

The Use of Round Table Technique to Improve Students' Writing Skill

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Abstract

The objective of this article is to report a study on how Round Table Technique is implemented effectively so that it can improve students' writing skill. This study was an action research. The subject of the research was class X-7 students of SMA Negeri Kebakkramat in the academic year 2013/2014. The data were collected through observation, interview, diary, and test. The findings of the research show that when Round Table technique was used effectively, the teaching and learning process was described as: active learning, learner – centered, and the activities were taking turns to jot down phrases and group discussion. In order to implement Round Table technique effectively, there were some points to ponder to suit the students' condition and need as follows: (1) determining students' group, (2) classroom management, and (3) the adaptation to Round Table technique.

Keywords: round table technique, writing skill, action research

Tujuan dari artikel ini adalah untuk melaporkan studi tentang bagaimana teknik Round Table diimplementasikan secara efektif sehingga dapat meningkatkan kemampuan menulis siswa. Studi ini adalah penelitian tindakan. Subyek penelitian ini adalah siswa kelas X-7 SMA Negeri Kebakkramat pada tahun ajaran 2013/2014. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, diari, dan tes. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ketika teknik Round Table digunakan secara efektif, proses belajar mengajar dideskripsikan sebagai pembelajaran aktif, berbasis siswa, dan aktivitasnya adalah bergiliran menuliskan frasa dan diskusi kelompok. Untuk menerapkan teknik Round Table secara efektif, ada beberapa poin untuk dipertimbangkan untuk menyesuaikan dengan kondisi dan kebutuhan siswa sebagai berikut: (1) menentukan grup siswa, (2) manajemen kelas, dan (3) adaptasi terhadap teknik Round Table.

Kata Kunci: teknik round table, kemampuan menulis, penelitian tindakan

Writing is a language competency which is used to communicate indirectly, not face to face to others (Tarigan, 2008:3). Tarigan also says that

writing is a productive and expressive activity. Meanwhile, Brookes and Grundy (1991: 4) say that writing is a skill we must learn in order to become full and useful member of society. So, writing is a skill which must be learnt in order to communicate and become full and useful member of society.

Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan arranges the standar competence and basic competence as a reference of targeted condition which must be achieved by tenth grade students. The standard competence of writing skill states that the students must be able to express meaning in short functional text and simple essay in the form of narrative, descriptive, and news item in the daily life context. The basic competence of writing skill for tenth grade students states that the students should be able to use English in accurate, fluent, and acceptable way. In addition, the students of SMA Negeri Kebakkramat are required to reach at least 75 to meet the targeted score.

During the internship program, the researcher found that a lot of students in SMA Negeri Kebakkramat had problems in writing. They had not met the ideal condition in which the students should be able to use English in accurate, fluent, and acceptable way. The researcher also did preliminary research through observation, interview, review on students' tasks, and diary to find out the problems which the students had and the causes of the problems. The researcher then found that the students' problem on writing covered content, organizing ideas, vocabulary, and grammar. In addition, the students' score on pre – test was only 56. The students' problems in writing were caused by: lack of exercise, lack of time, lack of feedback, and technique used in teaching writing.

Concerning the problem above, the researcher planned to conduct an action research as a way to solve the problems. In order to support the classroom action research, Round Table technique is used. Round Table is a technique in which students take turns responding to a prompt by writing one or two words, phrases, or sentences before passing the paper along to others who do the same (Barkley, Cross and Major, 2005: 235).

According to Barkley, Cross and Major (2005: 245), “this CoLT encourages students to adjust their writing (in areas such as content, conventions, style, and vocabulary) as they respond and react to the comments of the writers that preceded them.” Round Table technique can be adapted into several kinds of activities. The adaptation is created to meet the goal which should be achieved by the students. David (in Barkley, Cross and Major, 2005: 244) offers several ideas that are well suited for adaptation to Round Table as follows: *Brainstorm*, *Complete “truth statements”*, *Write out a list of key points*, *Respond to a prompt*, *Jot down a few phrases*, *Construct a “storyboard”*, and *Identify evidence*. In this study, the researcher chose to use *Construct a “storyboard”* as an adaptation to the use of Round Table technique.

