Students' Perceptions of the Flipped Academic Writing Classroom Learning Activities

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Abstract: Flipped-classroom strategy, as the name suggests, flips the conventional teaching and learning process. In a flipped classroom, students learn the materials at home in an online platform (out-class) and then they learn more through discussion with their peers in the classroom (in-class). This study focuses on students' perceptions of the activities in a flipped academic writing classroom. The data were collected using questionnaires and observation. The result shows that the activities were able to help students to learn and improve their academic writing. In addition, students also gave positive responses to the use of teaching media and peer feedback sessions.

INTRODUCTION

The development of technology has influenced other fields, including education. For instance, it evolves the teaching and learning process which is traditionally done in a conventional classroom, into a modern process done in an online platform. The use of technology in the teaching and learning process in Indonesian universities is supported by and regulated in the Kurikulum Perguruan Tinggi (Kemenristekdikti, 2015, p. 13). Galway et al. (2014, p. 8) support this idea by saying that the use of pedagogical technologies can revolutionize higher education by engaging students, providing easy access to information, and enhancing learning. One of the teaching strategies that involve technologies in the teaching and learning process is the flipped-classroom strategy. Bergmann & Sams (2012, p. 13) defines this teaching strategy as "the lectures are delivered at home and the homework is done in class". Besides, the flipped-classroom strategy is student-centered since it allows students to explore and experiment with the materials (Khoiriyah & Aji, 2017, pp. 282–283).

The effectiveness of the flipped-classroom strategy has been revealed in several studies (Afrilyasanti et al., 2016; Engin & Donanci, 2014; Soltanpour & Valizadeh, 2018). In their study, Afrilyasanti et al. (2016) found that students who are taught EFL writing using flipped-classroom strategy have better achievement compared to those who are taught conventionally. In addition, Engin & Donanci's (2014) and Soltanpur & Valizadeh's (2018) study, although conducted with different platforms, yielded a similar result. On the other hand, several researchers also have tried to raise awareness about students' perceptions of the implementation of the flipped-classroom strategy (Blair et al., 2016; Hidayat et al., 2019; Islam, 2019). Blair et al. (2016) found that students' performance in a flipped classroom is linked to their satisfaction. Moreover, students provide positive responses to the online platform's ability to promote self-study (Hidayat et al., 2019) and facilitate collaborative learning (Islam, 2019).

However, studies related to the implementation of flipped-classroom strategy in an academic writing class has not been widely published. In Indonesian universities, an academic writing class has an important role in helping students to produce written academic assignments (Aunurrahman et al., 2016, p. 1). After realizing the benefit of the flipped-classroom strategy and the importance of the academic writing subject, teachers can implement the strategy in the teaching and learning process. This study tried to discover students' perceptions of the activities in a flipped academic writing classroom. Therefore, teachers can make use of the findings to improve the activities in their flipped academic writing or other EFL writing class.

The flipped-classroom strategy is a form of teaching and learning process where students are involved in not only in-class activities but also manage their online self-learning out-class. In other words, the students learn the lectures at home and do their tasks at school (Bergmann & Sams, 2012, p. 13). By using this strategy, students are able to learn the materials at their own pace with their preferred learning style while guided by their teacher in the online platform during the out-class sessions. Then, they can have a focused discussion about the materials with their peers during the in-class sessions.

At the early age of its development, the flipped-classroom strategy is used in chemistry classrooms. In the spring of 2007, two chemistry teachers named Aaron Sams and Jonathan Bergmann recorded live chemistry lessons and uploaded them to YouTube. The positive responses from their students helped them in conceiving the idea of the flipped-classroom strategy (Bergmann & Sams, 2012, pp. 3–4). Nowadays, the flipped-classroom strategy is implemented beyond chemistry classrooms. Studies showed that the flipped-classroom strategy has been implemented in language learning classrooms, especially in EFL writing classrooms (Li-xia, 2016; Metilia & Fitrawati, 2018).

