

Using Authentic Assessment to Develop Student's Critical Thinking in Argumentative Writing

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ABSTRACT

Authentic assessment is the mode of assessment that encourages student to practice in a specific knowledge as a professional. Creating critical thinkers in teaching English for business is applied through writing argumentation. The purpose of the study is to use authentic assessment in investigating students' critical thinking in argumentative writing. A mixed-method research design is used by analyzing the interrelationship between argumentative writing and critical thinking, and providing an open-ended questionnaire is to know the students' perception. The finding indicates a strong positive correlation that argumentative writing contributes significantly to critical thinking development. The result indicates that students reach a high level of critical thinking in terms of knowledge construction and evaluating reasoning. In this study, it is found out that logical thinking and writing skill have been practiced through the use of argumentative writing in authentic assessment. It is a recommendation to use portfolio for writing project in argumentative essay, and presentation as the project. These activities are set in authentic assessment to enhance critical thinking skills in argumentative business writing.

Keywords: argumentative writing; critical thinking; authentic assessment.

INTRODUCTION

Authentic assessment is a critical issue to prepare students for job situations. Authentic assessment enables students to connect their knowledge, abilities, and behavior to the real-world demands of their career (Gulikers et al., 2006). Authentic assessment strives to develop skills into professional practice by teaching students the relationship between learning and working in practice (Gulikers et al., 2008). In line with this, the primary goal of learning a foreign language for students in higher education is to become proficient in English. Authentic evaluation can be used to achieve this learning goal.

In many forms of assessment, authentic assessment represents student learning, accomplishment, motivation, and attitudes about classroom activities. Performance evaluations, portfolios, and self-evaluation are all part of the evaluation. Many ideas for conducting authentic assessment in a real-world context, including tape-recording stories and reports, videotaping presentations, and responding to video clips as well as television broadcasting, presenting final drafts, researching with the internet and software, and creating digital portfolios. (Gottlieb, 1996). In line with this, (Cohen, L., Manion, L., Morrison & Wyse, 2010) describe assessment as the use of

real evidence from real situation rather than the application in test forms. While (Brown, 1994) recommends some approaches in authentic assessment, such as portfolios, self- and peer-assessment, (Brown, 1994) suggests some techniques in authentic assessment, such as portfolios, self- and peer-assessment. As a result, it will boost student participation in both learning and evaluation, as well as foster student autonomy and motivation. Oral interviews, narrative or text retelling, writing samples, projects and exhibitions, experiments and demonstrations, constructed answer items, instructor observation, and portfolios are all examples of authentic assessment (Riyani, 2019). The implementation of authentic evaluation in terms of performance, portfolio, and English project is the subject of this research.

Authentic assessment is concerned with assessing a student's learning process in terms of their behavior, expertise, and abilities. Teachers must evaluate students' abilities via performance, project, and portfolio exams (Rus, 2019). Authentic assessment is applied by monitoring the student's activities while performing a certain task. In addition, there are three types of authentic assessment: performance evaluations, portfolios, and students' self-evaluation (Rukmini & Saputri, 2017). Performance assessment is the evaluation to observe student's activities in doing particular activity; portfolio assessment is defined as a continuous assessment process based on a set of information that shows the development of students competence in a given period of time; project assessment is an integrated unit of works which cannot be finished at a given time; it requires the students to do a series of tasks resulting on specific product or data (Gottlieb, 1996).

Authentic assessment requires the students to do a series of task or project which will result in a specific product or data (Phillips et al., 2000). Authentic Assessment in academic writing cannot be assessed by using a conventional method like a multiple choice or true-false item test (Reyhan, 2012). A teacher can only know the students' writing competence by checking their work in detail. Accordingly, an authentic assessment is seen as the most appropriate method in assessing students writing skill. The following are the steps in assessing students writing by using authentic assessment proposed by O'Malley and Pierce (1996): selecting topic that is appropriate for the students, selecting rubrics students can use, sharing rubrics with the students, identifying bench-mark papers, reviewing how students write not just what they write, having a conference with the students on their writing results.

