Developing Students' Writing Skill on Narrative Text Using Guided Composition Technique (GCT):

An Action Research

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Abstract

The study aims to describe the development of the students' writing skill through the implementation of Guided Composition Technique (GCT) learning approach. This research is a Classroom Action Research consisting of three cycles. The subject of this research was 31 eighth grade students of SMPN 1 Borobudur of the academic year 2013/2014. The data were collected from the result of group task, observation, analysis of students' work and interview. The obtained data were analyzed qualitatively in three steps of data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. The results that there were many problems faced by the students in developing their writing skill which can be classified into five aspects: grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, organization and content. The implementation of GCT learning technique could develop their writing skill. It was found that the average score gained by the students using guided words or phrases constructions was 70.06, guided questions was 75.90, and guided picture was 76.26. The guided picture was the favourite one. On the students' motivation in learning English, there was improvement from cycle to cycle. In the first cycle there were 63.55% students having good motivation. Whereas the second and third cycle, there were 74.52% and 90% students getting good motivation. Between 250-300 words; must focus on: aims of the study, methods, findings, conclusions, and implications.

Keywords: _action research, guided composition, technique, writing skill_

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Background

Writing is complex activity; it not only combines the words into sentence but also arranges the sentences or paragraphs into readable and meaningful text. Writing, in fact, is an activity that involves the thinking process then it will be applied visually in form of written text. Harmonious text reflects harmonious thinking process.

According to Badger and White (2000), there are four main stages in product approach namely familiarization, controlled writing, guided writing, and free writing. The four stages are arranged from the simple to complex one. Thus, teacher should consider the students' level before applying certain stage of writing.

Based on a limited observation of the students' writing product in a Junior High School, it is found that the texts made by the students have not fulfilled the criteria of a good text. The students still face some problems such as the difficulties in developing their idea into appropriate English writing text, the use of incorrect grammar, the inappropriate choice of words, and in arranging words into good and meaningful sentence.

Considering the problems above, the teacher should put some efforts to find the best way in helping the students' writing. One of the alternatives is by guiding the students in writing their text. It is hoped that using suitable guide and method, the students will be able to develop their writing skills.

Literature Review

English Writing Competence

Nunan (1989) clarifies that writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control of a number of variables simultaneously. At the sentence level, those include control of content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and letter formation. Beside the sentence, the writer must be able to structure and integrate information into cohesive and coherent paragraph and text.

Furthermore, Heffernan and Lincoln (1986) state that good writing requires a working knowledge of grammar refinement of the basic or instinctive knowledge. It is more than the act of obeying grammatical rules. It is also the art of using rhetoric of arranging words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs in such a way as to engage and sustain the reader's attention.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that writing is a means of communication which pays close attention to its content, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and letter formation in its development. Besides, the writing process also pays attention to the step of planning, drafting, revising, editing and making final draft.

Development of Writing Competence

The development of writing can be observed as early as when children first try to hold writing tools such as a pencil or a pen and then they draw or scrabble something. They want to communicate something by drawing and scrabbling. Those activities can help them express their opinion which can further help them learn to write something. The activities of drawing and scrabbling are the early stages of writing development by which they can stimulate the motor skill to write something readable. When the children enter school, they try to learn to make sentences. They need their parents or teachers' guidance to develop their writing skill. In this stage, the children will also learn the orthographic knowledge of writing. Besides, the learning of phonetic forms and spelling are important. When they grow older, they may be familiarized with the process of writing such as planning, editing, and revising text.

According to Brown (2001), "there are quite number of salient and relevant differences between spoken and written language." On the same idea of difference between

spoken and written language, Harmer (2005:3) contends that "spoken language for a child is acquired naturally as a result of being exposed to it, whereas the ability to write has to be consciously learned."

Previously, writing was only used by rulers of church and government. Later on, the people thought that they need writing. They realized that writing and reading were the vital things to run the bureaucracy. Besides, they thought that writing was also needed for their own progress. Not only needed to handle the government's business, writing is also needed in educational institutions.

Because of its important role for people, writing is now being developed. However, to develop the writing competence, learners should firstly consider the characteristics of written language. Brown (303-306 and 341-342) classifies characteristics of written language into the following points; permanence, productive time, distance, orthography, complexity, vocabularity, and formality. Permanence deals with the students' ability to reread the words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or the complete text. Productive time means that the writer has time limitation. Some writing processes have appropriate stretches of time. Addition to time, distance can also be a constraint in writing. The distance between the writer and their audience will be the problem in writing, The next point according to Brown is orthography. Orthography is used for correct or standard spelling. It is more likely to be used for alphabetic writing than for syllabic writing. Besides, compared to spoken language, written language is more complex, needs more vocabularies, and is more formal.