The implementation of the flipped-classroom strategy in teaching writing is mainly similar to what Bergmann & Sams (2012) did in 2007. Li-xia (2016, p. 646) divides the teaching writing activities into two: outside of class and in-class. Teachers produce audios and videos and upload them to the online platform for outside of class activities. On the other hand, the in-class activities require students to discuss what they have learned outside of class, especially about the important and difficult parts of the materials. Meanwhile, Metilia & Fitrawati (2018, pp. 196–197) used a different approach in implementing the strategy in their study. The wheel of writing process (Harmer, 2004, p. 6) becomes the core in planning the in-class and out-class activities. The first out-class activities were mainly focused on the planning and drafting process by the students with guidance from the teacher in the online platform, while the in-class activities focused on face-to-face consultation with the teacher and other students in the class. After that, students continue the editing stage until they can publish the final version of their writing to the online platform.
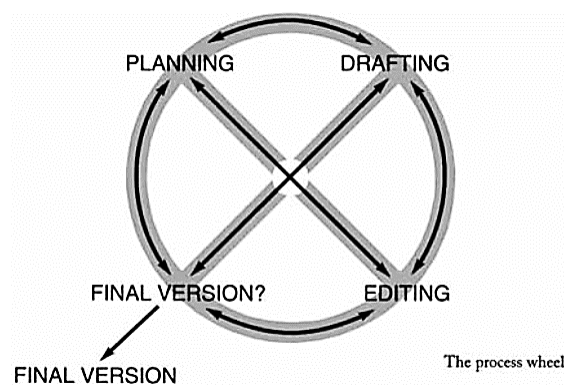

Figure 1 The Wheel of Writing Process

The writing process proposed by Harmer (2004, p. 6) can be applied to an academic writing class that is conducted by using the process-based approach. Academic writing can be referred to as a type of writing used by scholars in an academic context (Aliotta, 2019, p. 3). Since it involves a certain type of writing, most academic writing classes also use the genre-based approach. According to Brown & Lee (2015, p. 432), this approach allows students to focus on the discourse features of various writing genres. Additionally, Prihatmi (2017, p. 2) suggests that in order to be able to write academically, students should understand: (1) the process in presenting an idea in a written form and (2) the aspects of writing. Moreover, there are at least two principles in academic writing: clarity and honesty (Hamp-Lyons & Heasley, 2006, pp. 50–60). Those aspects of academic writing are considered essential in helping students produce exceptional academic writing.

However, students also face some challenges in learning academic writing. One of the most common challenges is applying techniques for writing a scientific paper (Husin & Nurbayani, 2017, p. 239). It is often found that the students in a writing class know what they want to write, but they do not know how to express it well in a written form. To counter this, writing activities involving idea development, stating arguments, and criticizing or confirming existing theories and findings should be included in the teaching and learning process. On the other hand, several studies also proved that the aspects of writing that university students struggle with are in terms of idea development, paragraph development, vocabulary, language, spelling, and mechanism (Persadha, 2016, p. 19; Rasyidah & Antoni, 2014, p. 28). Besides discovering the challenges faced by the students in the academic writing class, it is also necessary to look into students' responses to the flipped-classroom strategy.

Out of all the studies related to students' perceptions of the flipped-classroom strategy, the number of studies conducted in academic writing classes with Google Classroom as the online platform is still limited. The data gathered from students' insights might positively affect the implementation of the flipped-classroom strategy in the future. A study focusing on students' perceptions will result in an evaluation procedure to improve the use of a certain system (Brine & Franken, 2006, p. 22). It is also evidenced in Bergmann and Sams' (2012) initial stage of developing the flipped-classroom strategy. Positive responses from their students and other education practitioners are what motivates them to continue developing and improving the strategy. They also believe that there is no single way

to flip a classroom (Bergmann & Sams, 2012, p. 11) and encourage teachers to make their modifications and improvements to their flipped classroom. In brief, it can be concluded that students' perceptions of the activities in a flipped academic writing classroom can be used as guidance to improve the teaching and learning process in the future.

