write on some topics of interest in a systematic way. One of the distinctive types of communicating by means of written words is called a composition. It is a piece of writing made up of one or more paragraphs. It has a theme that can be broken into a number of topics. Each topic in a composition has its own paragraph(Al Gurdush,2013).The basics of a good composition as state by Ferris(1998:12), are as follows:

1. Restrict its content to one topic.
2. Presents and develops the subject in an organized manner.
3. It shows continuity from one paragraph to the next in the same way that sentences do within a paragraph.

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987:87) add that a composition is mainly arranged as follows:

1. Introduction which tells the reader what the composition is about.
2. Body which gives the details or explanations of the composition.
3. Conclusion which draws the composition endings.

2.2 Characteristics of Composition

According to Ferris(1998:42-43) composition has some characteristics as:

- It is the expression of one's thoughts, ideas, feelings and observations.
- It includes both the process and product of composing.
- It is the process of collecting thoughts, arranging them in a proper sequence and expressing them in a recognized form.

Starkey(2004:67),and Schmitz(2012:314-330) add other characteristics of a composition, as follows:

1. **Unity:** It refers to all the elements that make up the writing work harmoniously toward the single topic. If ideas are not arranged in a proper order , if less important elements are not subordinated to more important elements, if relations among ideas are not made clear, if irrelevant materials are included, unity is not achieved.
2. **Consistency:** It means adopting a point of view and a way of presentation and sticking to both throughout the paragraph.
3. **Coherence :** It is basically a matter of having the parts of a writing in the right order with the relations among the parts made clear to the reader. Ways of doing this are: numbering divisions of ideas as "first", "second", to keep the readers aware of their progression: using conjunctions such as: *however, consequently, moreover, on the other hand, as a*

result., repeating key words or phrases and maintaining continuity by skillful employment of pronouns.

4. **Cohesion:** This characteristic is an inseparable part of coherence, When a paragraph has cohesion , all the supporting sentences connect to each other in their support of the topic sentences . The method of connecting sentences to each other are called cohesive devices . Four important cohesive devices are connectors such as, coordinating conjunctions, subordinating conjunctions, prepositions, definite articles, personal pronouns , and demonstrative pronouns.
5. **Binding:** this is the best one among all given characteristics. If the writing does not bind the readers then it will be useless . Readers should feel as they are reading something very interesting from the starting point to the end of the paragraph.
6. **Content length:** many students like to write more , which is good but they should not write long sentences or paragraphs. No one likes to read long paragraphs because it wastes time .A good paragraph must be in a proper length of content which should be to the point.
7. **Concluding Sentence:** it is a sentence in which the writer concludes the paragraph in order to give the reader important points to note. An effective concluding sentence draws together all the ideas that have been raised in the paragraph and it reminds readers of the main points.

2.3 Types of Composition

Richards & Schmidt(2002: 97) mention two types of composition:

- a. **Free composition**, in which the students' writing is not controlled or limited in any way such as, essay question, or writing about a particular topic.

Tannacito(1995:92) adds that there is a free composition which is unlike guided composition and it is a kind of writing which allows a student to develop his own ideas and to create his own style of writing as he chooses. The subject of the composition is supplied by the teacher, and the student proceeds as he sees fit, and this is a complex activity that includes the mechanics of writing, spelling, and the basics of language knowledge. It implies the following points:

- generating ideas to put into print
- planning what to say and how to say it. Organizing the ideas into a coherent whole
- recognizing the needs of readers and how to meet those needs
- translating these plans into a written text, including a style of writing and word choice appropriate to the writing task and projected readers
- remembering all of the components that need to be included in reducing the composition (ibid).

- b. **Controlled composition**, in which the students' writing is controlled by various means such as, by providing questions to be answered.

Silva(2001:65) states that there is another type of composition ,i.e. the guided composition. It is a kind of directed writing in which a student is provided with instructions and supportive ideas that help to compose a suggested theme or subject, but this kind of composition writing has the following weak points:

1. The guided composition seems to force students to write for teachers' or textbook writers' purposes, but not their own.
2. The guided composition is limiting learners' creative thoughts for writing.

On the other hand, Silva (ibid: 66) adds two types of composition:

1. Oral Composition expressing one's ideas, feelings, needs orally in a few sentences. It is a beginning to written composition. It helps the students to speak fluently and write correctly. The advantages of oral composition are:

- It is useful for giving practice in using the language already learnt.
- It is useful for training the students in the new language.
- It prepares the students for written composition.
- It promotes clear and precise thinking.
- It develops the spoken skills of English like stress, intonation and pronunciation.

