

**THE USE OF POINT COUNTERPOINT STRATEGY IN
TEACHING EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS AT
MADRASAH ALIYAH NEGERI (MAN) 5 BIREUEN**

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to find out the use of point-counterpoint strategy to improve students' writing skills on discussion text for the second-grade students of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 5 Bireuen. This research used a quantitative method. The research subjects were 42 students from XI MIPA 1 and MIPA 2. Class XI MIPA 1 was an experimental group and Class XI MIPA 2 was a control group. Both classes were selected for students' equal ability. The instruments used to collect the data were tests; pretest and posttest and questionnaire. The writing test was used for pretest and post-test. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistic to find the mean scores of the two classes. The mean score of the pretest in the experimental class was 63.61 and the mean score of the posttest in the experimental class was 77. Meanwhile, the mean score of the pretest in the control class was 63.80 and the mean score of the posttest in the control class was 74.47. The mean score of the experimental class was higher than the control class. Accordingly, the hypothesis of this research was accepted. In the questionnaire, the researchers found that almost all students choose "agree" toward the Point-Counterpoint strategy in writing discussion text.

Keywords: *discussion text, point-counterpoint strategy, writing skill.*

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INTRODUCTION

Writing skill is one of language skills that are difficult for EFL students to master since the students must understand the academic context (Negari, 2011). Moreover, Richards (as cited in Nyasimi, 2014) assumes that writing skills are the most difficult skills encountered by EFL students. However, students are required to master it, since it is one of the components of English assessment. This fact, of course, needs to be taken seriously by English teachers so that their students will be able to understand and master this skill.

Based on the 2013 Curriculum, at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 5 Bireuen, students are required to be able to write texts, one of which is discussion text. Students are expected to be able to write based on several criteria in writing. In this curriculum, students are required to be more competent in writing texts to get a better understanding of interesting ideas that will be implemented in a discussion text.

Based on the preliminary research at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 5 Bireuen on August 23rd, 2019, the researcher found that most students did not get scores above the minimum criteria for mastery learning (KKM). The English KKM at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 5 Bireuen is 75. The students' writing must meet some criteria to get the writing score above the KKM or at least in line with KKM. Generally, in academic writing, several criteria must be found in a text, namely sentence structure, organization, grammar, and punctuation (Hogue, 2008).

From the interviews with several students at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 5 Bireuen, the researcher found some difficulties experienced by students. The students had difficulty in determining the main idea contained in a sentence, grammatical features, and organization. In addition, the students were confused about how to use appropriate words in a sentence. Furthermore, the students often made grammatical errors in writing. The students often used contraction words in academic writing which is considered a mistake. Besides, students were rarely asked by their teachers to reflect on what they had learned in writing. In this case, the researcher assessed the students' writing skills which were still lacking. Therefore, it is necessary to find a solution to be applied in the writing learning process to improve students' writing ability.

Referring to the problems above, the teacher should use an appropriate strategy to reach a good development in the teaching-

learning process. The researcher attempted to use an appropriate strategy in the learning process and made it easier for students to learn writing skills to help them improve their achievement (Pelton, 2010). Therefore, the researcher then employed one strategy that can help the students improve their writing skills.

Silberman (2010, p.137) stated that Point-Counterpoint is a strategy that affects the clash of opinions with perspective problems. This strategy is a technique to stimulate discussion and gain a deeper understanding of the various complex problems that occur. Point-Counterpoint learning strategies are used in students' writing skills to encourage them to think about multiple perspectives. If this learning strategy is developed, then the learning material should be in consideration, whether or not this method is suitable to be used in the classroom. Furthermore, Hudson (2004, p.90) explains that Point-Counterpoint proved to not only motivate students in writing arguments introducing the fundamental problems in an influential life of the community but also to encourage students to explore this perspective problem, the purpose of which is intended to function as a guide for the reader in examining circumstances that occur when students write a discussion text.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing

Writing is a productive competence that must be mastered in using language. The ability to write greatly influences the communicative competence of someone. Writing is an important thing to have as a form of expression in conveying ideas and feelings. In addition, it is also used to persuade and convince others (Jaramillo, 2011). Thus, the role of writing has the same level as speaking that functions as a way to express ideas, feelings, and thoughts orally.