This study is aimed to explore the students' perceptions of the activities in a flipped academic classroom. Therefore, the research questions are formulated as follows: (1) how do students perceive the significance of the academic writing activities conducted in the flipped academic writing classroom? (2) how do students perceive their academic writing competence after participating in the academic writing activities conducted in the flipped academic writing classroom?

METHOD

The academic writing class, which serves as the setting for this study, consisted of one 2-hour class per week for 16 weeks in the fourth semester. The subject of the study was 27 students who joined the academic writing class. Google Classroom was used as the online platform for online activities in this class. Of 16 meetings (one meeting for each week), six of them were conducted using the flipped-classroom strategy. Those six meetings were held during the COVID-19 outbreak from April 23, 2020, to May 23, 2020. The implementation of the flipped-classroom strategy was considered appropriate, considering the situation at that time which limit teacher-student face-to-face interactions. Therefore, this study is focused on the teaching and learning activities conducted in meeting 10 until meeting 15.

The data were collected from 27 fourth semester students who joined the academic writing class. As the aim of this study is to investigate students' perceptions of the activities in the flipped academic writing classroom, a questionnaire was given to the students to express their responses. The questionnaire was shared using Google Form after the students finished the out-class activities in meeting 15. This was done to ensure that the students still have a vivid memory of how the activities were conducted.

The questionnaire consisted of 26 closed-ended questions and one open-ended question. The closed-ended questions asked about the activities, media, feedback, and time allotment, while the open-ended question allowed students to prove their feedback on the implementation of the flipped-classroom strategy in the academic writing class. Furthermore, the items for closed-ended questions were adapted from Fonseca & Peralta (2019) and Richards (2001). A 4-point Likert scale was used in the closed-ended questions, ranging from "strongly disagree" (1 point) to "strongly agree" (4 points). The researcher opted to use a 4-point Likert scale instead of the commonly used 5-point Likert scale to omit the "neutral" option. Moreover, Lozano et al.'s (2008, p. 78) study proved that the optimum number of alternatives in rating scales is between four and seven points.

To enrich the data, the researcher also conducted an observation of students' participation in the flipped academic writing classroom. Both in-class and out-class activities in the whole six meetings were observed and the findings were recorded in the observation checklist. The items in the observation checklist were adapted from Fonseca & Peralta (2019) and Richards (2001). Besides enriching the data, the findings from the observation are also used to confirm students' responses to the questionnaire. Students' enthusiasm in joining the discussion, contributing ideas while working with others, and finishing the tasks given became the focus of the in-class activities observation. Meanwhile, students' participation in the out-class activities was observed from the assignment completion and the activeness in the Google Classroom. In addition, the researcher has conducted a preliminary study to get a glimpse of the teaching and learning process in the academic writing class.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The preliminary study found that the materials taught in the academic writing class were focused on teaching students about language proficiency, synthesizing ideas, and writing a research paper. The main source of the materials was from the students' workbook, with additional materials from other academic writing books and research papers related to ELT as supplementary materials. Additionally, the activities in meeting 10, 11, and 12 were focused on group activities, while the activities in meeting 13, 14, and 15 were focused on individual writing activities. Further explanation of the findings will be presented based on the two research questions. The first research question is focused on students' perceptions of the significance of the academic writing activities conducted in the flipped academic writing classroom, while the second research question is concerned with students' academic writing competence as the result of participating in the academic writing activities.

