

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Writing is certainly an important element of learning English as a second language. The importance of writing is eventually derived from the fact that it reinforces grammatical structures, vocabulary and idioms that teachers have been teaching to students (Ismail, 2011). Furthermore, writing is needed in every aspect of human life, when working, studying, and even at home. Since it is very important, every person is demanded to master this skill well in order to communicate and express thoughts and opinions in many media such as newspaper, magazine, social media, job application, etc.

Writing always demands correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation. This reason demands teachers to be careful in teaching writing so the teachers have to prepare some techniques that make students not afraid to write. Most students are afraid to write because their grammar, spelling, and punctuation have to be correct. One of the techniques that can reduce students' anxiety in those aspects is journal writing. According to E. Janet (2003) journal writing is one of the techniques that can improve students' writings, enhance critical thinking skills, encourage observational skills, and develop creative skills.

Journal writing has many advantages both for the students and for the lecturers. First, it can make students safe when they are writing. Powell, a teacher at Northwestern High School in Rock Hill, South Carolina, (Hopkins, 2017) said that the students loved to write if they felt safe with it. Students felt more free to write if their ideas were not judged and if they were not afraid that they would be marked down for their mistakes. As the year goes by, he felt that their students' writings and thinking skills were improved because of this safe practice. Second, it strengthened the bond of teacher and students relationship as Duncan, the teacher of English and History at Washburn Rural Middle School in Topeka, Kansas (Hopkins, 2017) said that when she used journal writing, she got to know more about her English students. In their journals, the students told about themselves, their families, and their things that they would never say to her. Third, journal could make the students more critical and reflective. Using a journaling technique often helped in the problem solving (Hiemstra, 2001). Also, it involved the students in reflective activity that made it easier for them to implement the theory into practice as stated by Argyris & Schon (1987) and Perkins, Simmons, & Tishman (1990) as cited in Dunlap (2014). According to Hopkins (2017), journal writing is mostly used in schools to teach primary and secondary level. In fact, journal writing is not only used in schools but also in the English Education Study Program of Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya because it is still very useful for college students or in higher education. It is even used in all Writing courses starting from Writing I to Writing IV.

The researcher chose Writing IV students because they are assumed to have adequate writing skills since they have been taught in Writing I, II, and III. The students must have good writing skills so it seems that they do not really need journal writing. Furthermore, many students did not write journals maximally, they did not submit it regularly, and even the lecturers sometimes cut the numbers of journals that should be submitted at middle and final semester as the researcher's experience as Writing IV students. On the other hand, there are many advantages of journal writing to keep developing writing skill as mentioned above. Therefore, the researcher wanted to know the perceptions of the students on the use of journal writing in Writing IV. In addition, this research is important to conduct so that the coordinator and the lecturers of writing course know how the students feel about the process and the use of this technique to make it better.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the background of the study, the research question is formulated as follows:

What are the perceptions of the students on the use of journal writing in Writing IV course taught at the English Education Study Program (EESP), Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya?

1.3 Objective of the Study

This study is aimed at finding out the perceptions of students of EESP of Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya on the use of journal writing in Writing IV course.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The results of the study will be useful for the lecturers of the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Widya Mandala Catholic University and the coordinator of writing course to maintain what is already good and to improve the shortcomings in the process of journal writing technique, especially in Writing IV course. For students, the results of the study are expected to be useful for evaluating their processes during journaling in Writing IV.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

According to Hetitch (1990), “journal writing is a popular teaching/learning technique that enables students to connect specific course concepts to their experiences” (Hetitch, 1990: 1). It is usually collected in a portfolio and written periodically. There are four types of journals according to Kerka (1996). They are learning journals, reflective journal, response journal and electronic dialogue journal.

In this study, the type of journal being studied is reflective journal which is used in Writing IV class.

“Perception is the end product of the interaction between stimulus, and internal hypotheses, expectations and knowledge of the observer, while motivation and emotions play an important role in this process” (Demuth, 2013:31). The process of acquiring and processing information are divided into two basic groups. It is top-down processes and bottom-up processes (Demuth, 2013). The top-down process is when someone who has prior knowledge to build a perception whereas the bottom-up process is when someone who needs to learn the detailed of certain things because the person does not have prior knowledge (Demuth, 2013). In this study, the researcher will use top-down process because they already have prior knowledge about journal writing as they had been taught Writing I, II, and III which used journal writing as well.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study is the students who are taking Writing IV course in the academic year of 2015. The students who take Writing IV are the students who had passed Writing courses from Writing I to Writing III. The reason why the researcher chooses the students who are taking Writing IV as the participant because they are still undergoing the journal writing technique so they can accurately conclude what they perceive about journal writing in Writing IV.

The limitation of this study is focused on one writing technique that is journal writing applied in Writing IV. The type of journal used is reflective journal.

1.7 Assumptions

The present study is based upon the following assumptions:

1. The students have language components and skills that are sufficient to write journal writing and other types of writings.
2. The students attended Writing IV course regularly.
3. The students have passed the course prerequisite or requirements for Writing IV.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

As a means to avoid ambiguity, the key terms used in this thesis are defined as follows.

1. Perception

Perception is the end product of the interaction between stimulus and internal hypotheses, expectations, and knowledge of the observer, while motivation and emotions play an important role in this process (Demuth, 2013).

2. Writing

Writing is really seen as a process of discovery as the researcher try to find their way while they are struggling to think, compose and put their ideas together (Ismail, 2011).

3. Writing IV

The highest level of writing course in English Education Study Program, Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya. Its basic competence is the students are able to write cohesive and coherent essays of discussion and review types/genres in grammatically correct and acceptable English sentences (Syllabus of Writing IV).

4. Journal

A *journal* is a written record of incidents, experiences, and ideas. It is also known as a personal journal, notebook, diary, and log (Nordquis't, 2016).

5. Journal Writing

“Journal writing is a popular teaching/learning technique that enables students to connect specific course concepts to their experiences” (Hetitch, 1990: 36).

6. Reflective Journal

A journal that facilitates connection between classroom and experience so it enables the students to examine and clarify their attitudes (Kerka, 1996).