

IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING ABILITY THROUGH STORYBOARD

Miftahul Janah

English Department, STKIP Muhammadiyah Pringsewu
email: metha25krucie@gmail.com

Abstract

This study is a classroom action research which intended to improve students' writing ability through Storyboard. The participants were the fourth semester students of English Department of STKIP Muhammadiyah Pringsewu in academic year 2014/2015. The instruments used in collecting data were observation, questionnaire, and documents. Observation is used to know what is really happening in the class and the condition when the class activity is taking place. Questionnaire is used to know the students' perception towards Storyboard in improving their writing ability, and documents is used to get students' written texts. Then, 1) assembling the data, 2) coding the data, 3) comparing the data, 4) building meanings and interpretations, and 5) reporting the outcomes, are the steps in analyzing the data. Having analyzed the data, it was found that there was improvement of the students' activeness in writing activity and in writing ability.

Keywords: Storyboard, Improving Writing, Writing ability.

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing (as one of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing) has always formed part of the syllabus in the teaching of English. However, it can be used for a variety of purposes, ranging from being merely a 'backup' for grammar teaching to a major syllabus strand in its own right, where mastering the ability to write effectively is seen as a key objective for learners (Harmer, 2004).

Writing skills are specific abilities which help writers put their thoughts into

words in a meaningful form and to mentally interact with the message. Learning how to write in a second language is one of the most challenging aspects of second language learning (Richards, 2003). He adds that writing has been identified as one of the essential process skills, because writing is seen as a product constructed from the writer's command of grammatical and lexical knowledge, and writing development is considered to be the result of imitating and manipulating models provided by the

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teacher. For others, writing is an intricate structure that can only be learned by developing the ability to manipulate lexis and grammar (Richard, 2003).

Many students get difficulty in writing. For many years the teaching of writing focused on the written product rather than on the writing process. In other words, the students' attention was directed to the what rather than the how of text construction (Harmer, 2004). Brown (2001) states that the process of writing requires an entirely different set of competencies and is fundamentally different from speaking. The permanence and distance of writing, coupled with its unique rhetorical conventions, indeed make writing as different from speaking. Brown adds that written products are often the result of thinking, drafting, and revising procedures that require specialized skills, skills that not every speaker develops naturally.

There is no an excellent writer. Writing clearly takes more effort than speaking clearly, and it can be a more intimidating experience. Getting an idea across requires writing that is well organized, specific in expression, and appropriate for for the recipient or audience (Sova, 2004). Well-written paragraph has three separate parts: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a

concluding sentence. In addition to organization, writing in English must also have the characteristics of coherence, cohesion, and unity (Boardman & Frydenberg, 2008). To make a good writing, Sova (2004) adds that the writers should do a role-play and pretend to be their reader when placing words on paper. If they find the explanation unclear, so will their reader.

Barkley, Cross, & Major (2005) states that most of English teachers expand their students to be able master all of skill of English, especially writing skill, because writing is a way where students can express their mind, and their feeling. Nevertheless, some students are extremely unconfident and unenthusiastic writers. There may be many reasons for this: perhaps they have never written much in their first language. Perhaps they think that they do not have anything to say and cannot come up with ideas (Harmer, 2009).

Hidi & Boscolo (2007) says that a major problem in writing instruction is students' lack of motivation to write. This problem may be due to both the difficulty and the limited attractiveness of certain demanding academic genres and writing tasks. Motivation is so broad a research field that it is difficult to analyze its various aspects.

With students like this who lack familiarity or confidence with writing (or indeed enthusiasm for it) the teacher needs to spend some time building the writing habit—that is making students feel comfortable as writers in English and so gaining their willing participation in more creative or extended activities (Harmer, 2004). Brown adds as a facilitator, the teacher offers guidance in helping students to engage in the thinking process of composing but, in a spirit of respect for student opinion, must not impose his or her own thoughts on student writing. As a teacher, guide, and facilitator to help students to revise and refine their work before final submission will help give them confidence in their work (2001).

One way of doing this, according to Harmer (2009), is to give them interesting and enjoyable tasks to do. The teachers need to be ready with enough suggestions to make sure the students can never say I can't think of anything to write. So that teachers are demanded to be able choose the technique or strategy that can help students learn easier to improve their writing skill.

Teachers must have a capability to teach with the best strategy or technique for the student. As a mediator for transferring knowledge to the students

teacher must have a good strategy, method or media in teaching. Mackey (in Bustami, 2011) says that method is very important in language teaching analysis because language teaching is partly determined by the different principles of language analysis and the method itself determines to a large extent the teaching techniques. He adds that the method used by teachers has often been said to be the cause of success or failure in language teaching.

One of the supporters to achieve the success of learning process technique is Storyboard. Storyboard help students to write with confidence and enthusiasm. It is like Harmer (2009) point out that if students are given a model of story through picture, it is easy to come up with their own slightly different version because pictures can provide stimulation for writing—habit activities. Students can describe pictures or write descriptions of the pictures that have given for them or they can tell the story reconstruction activities where students have to build up a story from a set of that pictures.