In Indonesia, authentic assessment is a major topic in the present curriculum (Aliningsih & Sofwan, 2015). Higher education in Australia builds a curriculum by emphasizing the need of assessment (Bosco & Ferns, 2014). The use of real-world context learning goals and assessment is recommended by the higher education curriculum (Lombardi, 2008; McCowan, 2010; Veillard, 2012). As a result, being able to apply critical thinking in argumentative writing in a corporate setting is an effective method of achieving the learning objective. In addition, the research will look into the relationship between critical thinking and mastering argumentative writing.

Written communication is one of the important skills in business English that most business schools have included in the program (Pittenger et al., 2006; Chan, 2014; Xie & Chen, 2019). The ability to write in English is important not only for students' academic success but also for their future jobs. It has become an important element in the hiring process in businesses. Recruiters and hiring managers will continue to emphasize business writing skills because people believe that the

ability to write well will help their development process in the business workplace (Nguyen & Miller, 2012; Bacha & Bahous, 2008). Based on this finding, critical thinking should be embedded in the business writing material. It is proven that integrating critical thinking into EFL argumentative writing is important for effective communication (Pei et al., 2017; Liu & Stapleton, 2014; Widyastuti, 2018).

Argumentative writing is chosen to be the suitable writing genre in developing critical thinking. As a fact, argumentative writing is a multifaceted process that includes understanding the topic, making a statement, structuring a logical discourse, and putting ideas into written form. It requires the intellectual capacity to think critically, so that good writing should reflect the features of critical thinking (Jin & Fan, 2011; Murtadho, 2021). In line with this, the definition of argumentative writing in terms of cognitive perspective is a problem-solving process that applies self-regulation to acquire the rhetorical objectives (Ferretti & Graham, 2019; Graham, 2018). Therefore, the study aims to explain the strategy in teaching argumentative business writing to develop students' critical thinking.

Previous educational researches that relate to authentic assessment have contributed to the institution, educators and students. Developing writing in EAP should be taught beyond linguistic indicators, and given according to the authentic learning experience, case study, and real-world situation (Abrami et al., 2015; Nguyen & Miller, 2012; Alhassan, 2019; Chan, 2014). Furthermore, the genre-based approach supports the process of teaching business writing (Takino, 2020). A previous study indicated that critical thinking throughout the courses could increase student performance in a particular area, especially if critical thinking is an explicit outcome within the course (Roohr & Burkander, 2020).

A mixed method research in the effectiveness of authentic assessment has found that learning through authentic assessment dimensions is successful in facilitating the students and positively promoting the attitudes of students. Authentic assessment is able to support the students in order to accomplish what they need in the future (Surabaya et al., 2019). Whereas, A research on authentic assessment in English language teaching proves that the assessment provides positive values not only in the cognitive domain, but also in the psychomotor and affective domains (Riyani, 2019). Furthermore, the language assessments are the crucial aspects of teaching and learning processes (Siddiqui et al., 2018). In line with this, teachers have positive perceptions towards authentic assessment as the assessment approach is beneficial to assess student progress and achievement (Aliningsih & Sofwan, 2015). A study on the perceptions of authenticity and learning outcome indicates that when the task, physical context and assessment form are more authentic and alignment, there is also evidence of more deep learning and an increase in generic skill development (Gulikers et al., 2006). This study aims to implement authentic assessment in developing critical thinking through the teaching of argumentative writing.

The scope of the study is the use of authentic assessment in developing students' critical thinking through the teaching of argumentative writing. This study applies mixed-method design in order to answer the research questions: 1) to what extent is argumentative writing able to contribute students' critical thinking development? 2) How is the application of authentic assessment in teaching argumentative writing?

METHODS

The study uses mixed method design to examine the research questions by mixing both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study (Hollstein, 2014). A triangulation mixed method design is used by applying quantitative analysis through the use of simple correlation to measure the association between writing and critical thinking. Whereas, qualitative data is obtained through document observation and questionnaire (Mulder et al., 2009). Furthermore, the teaching application in argumentative writing is explained to know the effectiveness of authentic assessment. The grading system uses writing rubrics (Jacobs, 1985). The mixed method design can be seen on the following table.

