IMPLEMENTING TASK BASED LEARNING TO IMPROVE STUDENTS’ WRITING SKILL

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Abstract
This research aims at identifying how the implementation of Task Based Learning can improve students’ writing skill on news item text; and describing the class climate when Task Based Learning is implemented in the writing class. The method used in this research is a collaborative action research which was conducted in two cycles at the tenth of SMA Batik 1 Surakarta from April 2013 to May 2013, in which in the first cycle there were 3 meetings and in the second cycle there were 2 meetings. Each cycle consisted of four steps: planning, implementing, observation, and reflection. The research data were collected by using documents, observation, interviews, field notes, photographs, and tests. The qualitative data were analyzed through collecting the data, reducing the data, presenting the data, and drawing conclusion. The quantitative data were analyzed by comparing the mean score of the pre-test and the post-test. The research findings show that Task Based Learning could improve students’ writing skill and classroom climate of English class. The mean score had the improvement from pre-test 54.09 to 70.89 in the post-test 1, and 77.86 in post test 2.
Keywords: writing skill, Task Based Learning, students

Abstrak
Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi bagaimana penggunaan Task Based Learning dapat meningkatkan kemampuan menulis siswa dalam text news item; dan dapat menggambarkan suasana kelas ketika Task Based Learning diaplikasikan ke dalam kelas menulis. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah penelitian tindakan kolaboratif yang dilakukan dalam dua siklus pada siswa kelas X SMA Batik 1 Surakarta dari April 2013 sampai Mei 2013, dimana pada siklus pertama terdapat 3 pertemuan dan pada siklus kedua terdapat 2 pertemuan. Setiap siklus terdiri dari empat langkah: perencanaan, pelaksanaan, observasi, dan refleksi. Data penelitian dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan dokumen, observasi, wawancara, catatan lapangan dan buku harian, foto, dan tes. Data kualitatif dianalisis melalui pengumpulan data, pengurangan atau penyaringan data, pengolahan data, dan penyimpulan hasil. Data kuantitatif dianalisis dengan membandingkan nilai rata-rata dari pre-test
INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the skills that should be mastered by English learners besides listening, reading, and speaking. By writing, someone can express their ideas and communicate their ideas to others freely in written form. Bell and Burnaby in Nunan (1998: 6) state 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 these include control of content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and letter formation. Beyond the sentence, the writer must be able to structure and integrate information into cohesive and coherent paragraph and texts.

Based on the school curriculum (KTSP) 2006, the students in senior high school are expected to be able to write various kinds of text examples: descriptive, narrative, procedure, recount, news item, report, analytical exposition, hortatory exposition, explanation, spoof, and review. Especially, for students at the tenth grade they study about narratives, procedures, and news items. So in writing the text, students should also be expected to be able to write in good organization, proper vocabulary, right language use and punctuation.

Based on the preliminary observation, the researcher found some facts about students' writing skills and their problems. Those problems were as follows: 1) the students wrote some inappropriate words; 2) the students were only able to write text with limited numbers of sentences; 3) the students wrote texts that are often inaccurate in spelling and punctuation; 4) the students wrote the text grammatically incorrect; 5) the students wrote the text that were not suitable with topic or content which teachers asked; 6) the students found difficulty in organizing ideas well besides, the classroom situation also was not interested, it can be seen from: (1) the students spent a long time to start and finish writing; (2) some students looked sleepy during the lesson; (3) some students did not submit their tasks.
in the same way as the other students’ work; (4) the students did not pay attention to the teacher and did another activity like chatting, drawing, or sleeping than writing a text; (5) the writing class was not alive because less of participation of the students.

Those problems can be caused by some factors, such as follow: 1) the lack of knowledge of the students related to the lesson; 2) the lack of students’ interest in writing; 3) the lack of students’ ability in mastering language competence; 4) the lack of students’ quantity in writing practice outside school time; 5) the lack of students’ involvement in writing activity.

The problem also came from the teacher. Mostly the teacher just gave brief explanation and asked the students to write a text same as what he explained before. The teachers also didn’t consider what method or techniques which are appropriate for the students. He often used traditional method and techniques in teaching English. So, the writing activities were tending to be monotonous.

According to the content standard which is developed by BSNP (2006), the English teaching of Senior High School in Indonesia is aimed at making the students develop several competences. They are: 1) developing students’ oral and written competence to achieve the informational competence which makes it possible for the students to access various knowledge 2) developing students’ awareness of the importance of English in improving Indonesia’s competence at the world’s level 3) developing students’ understanding on the relationship between cultures and language.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher tried to find the solution which can solve the problem. There are many strategies can be used by the teacher for example by using appropriate teaching technique and method. One of appropriate method which can solve the students problem in writing is Task Based Learning.