Fletcher & Munns (2005) says that the picture stories in Storyboard provide students with a visual springboard for various activities, which give opportunities for discussion, storybuilding, sequencing, vocabulary

development, role play, project work and creative writing. Good animation and good design never saved a bad story. Strong characters can make a weak story tolerable and a good story better, but characters develop within a story context (Beiman, 2007).

Good writing leaves a lot to the reader's imagination. Each reader creates their individual pictures of the settings and the characters' appearances based on information that the author provides. Author and reader collaborate to create the story. Beiman (2007) adds that a good character can be developed from a story. A good character can inspire the story. There are three types of story or 'genres' in Storyboard: human interest, reportage and comedy. Human interest stories (such as Gap year and Mother Theresa) present interesting 'true life' stories about ordinary and extra-ordinary people. Reportage stories (such as Earthquake hits city and Iceland and Cuba) are semi-authentic newspaper reports which link easily to genuine news events. Comedy stories (such as UFO story and Dinner disaster) are light-hearted stories or anecdotes which may or may not be entirely true (Fletcher & Munns, 2005). All of the stories are interesting in themselves and stimulate discussion. The related activities give plenty of language input and

opportunities for controlled and free practice. This study used those stories in building the students' writing habit to improve their writing capability.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study is about an action research. This classroom action research had been conducted in the fourth semester. According to Fraenkel et.al (2012), action research is conducted by one or more individuals or groups for the purpose of solving a problem or obtaining information in order to inform local practice. Mills (in Creswell, 2008) states that action research designs are systematic procedures done by teachers (or other individuals in an educational setting) to gather information about, and subsequently improve, the ways their particular educational setting operates, their teaching, and their student learning. Educators aim to improve the practice of education by studying issues or problems they face. Educators reflect about these problems, collect and analyse data, and implement changes based on their findings. There were two cycles in this study, and each cycle had same procedure when conducting the action in the class, they are *the planning step*, *the implementing step*, and *the observing*

step. The model of action research according to Suharsimi (2010):

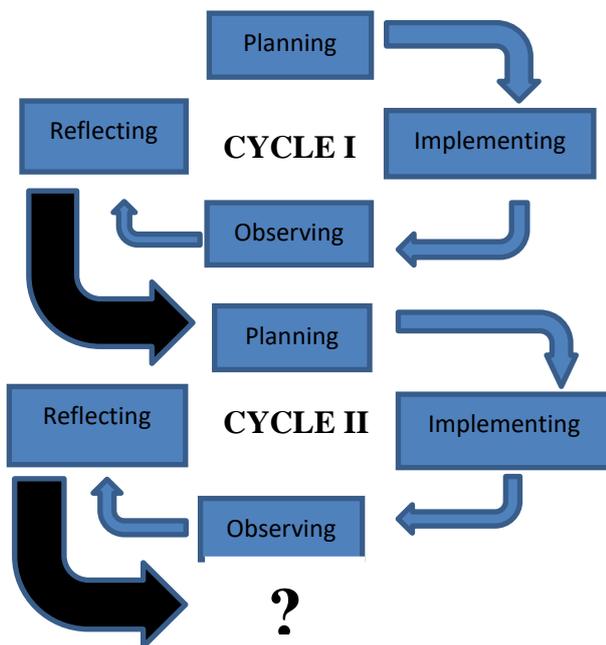


Figure 1: Action Research Model

The method that used in this research was including data collecting technique and data analyzing technique. Both of them was conducted based on the procedures of methodologist. In collecting data, it used test, observation, and questionnaire. Test was administered to know the students' improvement in every meeting. This test is writing test in essay form with command make a text individually. After explained about the material, students will be asked to work in group but write the text individually. Having wrote the text, the researcher will observe their writing result.

Besides doing the test, the researcher also did class observation. Observation is more than just looking and

seeing. Observation has an important role not only for classroom research but also more generally for supporting the professional growth of teachers and in the process of school development.

To observe the action research, according to Suharsimi, (2010), this study used the observation sheet consisting of three points: 1) The aspect of students' discussion activity which divided into two points; student as a leader of the group, and students as a member of the group. 2) The aspect of learning condition when the discussion activity is taking place. 3) The aspect of smooth running of discussion activity; how the students get learning sources, how the students make a conclusion and close the discussion. In scoring, in Hughes (2003) had been used. The scoring system is as follows:

Content	: 13-30
Organization	: 7-20
Vocabulary	: 7-20
Language use	: 5-25
Mechanics	: 2- 5
TOTAL	: 100

Then, Questionnaire used to know the students' perception towards Storyboard in building their writing habit to improve their writing ability. To administered the questionnaire, this study will use questionnaire sheet.

