USING "UNFINISHED STORY" TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING ABILITY OF THE FIRST GRADE OF ENGLISH EDUCATION PROGRAM OF STKIP HAMZANWADI SELONG

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ABSTRACT

This research was designed to improve the students' writing narrative text in English through unfinished story. A collaborative action research design was employed, involving the researcher and a collaborator.The design applied in this research was a classroom action research. Data in the form of observation checklist and students' writing product were collected at the end of the cycle then analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. The success was determined from the improvement of the students' score on their writing product. The findings respectively showed that the unfinished story improved the students' writing ability. The improvement can be seen on the students' individual writing scores. The findings also showed that this media was effective in enhancing the students' involvement in the instructional activities.

Key words: unfinished story, narrative text, writing ability

INTRODUCTION

Writing as one of the language skills is not acquired naturally. Writing is considered the most difficult and complicated language skill to be learned compared to other language skills**.** Nunan (1989:35) argues that learning to write fluently and expressively is the most difficult of four language skills for all students whether it is for first, second or foreign language students. Furthermore, Nunan (1999:271) highlights that the most difficult thing to do in learning a foreign language is probably in producing a coherent, fluent, and extended piece of writing. In line with Nunan, Richards and Renandya (2002:303) state that writing is the most difficult skill for second language students to master. The difficulty lies not only in organizing and generating ideas, but also in translating these ideas into readable texts. The skills involved in writing are highly complex. Students have to pay

attention to higher level skills of planning and organizing as well as lower level skills of spelling, punctuation, word choice, and so on. The difficulty becomes even more pronounced if their language proficiency is weak.

Harmer (1998:79) states that some reasons for teaching writing to the students of English as a foreign language include reinforcement, language development, learning style, and writing as a basic language skill. This means that in order to have a writing skill, students should write. In line with Harmer, Raimes (1987) in Widiati and Cahyono (2006:140) highlights that there are six purposes of teaching writing: writing for reinforcement, training, imitation, communication, fluency, and learning. She also highlights that teaching writing helps students learn to use language.

As one of the subjects for the English Language Education Program at STKIP Hamzanwadi Selog, one of the objectives of teaching Intensive English Course (IEC) is to enable students use language related to functional English in a variety of thematic-based material including past events and activities. Ability to use a language here deals with ability to use the language orally and in written.

Considering the complexity and the importance of writing, an English teacher should be an effective teacher who can draw students' talents and use variety of teaching methods and strategies to improve their talents. Writing class should be facilitated with activities which motivate students to learn. Teaching writing is not just giving assignments and grading papers. Students are not just writing based on the topic given and collecting the product at the end of a lesson. Students should be challenged and stimulated by interesting and fun activities during the teaching and learning process. According to Brown (2001:340) one of the challenges of becoming an effective writing teacher is by facilitating the students in learning writing. As the facilitator, the teacher must offer guidance in helping students to engage in the process of writing.

Many students, even most of the students, in the English Language Program of STKIP Hamzanwadi Selong find it difficult to write. The difficulty does not deal only with how to write but also what to write. This difficulty was mostly visible on the first graders who learn IEC. Their writing product respectively was affected by the difficulties they faced. This was proven by the average score of their first writing product which was 49.6. This score was clearly not expected. This was unsatisfactory.

The students' writing product indicated that they made mistakes in grammar, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and their paragraph organization and content are poor. Besides, after being interviewed, many students in class 1A said that they did not know how to begin their writing especially when they had no idea what to write. Second, they found it difficult to generate and translate the ideas into a readable text because of lack of vocabulary. Third, when they got stuck on their writing, it was very hard to go back writing again.

Based on these facts, the difficulties of students and the unsatisfactory results in writing might be due to the less effective technique of teaching writing that causes the teaching and learning activities to be unalive. Ideally, any teacher should make a good planning which includes general and specific instructional objectives, instructional materials and media for teaching writing. Burden and Byrd (1999:137) state that the use of instructional media during instruction can facilitate and enhance students' learning. Thus, to help students to be able to write, a teacher should be more creative to find out the authentic material and appropriate media which help the students to engage in teaching writing.