Task Based Learning is one of ways of teaching which offers students’ material which they have to actively engage in the process of teaching learning in order to achieve a goal or complete a task, and it focuses on the use of task as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching. Richard and Roger
(2001:223) state that Task Based Learning or Task-Based Instruction is a logical development of teaching because its built on several principles that become part of language teaching.

Prabhu in Nunan (1998:38) stating in Task Based Learning, the tasks are central to the learning activity. He also states that task is an activity which requires learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allows teacher to control and regulate that process. Moreover, Skehan in Richard and Roger (2001:224) gives statement that tasks are activities that have meaning as their primary focus. Success in task is evaluated in term of achievement of an outcome, and tasks generally bear some resemblance to real-life language use.

The TBL framework consists of three main phrases, provides 3 basic conditions for language learning. These are pre-task, task-cycle and language focus.

1) Pre-task: introduces the class to the topic and the task activating topic-related words and phrases.

2) Task Cycle: offers learners the chance to use whatever language they already know in order to carry out the task and then to improve their language under the teacher's guidance while planning their reports on the task. Task Cycle offers learners a holistic experience of language in use.

There are three components of a task cycle:

a) Task: Learners use whatever language they can master, working simultaneously, in pairs or small groups to achieve goals of the task.

b) Planning: Comes after the task and before the report, forming the central part of the cycle. The teacher's role here is that of a language adviser. Learners plan their reports effectively and maximize their learning opportunities.

c) Report: is the natural condition of the task cycle. In this stage learners tell the class about their findings. So the report stage gives students a natural stimulus to upgrade and improve their language.
It presents a very real linguistic challenge to communicate clearly and accurately in language appropriate to the circumstances.

3) Language Focus: allows a closer study of some of the specific features naturally occurring in the language used during the task cycle. Learners examine the language forms in the text and look in detail at the use and the meaning of lexical items they have noticed (Willis, 1996: 75). Language focus has two components:

a) Analysis: Analysis activities draw attention to the surface forms, realizing the meanings learners have already become familiar with during the task cycle and so help them to systematize their knowledge and broaden their understanding. Instead of the teacher presenting language to learners as new analysis activities, learners reflect on the language already experienced.

b) Practise: Practise activities are based on features of language that have already occurred in previous texts and transcripts or in features that have just been studied in analysis activities.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research was action research. This classroom research was conducted in SMA Batik 1 Surakarta that is located on Jln. Slamet Riyadi 445 Surakarta. This senior high school already uses KTSP (*Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan*) as the basis of the teaching and learning process.

The researcher used action research as method of research. Carr and Kemmisin Burns (1998: 30) that action research is a form of collective self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situation in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of this practices and the situation in which these practices are carried out. She wanted to know whether or not and to what extent Task Based Learning can improve students’ writing skill.
Action research consists of five steps. Those steps are planning, implementing, observing reflecting, and revising. For the qualitative data, the researcher were used interactive model analysis by Miles and Hubberman that consists of collecting the data, reducing the data, presenting the data, and drawing conclusion. The quantitative data of the research were collected by tests: pre-test and post test.

**RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The research was conducted at the tenth grade of SMA Batik 1 Surakarta. Before doing the research, the researcher did the preliminary research and pre-test to identify the problem that the students faced in English language. Based on the pre-research the researcher found that almost all of the students have many difficulties in the writing subject. The result of pre-test was the students got mean score 54.09, it could not pass the passing grade of writing. Based on the problem found by pre-research, then the researcher chose to implement Task Based Learning in teaching writing to the students to solve the problem.

The research was implemented in several stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. In implemented Task Based Learning, researcher prepared three activities for pre-task, main task and post-task. The material was taken from book, LKS, internet, etc. The lesson plan was made for each meeting. The researcher planned three meetings in the first cycle. Besides prepared lesson plans, she also copied some worksheets for the students and teaching aids to support the teaching learning process. Then for media and materials which would be used, researcher prepared pictures, video, and text from internet. For the task types which were chosen were considered to improve students’ writing skill. The last thing was prepared was the pre-test and post-test. Pre-test was used to identify students’ knowledge related to the topic. And post-test would be used to identify the students’ writing skill improvement during the implementation of Task Based Learning in the cycle one.