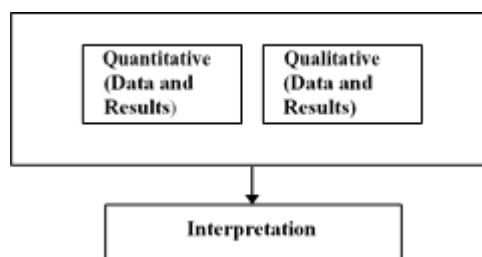


Figure 1. A triangulation mixed method design

The participants are fifty students in English for Business in Universitas Hang Tuah. Research Procedures are conducted simultaneously through the research and teaching process. Quantitative data analysis aims to find the correlation among variables (Pallant & Pallant, 2020). The hypothesis is a positive correlation between writing and critical thinking. Questionnaire is used in order to get the feedback from the students regarding the effectiveness of authentic assessment in the teaching argumentative writing. The results of qualitative and quantitative data are compared to be interpreted for the findings and conclusion (Chako, 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study provides the analysis on the students' performance based on the authentic task, document observation of authentic assessment on the course design, and the result of questionnaire.

1. The correlation between argumentative writing and critical thinking.

Assessment results of the authentic task relates to the project, presentation, and portfolio in writing tasks. Portfolio refers to formative test. Presentation is the interim test, such as academic writing and oral presentation. While, project is as the achievement test that students must present the final paper and presentation. The result of authentic assessment is graded based on the speaking and writing performances using rubrics. The grading results are analysed using statistical data analysis.

Table 2. Statistical analysis

	Mean	Max	Min	F test		R square
				F	Sig.	
Writing	75	95	60	153.599	.000	.867 (86%)
Critical thinking	78	95	64			

Table 2 indicates the mean and grading results for three variables. The mean of writing is 75 and critical thinking is 78. Overall, students have achieved very good and excellent accomplishments that can be seen from the achievements in two variables indicate the maximum score 95. In line with this, table 2 indicates that R Square is .867 in which approximately 86% of writing skill has correlation with the development of critical thinking skill.

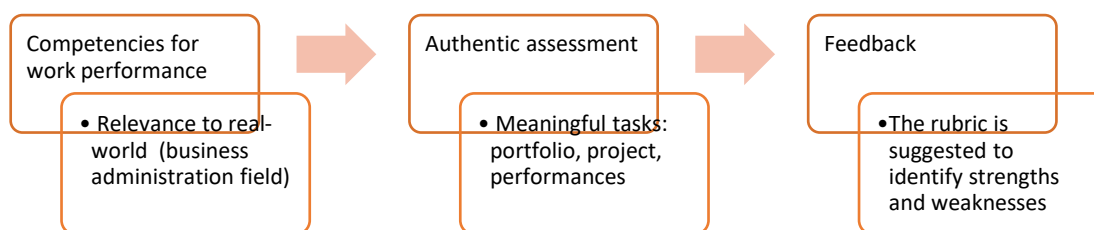
2). The effectiveness of authentic assessment in teaching argumentative writing.

The basic course outline is designed for the students of non-English department and authentic assessment is suggested to be implemented for encouraging the students to be able to write in good composition based on the learning target in course design. Authentic assessments have given practical values to the learning activities. This may be a consequence of the individualized nature of most assessment methods, but it suggests that authentic assessment approaches which do not foster these skills will have less of potential impact on students' learning for professional purposes.

Competencies for work performance include the graduation profile of the study program that the language course can contribute to. The English mastery should prepare the graduates to enter the professional sector. The key factor is to ensure the use of authentic assessment achieving the learning goals. The participants are students of Business Administration, so the language course design is expected fulfilling the real-world demand. In addition, the learning activities should cover all the knowledge in English skills that practise the students to be able to write and understand instructions related to English for specific purposes.

The important factor in authentic assessment is giving feedback, however, it isn't given good proportion. There are numerous ways to help students acquire feedback, including peer review, practice tasks, group test taking, observations of work colleagues and feedback on draft assignments. Feedback must provide information to students about their performance in a way that helps them understand the strengths and weaknesses of their work. Summative feedback is often important for quality assurance purposes as teachers are held to account for the quality of their information to students explaining marking decisions. For this reason, non-English department students should be guided and provided with feedback for learning improvement. The main factor is to assist them to practice for specific purposes, not to encourage them mastering the feedback technique. Therefore, they need to learn more, practice more, and to know more the implementation of mastering language in real-world context. In brief, a model to develop authentic assessment on course design is suggested as follows.

