



## **Teaching Argumentative Writing (Discussion Text) to Senior High School Students by Using Small Group Discussion**

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### **Abstract**

Many students have difficulties in writing discussion text, such as difficult to deliver contrasting ideas in one topic, no interest in the topic and inappropriate strategy or media when doing teaching and learning process. Considering such problems, an appropriate teaching technique is needed to help students improve their ability in writing discussion text. This paper is aimed at explaining how to use small group discussion in writing discussion text. Small group discussion is conducted by making several groups of students consist of six. In implementing small group discussion, the teacher shows the news to the students to stimulate them to give their arguments about the issue presented. Then, the teacher shows the discussion text related to the news given. Next, the teacher gives the students different topics for each group to be discussed. After finishing the discussion, the students write their own discussion text in the group. Finally, the students who are the representatives of each group present their discussion text in front of the class. The objective of this paper is to help the students to stimulate their critical thinking so that they can deliver their opinions in writing a discussion text.

**Key words:** *Writing, Discussion Text, Small Group Discussion*

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Senior High School students are in the phase of adolescents. Harklau (2011) says that adolescents are less experienced adult and are basically expanded version of children. So, in learning, Senior High School students must be taught with an interesting way that is not too complex but not too simple either, because the older a student gets, the more complicated the learning process he or she will face.

Based on the KI 4 of 2013 English Lesson curriculum, students must compose texts in both spoken and written forms. However, among the four language skills (i.e. speaking, listening, reading, and writing) writing is often considered the most challenging for ELLs. Reiss (2005) states that the school has high expectations and academic challenge for students. The students may be used to using English in social context such as writing facebook posts or a

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caption for instagram picture, but English writing inside the classroom is much more complex than that.

Nunan (1999) says that despite all these difficulties in writing, writing is still one of the important language skills that students must master to achieve academic achievement in school and to acquire language for one's individual purpose. (as cited in Tuan : 2010). Therefore, the teacher has to find the right strategy or method to teach writing in senior high school.

The purposes of teaching writing in Senior High School aren't only concerning about vocabulary and linguistic form such as grammar, but also the text genre. There are various text genres in English lesson. One of them is Discussion Text which is kind of Argumentative Writing where the writers put their opinion in the writing form. Bipinchandra (2014) says that this type of writing is important because it helps students become critical and reflective thinkers. It happens because before writing, the learner needs to have two exact different ideas to write. They are pro and contra.

There is a critical need to find out effective teaching strategies to develop students' writing competence especially in writing discussion text. Due to its difficulties, teachers need to find a certain strategy or even some strategies to make writing discussion text become less difficult for the students. Since writing discussion text is all about expressing two ideas that are against each other in the form of pros and cons, it would be better if the teacher chooses a strategy through which the students can express their own opinions, whether they are really pro or con to the issue rather than forcing them to write a discussion text with two different opposite ideas in it by themselves. Therefore, the writer in this paper builds effective social and cognitive bridges when writing discussion text using Small Group Discussion.

Basically, group work provides concept acquisition through social interaction. According to Brewer (1997) a small group discussion allows everyone in the group to express many ideas to discuss for others. A discussion may be based on information, facts or perhaps focuses on personal opinions and feelings concerning certain issues.

Discussion provides intellectual, emotional and social objectives that can help students in writing discussion texts with different opinions in a text. Intellectually, small group discussion helps the students to aware of the variety of opinions of a certain issue. One may be pro and the other one may be contra. The pro side may also have several different opinions and that also happen to the contra side. They could also differentiate between facts and opinions that could give a contribution in their writing. Many students learn better by negotiating meaning with peers within the small group because they can deliver their ideas and opinions in front of smaller audiences.

## **B. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

To consider what the correct definition of writing is, it is important to show the linguists' opinions concerning writing. Ghazi (2002) says that writing could be a complex process that allows writers to express ideas and concepts,

and make them visible and concrete. Writing empowers considering and learning for it persuades communication and makes thoughts accessible for reflection. When thought is composed down, thoughts can be inspected, reevaluated, included to, modified, and changed.

Tompkins (in Niandari and Jufri; 2012) indicated that four stages had to be completed in order to finish writing until the learners could read it: (1) Pre-writing: In this stage, the writer tries to generate ideas, specify the purpose and decide who will be the readers, (2) Drafting: In this stage, the writer tries to draw a sketch and make it the draft, (3) Review: In this stage, the writer tries to review and correct the parts in the draft that need to be improved, (4) Modifying-Publishing: The writer shares the writing to appropriate readers who were already determined in this stage.