The acting and observing was conducted simultaneously. The research was conducted three meetings. At the beginning, the researcher used brainstorming to introduce and connect the students about their knowledge and the topic of the
tasks that they would do. In the first meeting, the researcher gave the tasks which concerned more on the introducing of news item text like the form of the text, language feature of the text, language use of the text, and the specific content of the text before the students were asked to write the text by themselves.

In the second meeting the researcher reflected the previous meeting to remember the students about the news item. Then the researcher just gave explanation more about news item in details because the time were limited. In the third meeting, the researcher used video to make the students more interest with the activity. The students were asked to make the news item based on the news on the video. They had to do the task and discuss it in groups. While the students did the task, the researcher was going around to the class to monitor the task activity and help them when the students had difficulty in doing the task. In post task, the researcher asked some students to write the result of the group work on the board and discussed it together. Then the researcher gave a little correction and explanation about the task that had been done by the students in group. Before ended the class, the researcher gave homework to students to find the news from video or television or radio and made the news item from it by themselves.

From the reflection the cycle 1 and post test 1, the researcher found there was improvement in the mean score of students’ writing test, from pre-test 54,09 to 70,89 in post test 1. But the researcher also found that there were some weaknesses. The weaknesses had to be solved to get a better result. As a conclusion, the researcher revised the plan for the next cycle so that the weaknesses would not occur anymore. Based on the result of the evaluation in the cycle 1, the researcher made some improvements in applying the Task Based Learning as follows: 1) the researcher chose the topic about school things, which was more familiar with the students’ environment; 2) the researcher involved students to be a figure in the situation; 3) the researcher guided more on the students writing process.

In cycle 2, the researcher made some revisions and improvement in the lesson plan and some aspect in it, especially the use of instructional media. Even so, the planning of the action plan in cycle 2 was not totally different from in
Cycle 1. Cycle 2 consisted of 2 meetings. The first meeting, the researcher doing pre task like the researcher did in the first meeting, that was brainstorming to make the students connected with the topic and explained the task that they would do. The researcher made situation that the students were been a news writer for their school wall magazine. They had to work in pairs, that one of them was been a news writer and the other was been a resource.

In the task phase, the students did the task that have been told by the researcher in pairs. Nevertheless, the students had to make the news item individually. The researcher was going around the class to check in general the students’ work one to another. Then, in the post task phase the researcher and the students did the discussion. Some students wrote their task on the board and the others identified and corrected the work if there any mistake together. So that the students could identify their own work by themselves if them had understood about news item. In the second or last meeting, the researcher did the review about task that the students did in the previous meetings. Besides, the researcher also did the discussion to the students what their difficulties in writing were solved or not.

After did the research from cycle 1 until post test 2, the researcher found some research findings related to the using of Task Based Learning in writing class of Senior Highs School. Firstly, Task Based Learning could improve students writing skill. The improvement of students’ writing skill can be identified from the improvement of students’ writing achievement. The improvement of mean score of pre test from 54,09 to 70,89 in post test 1, and in post test 2 is 77,86. Besides, the improvements were also observed from several aspects of the compositions they produced. 1) the students were able to define the topic they choose into concrete idea; 2) they could generate suitable supporting sentences to topic sentences they wrote; 3) they could write introductory paragraph by providing general statement; 4) the students could make conclusion paragraph which reviewed the main ideas; 5) they could maintain the unity and coherence in their writing well.
Second, Task Based Learning could improve the classroom situation. The class became more alive, enjoyable, and fun. The students became more active in teaching and learning process both individually and in group. It can be shown from the learning activity that they did, most of them did the task actively. They were interested and being motivated when the researcher implemented the task based learning in writing activity. It can be reflected from their willingness to do all the task that given and moreover to have discussion session on their writing with the researcher. They wanted to make sure that their writing was correct. Their increasing motivation also can be seen from their enthusiasm in joining class discussion and from their regular attendance to the class.

The discussion is focused on using Task Based Learning in the teaching and learning of writing in SMA Batik 1 Surakarta. In this process, the researcher identified some factor causing low achievement of the students’ writing skill. The factors came from the teacher and students. The English teacher used monotonous technique in the teaching writing. Unfortunately, this technique was not suitable with the condition of the class. The students were not active in the teaching and learning process. The teacher just explained about the text which would be taught then asked the students to write it by themselves without showed the form of the text and gave them more explanation more about it. The students were passive during the teaching and learning process. They also often got bored during the lessons, so that they prefer to do other activities and they did not understand the materials which had been taught by the teacher.