To support the development of writing competence, teacher needs to consider the five principal types as Brown (2001: 343-346) advices. The first is imitative or writing down. At the early stage of developing writing competence, students imitate or write down English letters, words, and sentences to learn the convention of the orthographic code. The second type is intensive or controlled. The intensive writing usually occurs in controlled exercise of written grammar. The third is self-writing. Self-writing is writing with only the self in thought as an audience. Display writing is the fourth type. At school, the students can display their writings which cover their short answer exercises, essay examination, and report of the research.The last type is real writing. Real writing refers to the writing based on genuine information. Real writing can be in the forms of actual forms, diaries, real letters, post cards, notes, and personal messages.

Teaching and Learning Process of English

Teaching is a dynamic process involving teachers and students in meaningful and collaborative efforts in which the teachers modify the instruction to the needs of individual students carefully (Scarcella and Oxford, 1992: 3-4). It means that the process of teaching cannot be free from the process of learning. Both activities are related to one another. If there is process of writing, there will be a process of learning.

It is important for the teacher to develop teaching model in a teaching and learning process. Richards (2006: 215-216) sates that in teaching language, the teaching models are often based on particular methods or approaches such as the communicative approach, the cooperative learning model, the process approach, and the whole language approach. The model of teaching is based on the teaching philosophy which can be used to help teachers to select teaching methods, activities and materials, purpose, and criteria for evaluating the teaching and learning process.

Teaching of Writing

Taufik Nugroho and Hafrizon (2009:2-3) propose an idea of some areas of teaching,

"Within methodology a distinction is often made between methods and approaches, in which methods are held to be fixed teaching systems with prescribed techniques and practices, whereas approaches represent language teaching philosophies that can be interpreted and applied in a variety of different ways in the classroom. This distinction is probably most usefully seen as defining a continuum of entities ranging from highly prescribed methods to loosely described approaches."

In a teaching and learning process, it is important for the teacher to develop teaching model. Richards (2006: 215-216) states that the programs of language teaching and teaching models are often based on particular methods or approaches.

According to Scarcella and Oxford (1992), there are some factors affecting the development of writing skill, namely need and purpose, motivation, authenticity, culture and linguistics experience, background knowledge, skill and reading ability. Scarcella and Oxford (1992: 117-120) also explain that to develop the skill of writing students need some competences: (1) grammatical competence, (2) sociolinguistics, (3) discourse competence (to be used to arrange a text cohesively and coherently), and (4) strategic competence, which enables the writer to develop her/his ability to write effectively.

Narrative Text

Gerot & Wignell (1994:196) contends that "Narrative is a kind of text that is used to amuse, entertain or to deal with actual or vicarious past experience in different ways; narrative deal with events and which lead to a crisis or turning points of some kind, which in turn find a resolution."

Larsen (1993:21) says that narrative is an account of events. In similar point of view, Derewianka (1995:17) explains that narrative is a kind of text dealing with events that are problematic and which lead to a crisis or turning point of some kind. Aspect of setting dealing with character and situation are important for orienting the reader or listener.

Motivation

Gottfried (1990:525) explains that motivation is an enjoyment of learning characterized by a mastery orientation, curiosity, persistence, task endogen, and the learning of challengee. Turner (1995:413) considers motivation to be synonymous with cognitive engagement, which he defined as "voluntary uses of high level self-regulated learning strategies, such as paying attention, connection, planning, and monitoring."

Notoadmojo (2005) mentions that there are three ways to measure motivation. The first way is projection test; the projection test that is mostly known is Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) is used to know what people think, so they should give stimulus that can be interpreted. The second way is questionnaire. One of the instruments in measuring motivation is to ask the client to fill the question that contain indicators to be used to know the motivation. Behavioral observation is the next way. By this way, the teachers create a certain situation as one of the ways to measure motivation. Students' learning indicators that are usually used in the observation are:

a) The motivation of the students to listen teacher's explanation covering: students' attention to teacher's explanation, students' question about the material, their comment on the material, their answer the teacher's question, and the notes they make.

b) The motivation of students during learning process. The indication of the students' motivation is that the students have spirit in learning process, involve in learning process, and can understand the material.

The motivation of students in doing the task given by the teacher. The students willingly and eagerly do and finish the given tasks.

Methodology

This study belongs to a Classroom Action Research (CAR). Carr and Kemmis (1986) as cited by Parker and Waters-Adams (2006) describe action research as being about the improvement of practice, of the understanding of practice, and of the situation in which the practice occurs. There were three cycles conducted in this study. The participants were students of grade VIII of SMPN Borobudur. The data were collected from questionnaire, documentation, observations, interviews, and test. The quantitative data were analyzed by defining the mean score, while the qualitative ones were analyzed using Mile and Huberman's model covering data collection, data condensation, data display and conclusion drawing.