Significance

There are 14 items in the questionnaire that dealt with students' perceptions of the significance of the academic writing activities. Those items can be classified into two: items 7 to 13 are related to in-class academic writing activities, while items 20 to 26 are related to out-class academic writing activities. Besides asking direct questions about the academic writing activities (items 7, 8, 20, and 21), the questionnaire also asked about the use of teaching media (items 9, 10, 22, and 23), opportunities for feedback (items 11, 12, 24, and 25), and the time allotment (items 13 and 26). The responses to those items are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Students' Perceptions of the Significance of the Academic Writing Activities

No.	Questionnaire Items	Total Value	N	Average
7	The instructions for each in-class activity were clear and easy to follow	95	27	3.52
8	The activities done in-class were able to improve my academic writing skill	100	27	3.70
9	The teaching media used in-class were interesting	96	27	3.56
10	The teaching media used in-class were able to support the learning process	95	27	3.52
11	I had opportunities to receive in-class feedback from my teacher regarding my writing	102	27	3.78
12	I had opportunities to receive and give in-class feedback from and to my peers regarding my writing	101	27	3.74
13	The duration for each in-class activity was adequate	95	27	3.52
20	The instructions for each out-class activity were clear and easy to follow	92	27	3.41
21	The activities done out-class were able to improve my academic writing skill	96	27	3.56
22	The teaching media used out-class were interesting	96	27	3.56
23	The teaching media used out-class were able to support the learning process	97	27	3.59
24	I had opportunities to receive out-class feedback from my teacher regarding my writing	102	27	3.78
25	I had opportunities to receive and give out-class feedback from and to my peers regarding my writing	102	27	3.78
26	The duration for each out-class activity was adequate	97	27	3.59

First, the students responded positively to the items related to academic writing activities. They felt that the instructions for both in-class and out-class activities were clear and easy to follow (items 7 and 20). Similarly, the students also believed that the activities conducted in both in-class and out-class were able to improve their academic writing skills (items 8 and 21). The result of the observation is also in line with the findings from the questionnaire. Most of the activities in the flipped academic writing classroom were designed to be conducted collaboratively. Students were asked to form into groups and generate an argumentative essay in meeting 10 until 12, which required them to work together with other students. On the other hand, the academic writing activities in meeting 13 until 15 were conducted individually. However, the in-class sessions in those meetings were used for class discussion where students presented the progress of their work to their peers, and then they received feedback and suggestions to improve their writing.

The next items are the students' perceptions of the use of teaching media in academic writing activities. After observing the flipped academic writing classroom, the researcher found that the teacher used videos for teaching media. The videos were shared in the form of YouTube links in meeting 12 and 13 as a guide for the students when they developed their outline for individual argumentative essay. From five videos, the students were asked to pick one video and write an argumentative essay outline based on the topic presented in that video. In response to that, the students agreed that the teaching media used in the flipped academic writing classroom were interesting and able to support them in learning academic writing. Consequently, the students also showed similar responses during the teaching and learning process. They seemed more engaged in discussing their outline after watching the videos.

Then, the students showed positive responses towards items related to opportunities for feedback. Based on the interview with the teacher during the preliminary study, this aspect became one of the challenges in the academic writing class before the flipped-classroom strategy was applied. As a result, the items that were concerned with opportunities for in-class (items 11 and 12) and out-class (items 24 and 25) feedback received the highest response value. The students seemed to hold great value on the feedback from their teacher and peer. It is evidenced in Table 1 that there are no significant gaps between the scores in items 11, 12, 24, and 25.

Finally, the students agreed that the duration for each academic writing activity was adequate. Both in-class and out-class sessions were divided into three sets of activities: pre-activities, main activities, and post activities. The in-class session for each meeting took 100 minutes, while the out-class session for each meeting was done asynchronously and took around 120 hours (5 days). Besides, the

result of observation also shows that students were able to study the materials, revise their writing, and finish their work within the allotted time.

Competence

The remaining 12 questionnaire items are focused on students' academic writing competence after they have participated in academic writing activities. The materials taught in the flipped academic writing classroom were carefully selected based on the result of the needs analysis conducted before the semester begun. According to the teacher, students need to learn about language proficiency, synthesizing ideas, and writing a research paper to succeed in the academic writing class. Therefore, the items from the questionnaire that concerned about students' competence after participating in the academic writing activities asked about how well they can understand the materials (items 1 and 14), and their academic writing competence after joining the flipped academic writing classroom (items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19).