After implementing the action in the first and second cycle, some points can be taken, namely: 1) Task Based Learning can improve students’ writing skill; 2) Task Based Learning can improve the teaching and learning process.

1) Task Based Learning can Improve the Students Writing Skill

From the test, it could be concluded that the Task Based Learning could improve the students writing skill. The role of Task Based Learning is to stimulate a natural desire in learners to improve their language competence by challenging them to complete meaningful tasks. Task Based Learning allowed students to manifest considerable improvement in vocabulary.
The advantages of using Task Based Learning in teaching and learning writing were:

a. Using Task Based Learning in pre-task phase could stimulate the students’ prior knowledge. Students were more focused on the particular subject materials so that it made them easier to understand the lesson. By did pre-task phase which contains introducing the topic language, brainstorming about the topic, and introducing new words related to the topic to the students made the students were more ready to do the task and made them understood about the lesson.

b. Using Task Based Learning in task cycle phase helped the students to develop their writing skill by asking the students to discuss in group.

c. Using Task Based Learning in the language focus phase provided the students with an overall explanation about the text and helped the teacher to assess the students’ skill in writing text.

2) Task Based Learning can Improve the Teaching and Learning Situation

Task Based Learning made the classroom situation was more alive because of the application of various activities during the teaching and learning process. Activities such as discussing text, making sentences, interviewing friends, watching video, reporting the work, and making school events report were interesting and therefore motivating for the students to use the language. The students became active in learning writing. They showed their contribution in the discussion well in the post task phase and participated in the teaching and learning process by giving opinion and asking some information they did not know. They enjoyed the lesson.

To support the teaching and learning process, the students’ activities were guided by worksheet applying the use of visual media. The visual media were applied in the research were in the form of newspaper and video. The using of visual media could help the students receive the materials easily. The students were more interested and enthusiastic in teaching and learning process when the researcher used the visual media. It also stated by Heinich (1996: 114) that the use of visual media is beneficial because they can provide concrete referent.
for ideas, serving as a more easily remembered to the original ideas; and they
can motivate learners by attracting their attention, generating emotional
expression and simplifying information.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

There are some advantages of implementing Task Based Learning in
teaching writing, those are: 1) Task Based Learning can improve writing
classroom into better situation; 2) Task Based Learning can rise students’
participation in writing class and it can enhance students’ writing ability; 3) Task
Based Learning can make writing class more alive, fun, and exciting; 4) Task
Based Learning can encourage students to write better.

In conclusion, the effective steps in Task Based Learning to improve the
students writing skill are giving some tasks to the students in working
individually, in pair, or in group. Conducted on giving those tasks, there were
some significant progressions made by the students. The students tend to be better
in their content, organization, language use, vocabulary, and mechanics. So, it can
concluded that Task Based Learning is able to improve the students’ writing skill
and the classroom situation during the teaching and learning process. This study
can be used as a reference for the teacher in improving the teaching quality by
applying the suitable method toward improving the students writing skill. Besides,
teacher can apply Task Based Learning can apply in the class of listening,
reading, speaking, and writing. Considering the potential of Task Based Learning
in enhancing students English skill, it is necessary for the teacher to learn about
Task Based Learning.

Based on the research findings, the researcher would like to give some
suggestion related to the teaching of writing. Writing is one of the most important
and difficult skill because it needs many aspects to someone especially students to
master it. It becomes a responsibility both teacher and students to make the
teaching and learning of writing effective. For teacher, there are many difficulties
faced by the students, therefore teacher is hoped to be able to give the appropriate
approaches or method in teaching writing. Giving tasks and homework is one of
the efforts to motivate students to practice writing English. English teacher should
give sufficient vocabulary to solve students’ lack of vocabulary. In grammar, teacher can focus on language focus. The correct mechanics, content, organization can be achieved by giving more chances to the students to write. The teacher should be able to develop the teaching learning materials that as have provided in the curriculum.

For the students, they should realize that writing is not difficult thing to do. There are many ways to make writing is fun and enjoy activity if they have desire to practice it more and more. The researcher hopes that these research findings can be used as a reference for the students to gain their writing skill. By doing some tasks that suitable with their need and interest, they can improve their writing. Thus, the students can motivate themselves to get a better achievement in writing or even the other skill. Finally, this research is expected to be useful for the other researcher particularly, and it can be alternative of additional information for the them to conduct other action research to improve students’ writing skill, or other skills such as listening skill, reading skill, and speaking skill especially students at the tenth grade of senior high school.

REFERENCES