3. Written Composition is what students express their feeling, ideas, observations, etc. Written composition has three types: Controlled composition, guided composition and free composition .

Section Three: Roundtable Teaching Technique

3.1 Concept of Roundtable Technique

This technique is a form of academic discussion in which the learners have equal right to participate in discussing a particular issue. Roundtable technique worked well in teaching writing to the students (Fidyati et al. 2016:3). McCafferty et al. (2006:42) state that RT promotes equal participation of the learners. This equal participation gives the learners an opportunity to learn together and solves their problems in understanding the subject matter. Roundtable is a technique in which students take turns reacting to a prompt by composing one or two words, expressions, or sentences some time recently passing the paper along to others who do the same. Roundtable technique also encourages students to be active in the learning process. The structure requires all students to post, and limits a few group individuals from posting as well frequently. It means that in roundtable each student gets to contribute his/her thoughts for the group's task. It too gives an opportunity where the students can get feedback on their task both from their friends and teacher. This technique encourages students to alter their composing in areas such as content, style, and vocabulary as they react and respond to the comments of the writers that preceded them (Barkley et al, 2005:235-245).

It is generally defined as a technique useful for brainstorming, reviewing, or practising a skill. Students use a single sheet of paper and a pen for each group. Students in the group respond in turn to a question or problem by stating their ideas aloud as they write them on the paper. It is important that the ideas be vocalized for several reasons: (a) silence in a setting like this is boring, rather than golden; (b) other team members need to be reflecting on the thoughts; (c) variety results because learn immediately that someone has come up with an idea they know now not to repeat; and (d) hearing the responses aloud means that students do not have to waste valuable brainstorming time by reading the previous ideas on the page (Stenlev and Siegmund, 2011:4).

3.2 Steps of Roundtable Technique

Kagan and Miguel (2009:34), and Blanchard and Colgan (2010:2) state that there are some steps of Roundtable Technique, such as:

- a. Each group consist of 4-6 persons.
- b. The teacher assigns a topic or a question and provides think time.
- c. All four or six students respond simultaneously, writing, drawing or building something with manipulatives.
- d. The teacher signals time, or students place thumbs up when done with the problem.

- e. Continue until everyone has had a chance to answer at least once. If time keep going, students may be allowed to “pass” only once.
- f. Students pass papers or projects one person clockwise.
- g. Students continue, adding to what has been already completed.

3.3 Advantages of Roundtable Technique

Kagan and Miguel (2009:40) believe that Roundtable technique achieves some advantages in terms of academic and social points of view, i.e. assessing prior knowledge, practising skill especially writing skill, recalling information, creating cooperative art, teambuilding, and participation of all groups. Khadafi (2017:57) states that the benefits of Roundtable are as follows : the responsibility of each group , the contribution idea in the group, more than just learning in group , expressed opinion , views as well as the results thought , and the thoughts of some students are better than other student ,so the text they produce will be better .

Stenlev and Siegmund(2011:2) add that Roundtable Technique as a cooperative learning has some advantages in implementing teaching and learning in the classroom, as follows:

- 1. A lot more done in a shorter amount of time.** One advantage of working in groups is that a problem can be solved more easily. In any time more than one person work together to solve any problem is usually more efficient. When working in a group it allows for people to think as one and help others, problem solving becomes easier when people work together.
- 2. Each member of the group has something unique to contribute:** listening to another person’s ideas helps them to broaden their horizons and the saying “three heads are better than one” is definitely true.
- 3. Students are motivated by others in the group.** This consists of four domains. Reassurance from others and trusting their own- thoughts, Because of the group students do not give up on doing assignment and group keeps each other on hand, the last partner explains things that are not easily understood.
- 4. Emotionally:** Students relate to one another more easily than to a teacher and feel more comfortable asking their own peers questions because they are also on the same level. In addition the group creates a comfort area, the final is making the assignment or project more fun.
- 5. The social benefits.** The teaching social skills such as, cooperation, teamwork, and communication skills useful in later life and also to learn to work together to achieve a common goal and how to problem solve together which is required in the workplace.

However according to Handoko(2018:12) and Blanchard (2010:3) the Roundtable Technique allows the students to cheat each other.

Conclusion

Composition is an advanced stage of writing on some topics of interest in a systematic way .It is a means of communication between the writer and the audience on paper which requires independent thoughts .

Roundtable technique is one of the important techniques that help to develop students' skill of writing English composition .Reviewing the Roundtable technique , its steps, advantages indicate that Roundtable is an appropriate technique that gives the learners an opportunity to learn together and promotes the cooperative learning between the students in the class .

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