It can be considered from the above statement that the idea, thoughts and emotions expressed in writing can be revised and assessed. This makes writing different from speaking. It's because speakers cannot review or evaluate the words they say, because the words are heard by listeners immediately.

In the 2013 curriculum applied in Indonesia, KD 4.4.3 requires students to write a spoken or written discussion text. According to Sufyan (2015) discussion text can generally be defined as a text that provides two contrasting arguments for informing readers of what is being discussed. In writing a discussion text, the writer must present their arguments fairly or, in other words, the writer should cover the arguments of the problems on both sides.

Gusdiana (2013) states that the word "discussion" means a process in which two different ideas, points of view or opinions meet. In line with that, Clair: 2008 (as cited in Handayani:2012) says that discussion text is a kind of text that presents at least two points of view on a problem. The function is to explore different perspectives before reaching an informed decision. In addition, to present information and opinions on more than one side of a problem (' for ' points and ' against' points).

Based on the opinions above, it can be concluded that the main purpose of the discussion text is to discuss the two different arguments in an issue. Furthermore, another purpose of this text, as stated by Sudarwati and Grace as cited in Sufyan (2015) is to provide readers with many information relating to some points of view on the issue discussed in the first place.

According to Warner as cited in Sufyan (2015), discussion text has three main elements. They are:

1. Statement: In this part, the writers should describe the subject in order to give readers limits on what is to be discussed.
2. Arguments: The writer should put the arguments on both sides while providing or listing the arguments. Therefore, writers are not allowed to take a position on the arguments to balance it.
3. Conclusion: In this part, the writers are required to summarize all the arguments and choose their preferences.

Moran (1997) as cited in Hadimani (2014) stated that research in the field of cognitive sciences shows that knowledge gained by activity is more useful than knowledge gained by memorization. Development of higher- level

thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, evaluation, decision-making and problem solving are not usually used in traditional lectures. According to Kenz (2000) A small group is a small member of human, work together through interaction whose interdependent relationship allows them to achieve a mutual goal.

In short, it can be concluded that small group discussion is the process by which three or more people of a group exchange verbal and non verbal messages in order to influence one another. By using this technique, it could be easier for the students to actively participate and a small group gives students the chance to hear other students' thinking about their opinions and respond to them. Most students do not understand or learn, unless they participate actively. In order to overcome the above limitations of only lecturing, Small Group Discussion method is worth to apply.

## C. DISCUSSION

### 1. Preparation

At this stage, the teacher must prepare everything necessary to determine what the teacher and the students do in the course. The preparations include preparing the necessary materials for the media. Next, teacher divide the students into several groups, each group are consisted of 6 people. The material consists of an example of discussion text, news, or articles. The medias are a projector, loudspeaker, and laptop.

### 2. Implementing Small Group Discussion in writing discussion text

The curriculum is implemented to adjust the development of science and technology, to develop educational program, and to improve the quality of human resource. The teacher must stimulate students to observe, make question, associate, experiment, and then communicate. All those steps are called as Scientific Approach. There are five steps on Scientific Approach, namely: observing, questioning, collecting information or experimenting, associating or information processing, and communicating.

In observing and questioning activity, the teacher provides news or articles that are viral at the moment so that it could attract students' attention to the lesson. The students are asked to observe news or articles. When the students already observe the head of news or articles, the teacher should stimulate them to ask questions and give opinions related to the news.

In collecting data and experimenting activity, students collect data to gain an understanding of the discussion text. The teacher shows the students the text of the news and then explains the language features and generic structures of the text. The students are also allowed to explore as many sources as they have to get better understanding about the topic.

In associating activity, students are ready to make the draft of the discussion text which contains the generic structures of the text: statement of the issue, arguments (pros and cons) and conclusion. In this stage, teacher gives different topics to the groups. Each group then discusses and makes its own discussion text based on the teacher's topic.

In communicating activity, the students present their discussion text in front of the class, and the teacher and the other students evaluate the discussion text.

#### D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In conclusion, small group discussion is an effective strategy to teach writing discussion text. Since writing discussion text is all about expressing two ideas that is opposite which is in the form of pros and cons, it would be better if the teacher chooses a strategy through which the students can express their own opinions, whether they are really pro or con to the issue rather than forcing them to write a discussion text which has two different opposite ideas in it by themselves. By using small group discussion, it could be easier for the students to actively participate and it gives students the chance to hear other students' thinking about their opinions and respond to them.

It is suggested that the teacher runs through the steps of teaching and learning offered above as a sequence. In addition, it is better for the teacher to prepare some news or articles related to the issue that will be discussed. The teachers need to prepare the materials, what to do in whilst teaching, and what should be done at the end of the teaching. Thus, the students can be really involved in the activity - writing discussion texts by using small group discussion.

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