Writing is defined by Nunan (2015) as a physical and mental process of sharing an idea and thinking in the form of written texts presented in the form of text that can be understood by readers. For instance, a writer who composes a text is demanded to write it in clear and good writing so that the readers know what he/she means. Thus, writing not only shares thought with other people, but it also needs good consideration when writing it. In addition, Brown (2000) mentions that the result of writing constitutes a product of thinking, drafting, and revising procedures that need special skills. It means a

writer needs to have adequate skills in generating his/her ideas by following the rules and appropriate process.

Process of Writing

In writing activities, several stages must be considered, one of which is the three stages as suggested by Brown (2003). They explain there are three main stages in the writing process, namely writing preparation, composing, and revising. According to Seow (2002), "the writing activities are a broad personality activity which consists of four (4) main stages: planning, compilation, revision, and editing.

Types of Writing

Types of writing that are required to be taught and mastered by students must be based on level and ability. Brown (2000) mentions that there are five categories of writing taught to students at school. The five categories are imitative writing, intensive or controlled, self-writing, display writing, and real writing.

Genre in Language Learning

Definition of genre

Paltridge (1996, p. 238) explained genre as "a type or kind of text that has a social purpose, generic structure, and language feature." Genre is also described as communicative events in which the member shares communicative goals with the expert members of the community.

Kinds of genre

When studying the text, it is important to understand the genre. Every text has different shapes of forms. Knowing the genre of the text is needed to select appropriate content and language use. There are two different kinds of genres or text types. Moreover, every kind of genre has a different social function, a different schematic/generic structure, and different languages.

Generic structure

Discussion text has a schematic structure such as the rule of the text to gain the writing goal. The structure is as follows:

Firstly, it is the issue; it consists of a statement of the issue. The statement gives necessary background information on the issue. A

discussion begins with a brief introduction describing the situation of the text. The point of this introduction recognizes that there are two points of view.

Secondly, it is the argument. Arguments to oppose or statements of different points of view. It means the writer gives their argument consisting of arguments for and arguments against. The argument for is giving a supporting opinion to the issue, while the argument against is giving a contrary idea to the issue. In other words, the argument is called “pros” which means advantage, and the argument against is called “cons” which means a disadvantage of something.

Thirdly, it is a conclusion or recommendation at the end of the discussion presenting a personal point of view before giving a conclusion. The conclusion and recommendation may consist of both sides of the argument if they are balanced, or it can be a single argument if providing sufficient evidence.

Language features

According to Feez (1998), the language feature of discussion text consists of conjunction, modality, and conditional clause. Feez listed modal verbs, conditional clauses, and reader engagement strategies as important aspects in discussion texts.

Writing Measurement

According to Brown (2007), the best composition of writing skill is that if it fulfills some criteria: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics”. The writer should know what components indicate good writing. In this case, the researcher used the writing rubric score by Heaton (1988) in assessing students' discussion text.

Evaluating Writing

In addition, the sixth evaluation category must be measured based on the analytical scores. The scoring is needed in determining students' ability in writing. The scoring of writing was formulated by Brown (2003, p. 358), as below.

Table 1. Scoring rubric of writing.

Content	30
Organization	20
Vocabulary	20
Grammar	25

Mechanics	5
Total	100

Point-Counterpoint Strategy

Silberman (2010, p.137) stated that Point-Counterpoint is a strategy that affects the clash of opinions with perspective problems. This strategy is a technique to stimulate discussion and gain a deeper understanding of the various complex problems that occur. Point-Counterpoint learning strategies are used in students' writing skills to encourage them to think about multiple perspectives. If this learning strategy is developed, then what must be considered is the learning material, whether or not this method is suitable to be used in the classroom. Furthermore, Hudson (2004, p. 90) explains that Point-Counterpoint is proven not only to motivate students in writing arguments introducing the fundamental problems in an influential life of the community but also to encourage students to explore this perspective problem, the purpose of which is intended to function as a guide for the reader in researching circumstances that occur when students write in a discussion text.