Teacher possibly assumes that writing is a product–oriented which focuses on the end result of the learning process. Students are expected to be able to do as fluent and competent as user of the language does. In fact, writing is not a single activity, but one which is recursive. It means that writing has several stages and these can be performed from the initial to the final stages, and can proceed through again, until

the final product is presented. Nunan (1991:87) states that writing is a long and often painful process. Due to this situation, the teacher has to involve the students with various classroom activities which are believed to promote the development of language skill.

Additionally, the class was mostly dominated by the teacher. The activities in the teaching and learning of writing were likely to be teacher-centered. Students rarely work cooperatively. They are often given individual works that induce them to give up dealing with difficult tasks. It is possibly that the students prefer to be more frequently engaged in classroom activities with other fellows.

Considering the problems in the teaching of writing at English Language Education Program of STKIP Selong especially grade IA, providing them with an interesting media is worth doing because generating ideas is a common problem encountered by the majority of the students. The media proposed here is a story. Tompkins and Hoskisson (1995: 316) state that stories give meaning to the human experience, and they are a powerful way of knowing and learning. Students develop an understanding about stories as they read and write stories during learning activities at school. Story in this research is without ending. In this way, each student is supposed to have different end of the story to write. According to

Related to teaching technique, students are divided into some small groups consist of four. Each group is given different story. Group working is helpful for students. The students will achieve success in generating their ideas as a consequence of discussing what they have in the story, sharing ideas, asking questions, helping each other, and teaching each other in their groups.

Based on the benefit of story and group working, the researcher intended to improve the students writing ability of the first grade of the English Language Education Program of STKIP Hamzanwadi Selong in the academic year 2011-2012.

METHOD

The design of this research was Classroom Action Research (CAR) since this research was focused on the teaching and learning activities in the classroom. This action was designed to improve the students' writing ability using unfinished story. This research was a collaborative classroom action research in which the researcher was assisted by one of the upper grade students of the English Language Education Program of STKIP Hamzanwadi Selong.

In conducting this research, the researcher followed a number of steps. The steps included preliminary study to analyze and identify the problems as the preparation, followed by planning the action, implementing the action, observing, analyzing, and reflecting. The researcher conducted the research procedures proposed by Kemmis and Mc Taggart (Kemmis & Mc Taggart, 1988:15).

In the planning stage, the researcher and the collaborator made a careful action preparation prior to the implementation of the action based on the result of the preliminary study. The preparation consisted of designing a suitable model of applying unfinished story and the lesson plans for teaching writing, developing the materials and media and determining the success criteria. The success criteria encompassed (1) the students' involvement during the teaching and learning process. This research was considered success if 70% (27 out of 38) of students are actively involved in the instructional activities. (2) the students' improvement in writing. It was considered success if 70% (27 out of 38) of the students with individual score in writing narrative text achieve at least 60.

In the implementation stage, the plan concerning the teaching and learning of writing using unfinished story through small group working was implemented after all of the preparations had been made. In implementing the action, it was decided that the researcher acted as the implementer or teacher of writing whereas the collaborator acted as the observer whose job was conducting the observation during the teaching and learning process.

In the observation stage, the data were gathered from students' writing product and observation checklist. The data gained from these instruments were used to confirm whether the success criteria were conformed or not. Besides, they were also used to identify aspects of the media and technique to be modified in the subsequent plan.

In the reflection stage, the researcher and the collaborator discussed together the implementation and observation during the teaching and learning process in the classroom. The researcher made two kinds of conclusion, the each cycle-based conclusion and the final conclusion. The conclusion of each cycle was made to determine whether or not another cycle was needed while the final conclusion was made to describe the model of teaching of writing using unfinished story that had been improved.

RESULT

The research finding yielded the appropriate model of applying unfinished story in teaching writing encompasses some procedures: 1) dividing students into some small groups consist of four; 2) giving each group an unfinished story. It is advisable that teacher gives different story for each group. 3) assigning students to read the story and pay attention in vocabulary and sentence structure or language feature of narrative texts, (3) questioning to ensure that the students have understood about the story and generic structure of narrative texts, 4) floating from group to group, observing the process; 5) asking students to write the story individually by telling them that they have the right to decide how and what is the end of the story. In this way, students quickly come to realize that these sessions are not just fun and games but really count; 6) asking students to revise their draft on content and organization using the revising guide, 7) giving students a chance to edit their writing in terms of grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation using editing guide; and 8) publishing the students' revision and completed versions by reading aloud the story at the end of the session in front of the class.