In analyzing the data, the writer adapted steps of analysing Action Research data which is proposed by Burn (2010). The researcher analyzed the improvement of students' writing ability by identifying appropriate data analysis and data interpreting technique. The data that had been collected was analyzed and synthesized both qualitatively and quantitatively. The result of observation was analyzed qualitatively by categorising and inductive coding. Inductive coding means that we look at the data from the perspectives of people closely involved in the research context and analyze their opinions and views exactly as we find them. Then, the data of students' activity in group was analyzed too. While the result of test and questionnaire were analyzed and synthesized quantitatively by using numerical scale.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

There were 2 cycles of this study consisted of three meeting of each cycle. Then, there were 11 groups in every meeting consisted of three members of each group.

In this study, the Steps of Teaching Writing by Storyboard were: *First*, students work in group. The group is consisting of three students. They will taking turns to show their storyboard and

describing ideas for the paper that each group intends to write. As each student describes his or her ideas, the other group takes notes, asks questions, and makes suggestions.

Second, the researcher will give another storyboard and ask each student conducts research for the individual paper for each part. They must keep an eye open for material that might prove useful to the group. *Third*, students write their papers individually.

Forth, within each group, students exchange paper drafts for collecting and summarizing the story chronologies. The leader of each group should represent to present about his/ her story result. *Fifth*, all of the group submitted their story paper to the researcher to correct their writing mistakes.

Sixth, all of the group repair their writing paper and attach the researcher's improvement form to the final draft and submit it to the researcher for evaluation, and *Seventh*, after meeting for one cycle, students work with the same activity as before in a group.

In cycle 1 only 23 % students were active in group activity. It could be seen during the activity. Some students in the groups were not active while some other students enjoyed learning in group. The percentage of students who got good

score on writing was 31 % (10 students). Therefore, the teacher had motivated them to be active.

In cycle 2, their writing was better than the first cycle. The percentage of students' active in writing activity was 71%. It was proven by their behavior in group activity. They were more active to be involved in learning activity. Most of the students could elaborate their writing and make it relevant to topic but lacks detail. However, there were still a few students were not motivated in learning. Then, any students who did not focus in learning; when they were learning, they giggled and teased their friends.

28% students got excellent to very good score. 62 % students got good to average score, and only 10% who got fair to poor score. It meant that most of students improve their writing ability, although they still had a little difficulty in making fluent expression and organized text well. The following table is the sum up of the improvement of students' writing ability from pre-observation to cycle 2.

Table 1 The Improvement of Students' Writing Ability

	Improvement
Pre-Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students were confused to express their idea - Students lacked vocabulary - It was difficult for students to write the correct sentences. - Students' word/ idiom form were poor and grammatical errors almost entirely in their writing
Cycle 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students tried to express their ideas - Mechanics, Grammatical Error and inappropriate vocabulary still dominated students' writing - Some students had adequate vocabularies but others still lacked vocabulary - A few students expressed their ideas fluently - Some of students could not organized the writing well and had limited subject
Cycle 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students vocabulary was occasional error - Students still made grammatical error and inappropriate prepositions in their writing but the meaning not obscured - Only some students write fluently, the others had loosely organized but main ideas stand out - All of students could make a text well but they found difficulties in using tense constantly.

4. CONCLUSION

The Steps of Teaching Critical Writing by Using Peer-Editing Technique:

- a. *First*, students work in group. The group is consisting of three students. They will taking turns to show their

- storyboard and describing ideas for the paper that each group intends to write. As each student describes his or her ideas, the other group takes notes, asks questions, and makes suggestions.
- b. *Second*, the researcher will give another storyboard and ask each student conducts research for the individual paper for each part. They must keep an eye open for material that might prove useful to the group.
 - c. *Third*, students write their papers individually.
 - d. *Forth*, within each group, students exchange paper drafts for collecting and summarizing the story chronologies. The leader of each group should represent to present about his/her story result.
 - e. *Fifth*, all of the group submitted their story paper to the researcher to correct their writing mistakes.
 - f. *Sixth*, all of the group repair their writing paper and attach the researcher's improvement form to the final draft and submit it to the researcher for evaluation,
 - g. and *Seventh*, after meeting for one cycle, students work with the same activity as before in a group.

Having analyzed the result of the research from the first cycle to the second

cycle, it was known that Storyboard could be implemented well in the fourth semester students of English Education Department of STKIP-MPL in academic year 2014/ 2015. It could improve students' writing ability. In cycle 1 only 63 % students were active ingroup activity. It could be seen during the activity. Some students in the groups were not active while some other students enjoyed learning in group. In cycle 1, the percentage of students who got good score on writing was 31 % (10 students), the others got fair to poor score.

In cycle 2, 28% students got excellent to very good score. 62 % students got good to average score, and only 10% who got fair to poor score. Then, the percentage of students' active in writing activity in cycle 2 was 71%. It was proven by their behavior in group activity. They were more active to be involved in learning activity. So it means that Storyboard could build students' writing habit so that their ability in writing had improved.

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