Point-counterpoint strategy involves students to think about issues or problems that occur to be used as material to be discussed deeply. In this case, students are required to be more active in understanding discussion text (Sejnost & Thiese, 2010). This is a technique of teaching students in the form of collaborative activities and trying to develop students' understanding and interpretation of writing texts, namely discussion text, based on the topic given by the teacher. To apply this strategy, teachers must follow some procedures.

The Advantages of Using Point Counterpoint Strategy in Teaching Process

According to Yunita (2014) at MA Darul Huda Ponorogo. The result of the questionnaire showed that the students were interested in this strategy. It was proved from the total of the questionnaire I is 59.68% and the questionnaire II is 79.45%. The observation checklist result showed that the students became active during the teaching-learning process. It was seen from the total of the first observation checklist is 58.60% in cycle I up to 83.85% in cycle II. The researchers conclude that the use of the Point-Counterpoint strategy is very effective and it can improve students writing skills.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Participant

This research determines quasi-experimental research using a nonequivalent control group design. It took five classes of the eleventh-grade students of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 5 Bireuen. The researchers used Point-Counterpoint Strategy in teaching writing discussion text as an object of the lesson. Then the researchers selected two classes purposively where each class consists of 21 students. Each class was grouped as control and experimental groups.

Research Instrument

The researchers used the test (pre-test and post-test) and questionnaire as the instrument of the research. The test is an instrument used by researchers to collect data to see students' responses to material in the instrument, and students must demonstrate their abilities based on the material. In this study, the researcher used discussion text as a test in the pre-test and the post-test with the theme of "economic crisis, coronavirus, and curriculum 2013" etc. Students tried to develop the topic into a discussion text consisting of four paragraphs which consist of issues, pro, contra, conclusion, and recommendation by using the procedure of Points-Counterpoint strategy. The researcher gave 60 minutes for the students to work on the text. The researcher used descriptive statistics, namely the cumulative frequency distribution method, while the measurement of item validity is to correlate the score of the item with the total score of all existing items. The pre-test and post-test were given to find out whether the use of Point-Counterpoint strategy in teaching writing was effective. In this research, the researcher used a rating scale to score or evaluate the students' achievement in writing. There are five aspects used for scoring: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. A questionnaire is a list of written questions that can be filled in. In this study, the researcher used Likert scale questionnaire consisting of 15 questions about students' responses towards the Point Counterpoint strategy in learning writing. The researcher used the questionnaire to help students easily find answers by providing available alternative answers in the table. Each question had 5 options, namely strongly agree (score 5), agree (score 4), neutral (score 3), disagree (score 2), strongly disagree (1). The researcher categorized the

question into the following categories: five questions on writing motivation and eleven questions on the implementation of this strategy.

Technique of Data Collection

In collecting the data, the researchers made use of the scores of students in the pre-test (before treatment) and the post-test (after treatment). For both pre-test and post-test, the students were required to write a discussion text. Their writings were scored based on the writing score scheme by Weigle (2002), which consists of administering pre-test, treatment, and administering post-test. In administering pre-test section, the researcher asked the students to make discussion text paragraphs without the use of the Point-Counterpoint strategy being acted. The purpose of the pre-test was to know the students' basic competence in writing discussion text before the implementation of Point-counterpoint strategy. Next, the researchers applied the treatment after pretest, where, in this meeting, the researchers explained clearly about the discussion text to the students, explained the use of point-counterpoint strategy in writing discussion text, and its use in the learning process. The treatment was held in two meetings. Lastly, the posttest was given to know the students' influence and score in writing discussion text after they were taught by using the Point-counterpoint strategy (experiment class) and for control class, the researcher uses conventional method (scramble sentence).