Furthermore, the use of unfinished story in teaching of writing has successfully improved the first grade students' writing ability in narrative text at English

Language Education Program of STKIP Hamzanwadi Selong in the academic year 2012/2013. The improvement could be seen from the increase of students' writing score in the preliminary study each cycle. In Cycle 1, 58% students in the class gained at least 60, and 77% students gained at least 60 in Cycle 2. Additionally, the language produced by the students was more varied because the end of the story was based on their imagination.

The finding also indicated that unfinished story was effective in encouraging the students to participate actively in the instructional activities. It was proven by that 74.0% students were actively involved in Cycle 1 and 84% students were actively involved in the instructional activities in Cycle 2.

DISCUSSION

Providing good and interesting materials are advisable in teaching-learning activities. Materials can help both teachers and students. In developing students' ability to communicate in English, teachers have to be able to provide such good materials which emphasize to the development of communicative competence. To go beyond the limitations of a text, many English teachers adapt or create authentic materials and media.

There will be very strong reasons to use the authentic materials and media. Materials and media can reinforce students for the direct relation between the language classroom and the outside worlds. In addition, authentic materials and media offer a way to contextualize language learning. This is because students tend to focus more on content and meaning than on language. This offers students a valuable source of language input, as students can be expected to learn more than just the language presented by the teacher and the text (Gebhard, 2000: 102)

Considering the benefits of authentic materials and media, teachers should provide such kinds of materials and media which are not only suitable for the students' needs but also able to motivate them in learning language. With regard to the use of the

authentic materials such as photographs, pictures, magazines, and stories, Wright (1995: 5-6) asserts that stories are particularly important in the lives of children; they helps children to understand their world and to share it with others. Then, she says that stories are motivating, rich in language experience, and inexpensive.

According to Tompkins and Hoskisson (1995: 316) stories give meaning to the human experience, and they are a powerful way of knowing and learning. Children develop an understanding about stories as they read and write stories during learning activities at school.

Through this study, it can be seen that stories do not stimulate only students' imagination and understanding of the world, but also develop students' language ability and appreciate literature. The use of stories and group working can be considered as an integrative, interactive and effective approach that can enhance students' communicative competence, especially in writing.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

The use of unfinished story in teaching of writing has successfully improved the first grade students' writing ability in narrative text at English Language Education Program of STKIP Hamzanwadi Selong in the academic year 2011-2012. The improvement could be seen from the increase of students' writing score in the preliminary study each cycle. In Cycle 1, 58% students in the class gained at least 60, and 77% students gained at least 60 in Cycle 2. Additionally, the language produced by the students was more varied because the end of the story was based on their imagination.

The finding also indicated that unfinished story was effective in encouraging the students to participate actively in the instructional activities. It was proven by that 74.0% students were actively involved in Cycle 1 and 84% students were actively involved in the instructional activities in Cycle 2.

There are seven main steps in applying unfinished story in teaching and learning process. Those are 1) dividing students into some small groups consist of four; 2) giving each group an unfinished story. It is advisable that teacher gives different story for each group. 3) assigning students to read the story and pay attention in vocabulary and sentence structure or language feature of narrative texts, (3) questioning to ensure that the students have understood about the story and generic structure of narrative texts, 4) floating from group to group, observing the process; 5) asking students to write the story individually by telling them that they have the right to decide how and what is the end of the story. In this way, students quickly come to realize that these sessions are not just fun and games but really count; 6) asking students to revise their draft on content and organization using the revising guide, 7) giving students a chance to edit their writing in terms of grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation using editing guide; and 8) publishing the students' revision and completed versions by reading aloud the story at the end of the session in front of the class.

Suggestions

Seeing the benefits of using unfinished story in teaching and learning of writing narrative texts, it is suggested that English teachers use this strategy as an alternative way in English instruction in addition to other strategies and create the student-centered instructions. It is also recommended that English teacher use another strategy of cooperative learning as a learning strategy to enhance the students' competence not only in writing but also in the three other language skills.

To the future researcher, particularly those who have the same problem and are interested in conducting research, it is suggested that they use this activity in the same field in their research or on the teaching of three other language skills. In listening, for example, students can hear the different parts of a text, and then exchange information with others in order to complete a task. The student can report the task orally or in a written form.

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