Table 3. A model to develop authentic assessment



The result of course design can be seen on table 3 that consists of the objective of the study, learning activities, outcome, and the progressive of the course. The course design promotes the strategy for teaching English for specific purposes using authentic assessment.

BASIC COURSE OUTLINE

Subject: English for Public Administration

Aims

By the end of this course students are expected to be able to have:

1. A good understanding of content and organization of argumentative writing in English for business
2. Skills of constructing words and sentences in essay
3. Developing critical thinking through writing and oral presentation

Course Description

This course deals with English for business with writing as the learning outcome.

Organization of Teaching/Learning Activities

The topics are sequenced from simple to complicated. Lecturing will be the technique in delivering the theory of writing and then students are assigned to do structured work both individually and in small groups in the classroom or at home. Class discussions will be used to discuss students' work and the feedback.

Progressive of the course

Week	Topic/Skills
1	Introductory of course outline: authentic assessment, and rubrics (scoring technique)
2	Portfolio: analyzing sentence construction related to entrepreneurship
3	Portfolio: analyzing topic, content, organization, and style of writing related to entrepreneurship
4	Portfolio: group discussion related to business plan
5	Portfolio: Oral presentation about business plan
6	Quiz: writing project in argumentative essay
7	Portfolio: analyzing sentence construction related to online business project
8	Project Assessment: MID TERM TEST
9	Portfolio: analyzing topic, content, organization, and style of writing related to business online project
10	Portfolio: group discussion related to small medium enterprise
11	Portfolio: oral presentation related to small medium enterprise
12	Quiz: writing argumentative essay
13	Portfolio: analyzing sentence construction related to production
14	Portfolio: analyzing topic, content, organization, and style of writing related to production
15	Portfolio: group discussion related to production
16	Project Assessment: FINAL TEST

3). The result of questionnaire

Likert scale is used to input and analyze the result of questionnaire using statistical analysis (Murphy & Myers, 2003). Table 4 provides the frequency of student opinion towards the effectiveness of authentic assessment on writing argumentative essay for their learning achievements.

Table 4. The result of questionnaire

		Frequency
Valid	Strongly agree	27
	Agree	18
	disagree	5
	strongly disagree	0
	Total	50

Based on the results of questionnaire, as seen in table 5, it can be summarized that the students are strongly agree (27), and agree (18) towards the application of authentic assessments for learning writing skills. However, only five students who consider authentic assessment doesn't give impact on their learning achievement. Based on the results of multiple regression analysis, many students have achieved excellent and very good grades on both writing skills. Fewer of them get average grade. Above all, authentic assessment contributes positively for the improvement of learning English skills through performances, portfolio, and presentation. A strong positive correlation between the variables is supported with the students' point of view in questionnaire. Authentic assessment is recommended to be used in giving authentic tasks.

The analysis of quantitative and qualitative are interpreted as well as the result of questionnaire. The analysis of course design indicates that authentic performance generates 62%. It means that the application of writing and speaking tasks reflects the effectiveness of this method. Students see the concept mastery and their performance on authentic task got positive impacts through the learning process.

CONCLUSION

There is strong correlation between argumentative writing and critical thinking. The result is proven by developing the quality of authentic assessment embedded in course design of teaching argumentative writing for students in English for business. It has to be supported by the relevance to the professional competence, meaningful tasks, and feedback technique. This study suggests a model to develop authentic assessment and promotes a basic course design for English for business. They must be related to real-world context. This study recommends the use of authentic assessment, namely portfolio by writing argumentative essay, and giving oral presentation to develop critical thinking. These activities create students' participation by giving questions, discussing the solution, analysing the problem, and creating new ideas in establishing a business project. The argumentative writing which is written in English automatically develops English knowledge in vocabulary, sentence pattern, and critical thinking.

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