Technique of Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, the researchers used the comparative technique. In the comparative technique, the variables are compared to know whether the differences are significant. The researchers used a t-test to find out the different scores of students' achievement in writing discussion text by using the procedure of Point-Counterpoint strategy and without using point-counterpoint strategy. In analyzing the result of the questionnaire, the researchers counted the percentage from the frequency of the answer, the researcher used descriptive statistic, namely cumulative frequency distribution method.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Table 2. Writing score of pre-test of the experimental class (XI MIPA 1).

No	Writing Element	N	Max Score	Total Score	Mean in Percent	Criteria of Writing Mastery
1	Content	21	30	394	62.53%	Fair
2	Organization	21	20	307	73.09%	Fair
3	Vocabulary	21	20	269	64.04%	Fair
4	Mechanism	21	5	75	71.42%	Fair
5	Grammar	21	25	296	70.47%	Fair
	TOTAL	21	100	1341	63.87%	Fair

Table 3. The students' scores of posttest in experimental class (XI MIPA 1).

No	Writing Element	N	Max Score	Total Score	Mean in Percent	Criteria of Writing Mastery
1	Content	21	30	493	78.72%	Good
2	Organization	21	20	344	81.19%	Good
3	Vocabulary	21	20	330	78.57%	Good
4	Mechanism	21	5	91	86.66%	Excellent
5	Grammar	21	25	348	82.85%	Good
	TOTAL	21	100	1610	76.66%	Good

Table 4. The students' scores of pre-test in the control class (XI MIPA 2).

No	Writing Element	N	Max Score	Total Score	Mean in Percent	Criteria of Writing Mastery
1	Content	21	30	385	69.44%	Foor
2	Organization	21	20	316	73.23%	Fair
3	Vocabulary	21	20	275	65.47%	Fair
4	Mechanism	21	5	72	68.57%	Fair
5	Grammar	21	25	299	71.19%	Fair
	TOTAL	21	100	1347	64.14%	Fair

Table 5. Writing score of post-test in the control class(XI MIPA 2)

No	Writing Element	N	Max Score	Total Score	Mean in Percent	Criteria of Writing Mastery
1	Content	21	30	482	76.50%	Good

2	Organization	21	20	333	79.28%	Good
3	Vocabulary	21	20	318	75.71%	Fair
4	Mechanism	21	5	89	84.92 %	Excellent
5	Grammar	21	25	333	70.92%	Good
		21	100	1555	74.04%	Fair

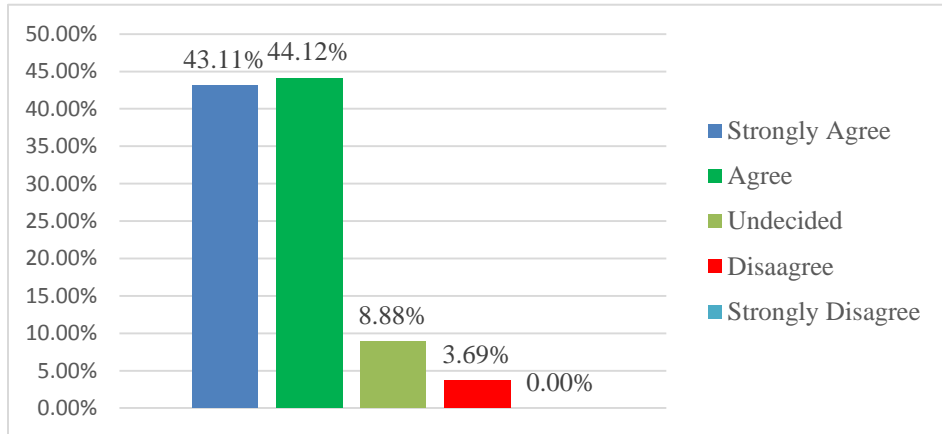


Figure 1. The total percentage of students' answers from questionnaires.

Discussions

Based on the research finding, it was found that the students who were taught by using point-counterpoint strategy has an improvement in writing discussion text compared to the students who are not. Based on the result of the pretest before the Point-Counterpoint strategy was implemented in writing discussion text, the students faced many difficulties in writing. Their writing usually contained grammatical and mechanical errors. The ideas generated were not clear and the sentences were not neatly organized and difficult to understand and lacked vocabulary.