Table 2 Students' Perceptions of their Academic Writing Competence

No.	Questionnaire Items	Total Value	N	Average
1	The in-class materials were easy to understand	93	27	3.44
2	The materials taught in-class were able to help me in paraphrasing experts' theories, statements, or ideas	98	27	3.63
3	The materials taught in-class were able to help me in writing citation or reference according to the appropriate format determined by the faculty (APA)	100	27	3.70
4	The materials taught in-class were able to develop my critical thinking ability, especially in expressing my arguments in a written form	102	27	3.78
5	The materials taught in-class were able to improve my academic writing skill	100	27	3.70
6	The materials taught in-class can be used as a guide in writing academic essays	101	27	3.74
14	The out-class materials were easy to understand	96	27	3.56
15	The materials taught out-class were able to help me in paraphrasing experts' theories, statements, or ideas	96	27	3.56
16	The materials taught out-class were able to help me in writing citation or reference according to the appropriate format determined by the faculty (APA)	98	27	3.63
17	The materials taught out-class were able to develop my critical thinking ability, especially in expressing my arguments in a written form	95	27	3.52
18	The materials taught out-class were able to improve my academic writing skill	100	27	3.70
19	The materials taught out-class can be used as a guide in writing academic essays	101	27	3.74

Table 2 shows that the students agreed that the materials in both in-class and out-class were easy to understand. Conversely, the result of the observation showed a different result. Some of the students seemed to struggle at the initial stage of the academic writing process, which was the drafting stage (meeting 10 and 13). When drafting their essay, some of the students had trouble distinguishing between a block-structured essay and a chain-structured essay. Fortunately, the teacher was able to confirm the materials and clear the misconception.

On the other hand, the students showed positive responses to items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19. From the responses in the questionnaire, it can be seen that the students are confident with their academic writing abilities after participating in the academic writing activities. Indeed, the students faced some challenges and difficulties in learning the materials. Despite that, they were able to work together, support each other, and produce exceptional pieces of academic writing. The findings from the observation are also in line with students' responses regarding their academic writing competence. After they revised their group argumentative essay several times (meeting 10 to 12), the students were able to learn from their past mistakes and apply their knowledge in writing their individual argumentative essay (meeting 13 to 15).

As explained in the previous sections, this study is conducted to answer the two research questions: 1) how do students perceive the significance of the academic writing activities conducted in the flipped academic writing classroom, and 2) how do students perceive their academic writing competence after participating in the academic writing activities conducted in the flipped academic writing classroom. A questionnaire has been distributed to the students, and observation also has been conducted to collect the data. Then, the findings from the questionnaire and observation are discussed further below.

Students' Perceptions toward the Significance of Academic Writing Activities Conducted in the

Flipped Academic Writing Classroom

Students' perceptions toward the teaching and learning activities can affect their performance in learning. When the students think the activities are not important, dull, or a waste of time, they tend to lose their motivation to participate in the activities. Fortunately, the students of the flipped academic writing classroom that become the subject in this study think otherwise. From the positive responses in the questionnaire, it can be seen that the students were satisfied with how the activities were conducted in the flipped academic writing classroom. After computing the students' responses, the items related to opportunities for feedback (items 11, 12, 24, and 25) received the highest number of total responses. This means that the teacher feedback and peer feedback were beneficial to the students in supporting their academic writing process. In the case of peer feedback, this finding confirms Huisman et al. (2018, p. 963) in which feedback providers and receivers are able to improve to a similar extent from draft to final essay. The improvements discussed here are not only in terms of the students' overall grades, but also the content, structure, and writing style of their academic writing.