Findings and Discussion

The Development of the Students' Writing

In the cycle 1, the researcher found that almost all of the students had low writing skill. It could be seen from the score they gained. The average score they got only 70.06. It was far from the minimum achievement criteria, that was 75. The students were also less motivated to develop their writing skill. Only 63.55% students had good motivation to develop their writing skills.

Some problems were found in this cycle such as incorrect grammar, spelling, inappropriate preposition, and also mistyping. On the students' motivation, some of the students did not pay enough attention to the teacher's explanation, did not make note, had low spirit, were less active and couldn't finish the task within a given time.

The guided composition technique was then implemented in cycle 2. Through the help of pictures and teacher's guidance, there was improvement in cycle 2. Based on the results of cycle 2, the researcher found that more students showed improvement in their writing skill. It could be seen from the score they gained. The average score they got was 75.90. It was above the minimum achievement criteria, which were 75. The students' motivation also started to develop. 74.52% of the students showed higher motivation to develop their writing skills.

However, there were few problems in cycle 2. Some of the students still made some mistakes on grammar. Students could not differentiate the passive from active sentence yet. They used unproper preposition too but there were significant development in using grammar and everything related to the other syntactical rules. The average score they gained started to rise from 70.06 to 75.90. It could be said that the problems faced by the students in writing narrative text were reduced.

In cycle 3, the researcher found that almost all of the students showed improvement in their writing skill. It could be seen from the score they gained. The average score they got was 76.42. It was above the minimum achievement criteria. Twenty four 24 or 77.42% students passed the minimum achievement criteria.

In cycle 3, there were fewer problems related to the students' writing skill and students' motivation. From the data, the researcher could say that some of students made some mistakes on grammar. The average score they gained was 76.42. It could be said that the problems faced by the students in writing narrative text had been solved. The students' learning motivation in the cycle 3 was also higher. About 90% students had good motivation to join the teaching and learning process.

After conducting the Classroom Action Research, it can be seen from the data gathered that every cycle had different result. In the first cycle there were still many problems faced by the students both in developing their writing skills and motivation. In the second cycle, those problems started to be reduced. In the third cycle, those problems had been solved well. It can be seen from table 1 below.

Table1.
Result of Students' Writing Skill of All Cycles

Assessment Aspect	Average Score			Development		
	C1	C2	C3	C 1 – C2	C 2 – C3	C 1 – C3
Average	70.06	75.90	76.42	5.84	0.52	6.36

The data above show that the students' average score of first cycle was 70.06. With this score, they belonged to good category but it was under the minimum achievement criteria. The average score of cycle 2 was increased, that was 75.90. It meant that the treatment and action in cycle 2 succeeded to reach the minimum criteria. The average score belonged to good category. Finally the, the average score in cycle 3 increased up to 76.42. It belonged to good category.

Table 2.
The Result of Students' Motivation of All Cycles

o	Behavioral Types	Observation Focus	C ycle 1 (%)	C ycle 2 (%)	C ycle 3 (%)
.	The motivation of the students to listen to the teacher's explanation	1. The students pay attention to the teacher's explanation	6 4.52	7 4.19	8 0.64
		2. The students ask questions about the material	4 8.39	6 4.52	8 0.64
		3. The students comment on material	3 2.26	4 8.39	8 0.64
		4. The students answer the teacher's question	7 4.19	8 3.87	9 6.77
		5. The students make some notes	8 0.64	9 0.32	1 00

.	The motivation of the students during the writing activities (on narrative text)	6. The students have spirit in writing narrative text	58.06	64.52	90.32
		7. The students involved in writing the text	51.61	64.52	90.32
		8. The students understand the material	64.52	77.42	80.64
.	The motivation of the students in doing the task given by the teacher.	9. The students do the task	83.87	87.10	100
		10. The students finish the task and test within a given time	77.42	90.32	100
Average			63.55	74.52	90

Table 2 above shows that there was some progress from the first to the second and the third cycle. In the first cycle, 63.55% of the students had good motivation. It belonged to medium category. There was development in the second cycle. About 74.52% of the students had good motivation in learning writing skill. It still belonged to medium category. Finally the third cycle showed very good development where 90% of the students had good motivation in writing narrative text. It was included in high category.

Conclusion

Considering the results of the three cycles, it can be concluded that students' writing can be improved through appropriate technique. The problems appearing in the first cycle could be reduced after the writer implemented the guided technique. Cycle 2 showed more improvement in students' writing. Cycle 3 revealed the more reduced problems faced by the students in writing narrative text. Through proper guidance using appropriate media such as pictures, the writer succeeded in helping the students improve the quality of their text as well as their motivation.

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