From the result of the experiment after applying Point-counterpoint strategy (treatment) in teaching discussion text and after the posttest was conducted, it was found that there were significant differences between the students from experimental class and the students from the control class. The students from experimental class had a higher score than the students from control class. Most discussion text written by students from the experimental class had complete generic structures, fit in the use of imperative sentences, and the goals were clear. Their fluency in writing discussion text was also better because they were used to writing discussion text which is also written

in the simple present tense form and how to use modal. The result of the data analysis showed that using the Point-counterpoint strategy in writing discussion text was applicable for the eleventh-grade students of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 5 Bireuen. Point-counterpoint strategy encouraged the students to be more active, enjoy, and motivated in writing English text, especially writing discussion texts.

The testing of the hypothesis indicated that the experimental group was significantly higher than the control group. The mean score of the experimental group was 77 and the control group was 74.47. The difference between the two means was 1.72 with $\alpha = 5\%$ and $dk = 21 + 21 - 2 = 40$, obtained $t\text{-table} = 1.68$. since $t\text{-count}$ is higher than $t\text{-table}$ ($1.72 > 1.68$), therefore, H_a is accepted. From the table above, it can be seen the difference in the posttest mean score from both groups.

From the result above, it can be concluded that there is a different result between the students who were taught by using point-counterpoint strategy and those who were not, where the students who were taught by using Point-counterpoint strategy got better scores. The hypothesis is accepted. Based on the statement above, it is proven that there was a significant difference in achievement between the students who were taught by using the Point-counterpoint strategy in writing discussion text and the students who were not.

Based on the questionnaire, the researchers calculated the percentage of every option that the students answered in the questionnaire. The researchers gained the answer from the percentage of students' perception toward Point-counterpoint strategy in writing discussion text. It showed that almost all students chose "Strongly Agree" with the percentage of 43.11% and 44.12% of students answer "Agree". Then 8.88% of the students Answer "Undecided" and lastly 3.36% of students answer "Disagree". As a result, the researchers summarized that the students accepted the Point-Counterpoint strategy in learning writing as the best way to improve their writing. The result of the questionnaire showed that the students were interested in Point-Counterpoint strategy. It was proved from the total of the questionnaire I is 59.68% and the total of questionnaire II is 79.45%. The observation checklist results showed that the students became active during the teaching-learning process. It was seen from the total of the first observation checklist which is 58.60% in cycle I up to 83.85% in cycle II. the researchers conclude that the use of Point-Counterpoint strategy is very effective to improve student writing skills.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The use of point-counterpoint strategy in teaching writing discussion text for EFL students is very effective. This is proven and can be seen in the students' posttest where the mean score of the experimental class is 79.70, while the control group is 76.93. The t-test scores showed that t-count is higher than t-table ($1.72 > 1.68$) with $\alpha = 5\%$ and df 40. Based on the finding of data analysis, there is a significant difference in the achievement between the Second-grade students of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 5 Bireuen who were taught by Point counterpoint strategy in writing discussion text and those who were not. The result of the questionnaire shows that the students accepted the Point-counterpoint strategy in learning writing as the best way to improve their writing. The students also approved the impact of the Point counterpoint in their writing.

In addition, the researchers give some suggestions to the English teachers. English teachers should use some variations of strategy in the teaching and learning process, especially in teaching writing. Point counterpoint strategy gives something different in teaching writing skills. Point counterpoint as a strategy can enrich student's ideas in writing. Furthermore, students should study more and respond to the learning process; students should be more interested and fun in learning English, and they should improve their ability in English. Point counterpoint strategy in this study has a good impact for students to practice writing; it will make and push them to be better in their writing achievement. Future researchers who are interested in the same field of study may use this research as a reference. It is expected that the future researches are able to cover the limitation of this research and to provide more detailed information about it. They may conduct the research by using the same strategy but in different types of text with their creativity.

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