Other positive responses are given by the students toward the use of teaching media in the academic writing activities (see items 9, 10, 22, and 23 in Table 1). The use of video as teaching media is planned in the syllabus, and the researcher witnessed students' reactions when they discussed the content of the video while trying to come up with their own idea for the individual essay. Islam (2019, p. 60) agrees that the use of interesting English videos can engage students to practice their writing skills in Google Classroom. Moreover, to maintain relevance with the topic and materials, the teacher selected videos related to the issues of the students' field of study. Besides, the use of videos related to the students' field of study is also able to maintain students' engagement. Clark & Mayer (2016, p. 222) defines engagement as meaningful psychological interaction which helps the students in building relationships between new content and prior knowledge in the teaching and learning process to achieve the learning goal. Thus, students' engagement with academic writing activities may support them in learning the materials and generating academic writing.
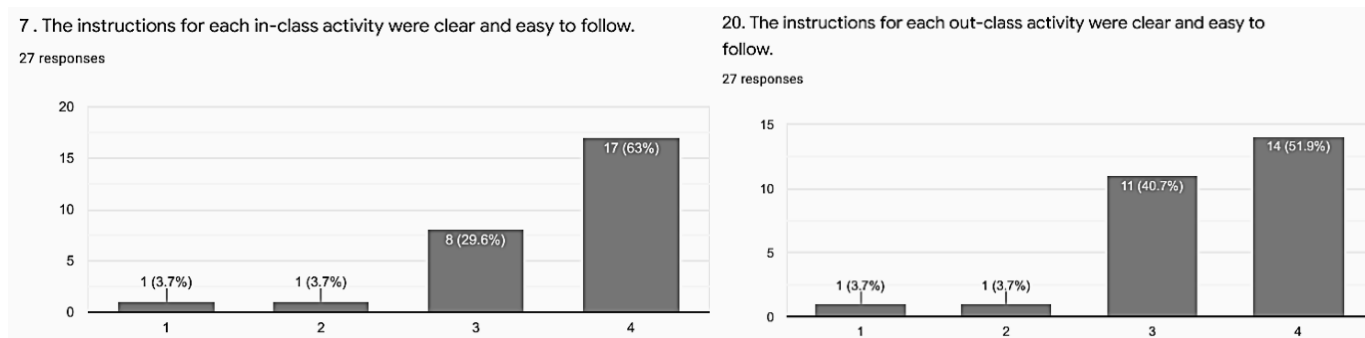

Figure 2 Students' Responses to Items 7 and 20

A notable difference in the students' responses is found in the questionnaire items 7 and 20 (see Figure 2). Most of the students agreed that the instructions for both in-class and out-class activities were easy to follow, while some of them disagreed. One student selected "strongly disagree" (1 point), and the other one chose "disagree" (2 points) in both items. Furthermore, the observation was able to confirm that some students were having difficulties in understanding some of the instructions given by the teacher. In a student-centered classroom, the students are allowed to be more active while the teacher becomes less directive or controlling. However, teachers can adjust their roles to fit the directive or nondirective teaching, depending on the purpose and context of an activity (Brown & Lee, 2015, p. 261). Therefore, the teacher may act as the manager, director, or even the controller of the class instead of maintaining their role as the facilitator or the resource in a student-centered classroom.

Students' Perceptions toward their Academic Writing Competence after Participating in the

Academic Writing Activities Conducted in the Flipped Academic Writing Classroom

From the responses in the questionnaire, it can be seen that the students agreed that the teaching materials used in the academic writing activities were able to support them in enhancing their academic writing ability. Teaching materials should reflect the instructional objectives to make a learning experience as a whole (Astuti & Andreani, 2020, p. 319). In short, the instructional objectives in the flipped academic writing classroom are to 1) identify credible sources, 2) cite, paraphrase, and/or summarize relevant sources, 3) build arguments based on credible sources, 4) develop chain-structured paragraphs that employ arguments based on credible sources, and 5) compose a chain-structured argumentative essay. Since the students' responses confirmed that the academic writing knowledge

that they received was able to help them to achieve the instructional objective, it can be concluded that they felt confident about their academic writing competence after participating in the activities.
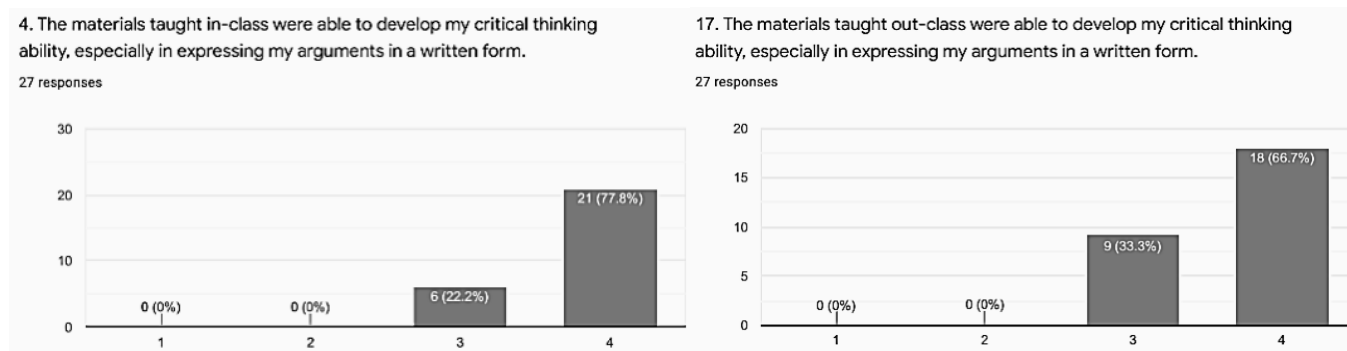

Figure 3 Students' Responses to Items 4 and 17

The students believed that the materials taught in both in-class and out-class were able to develop their critical thinking ability (see items 4 and 17 in Table 2). However, upon closer inspection, there is a noticeable gap between responses to items 4 and 17 (see Figure 3). To some extent, improving students' critical thinking can be considered as essential as teaching academic writing skills. The ability to create reasonable arguments is often associated with students' critical thinking ability (El Khoiri & Widiati, 2017, p. 72). With that in mind, academic writing teachers must not ignore the role of critical thinking in the writing process.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the student felt that the academic writing activities conducted in the flipped academic writing classroom are significant. From the questionnaire and the observation, the students were able to enjoy and see the value of the academic writing activities. Positive responses were given by the students, especially to the use of teaching media and the opportunities for feedback. Despite having trouble following some of the instructions, the students were able to clear up their misunderstanding and hop back on track. As a result, teachers should be able to adapt their roles depending on the purpose and context of the activity. The students also agreed that the activities conducted and the materials given in the flipped academic writing classroom are able to help them in creating a piece of academic writing. Consequently, they felt confident to apply the knowledge in writing their future essays.

After analyzing and discussing the findings, the researcher proposed some suggestions to improve the future implementation of the flipped-classroom strategy, especially in the academic writing class. First, the teacher can share their knowledge of analyzing scientific papers with their students. Since the students hold a great value to the feedback on their writing, it would be better if the teacher provides materials about how to analyze academic writing and give appropriate feedback and suggestion. Next, the teacher should be able to identify and confirm that all students can understand the instructions for the activities. In some cases, the teacher must switch their role to become more directive even in a student-centered teaching scenario. Besides, checking students' understanding in the online platform is not easy since there might be some delays in students' responses caused by the connection or other technical issues. Finally, the teacher must not overlook activities that can improve students' critical thinking. Studies related to the role of critical thinking in students' writing ability are abundant (Abrami et al., 2008; El Khoiri & Widiati, 2017; Elder & Paul, 2013; Vyncke, 2012), and academic writing teachers can apply whichever activities that they felt able to help their students in achieving their goals.

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