Round Table technique also encourages students to be active in learning process. Barkley, Cross and Major (2005: 243) state that the structure requires all students to post, and limits some group members from posting too frequently. It means that in Round Table every students need to contribute their ideas for the group’s task. It also provide an opportunity where the students can get feedback on their task both from their friends and teacher. According to Barkley, Cross and

Major (2005: 245), “this CoLT encourages students to adjust their writing (in areas such as content, conventions, style, and vocabulary) as they respond and react to the comments of the writers that preceded them.” This technique concerns more on the process of writing which brings advantages to students. According to Raimes (1983:11), the process of writing is a valuable learning tool for all of our students.

The goals of this research were to describe the teaching and learning process when Round Table technique is used, and to find out how Round Table technique is implemented effectively to improve the writing skill of narrative text at the tenth grade students of SMA Negeri Kebakkramat in academic year 2013/2014.

Research Method

The method used in this study is an action research. Carrying out action research is all about developing the act of knowing through observation, listening, analysing, questioning and being involved in constructing one’s own knowledge (Koshy, 2005: xiv). The new knowledge and experiences inform the researcher’s future direction and influences action.

This action research was carried out at SMA Negeri Kebakkramat in Karanganyar Regency. The subject of this study are the students of class X-7 in the academic year 2013/2014. The students’ composition of X-7 is 26 girls and 10 boys. The research was conducted through teaching and learning process from April to June 2014.

The procedure for carrying out action research consists of four developmental stages (Kemmis and McTaggart in Nunan, 1989: 12). The stages are as follows: (1) Planning: the researcher develop action plan, (2) Acting: the researcher implement the action plan, (3) Observing: the researcher and observer observe the teaching and learning process and the implementation of Round Table technique, (4) Reflecting: the researcher analyses the effects of the action and uses the findings for making decision on the next cycle.

In this study, the data were collected through four techniques, namely observation, interview, diary, and test. The data were written on observation results form which was done by the English teacher as the observer, and field note which was written by the researcher. The researcher interviewed the students at the end of each cycle related to their experiences in following Round Table procedures. The researcher also interviewed the English teacher related to the teaching and learning process using Round Table technique. Diary was used by the researcher to record the data related to the students' feeling and interpreted class condition during the teaching and learning process. Test was conducted before the action (pre – test) and after each cycle (post – test 1 and post – test 2).

Research Findings and Discussion

After implementing the action the researcher found that when Round Table technique was used, the teaching and learning process was described as: active learning, learner – centered, and the activities were taking turns to jot down phrases and group discussion. The students were actively involved in the teaching and learning. Therefore, the use of Round Table technique was able to create an

active learning. Supporting the result, Harison (in Warsono & Hariyanto, 2012: 24) identifies that active learning takes place when the students are active during the learning activity, both physically or intellectually active.

The teacher used deconstruction activity in the first meeting. In cycle 1, the teacher provided a narrative text to be deconstructed. The teacher asked the students to work in pair and discuss the text given. This activity aimed to guide the students in understanding the generic structure and language features of narrative text. The activity also encouraged the students to be active.

Meanwhile, in cycle 2, the teacher used the students' writing in post – test 1 in deconstruction activity. The teacher guided the students in analyzing the mistakes on the students' writing. The teacher used whole class discussion after first asked the students to study the writing. The students were more enthusiastic in cycle 2 because the writing to be deconstructed was familiar to them. The students were active in this activity.

The use of Round Table technique in the second and third meeting also encouraged students to be active. The students were required to write down phrases on storyboard to develop the outline of narrative text. In addition, the teacher also instructed the students to follow Round Table procedure in writing the draft. The teacher used group discussion to facilitate students in the editing process.

Before the action, the class condition was not conducive. Most of the students did non academic activity during the lesson and not focus to the teaching and learning process. Moreover, the teaching and learning process was teacher –

centered. The students also saw that writing was a difficult thing to do. Furthermore, not all of the students took part during the lesson. Only few students participated in giving their ideas.

During cycle 1, most of the students focussed on the teaching and learning process and fewer students did non academic activity although some of the students chatted to their friends because there was only a short or even no space between groups in cycle 1. This problem was solved in cycle 2 by making a better seat arrangement and reducing the number of group. In cycle 2, the class situation was improved. Students no longer chatted to others. They could focus on their learning.

Round Table technique which is seen as both cooperative and collaborative learning technique was able to change the teaching and learning activity into learner-centered. All of the students were actively involved during the teaching and learning activity. This result is supported by the theory proposed by Nunan and Lamb (1996: 9), “learner-centered classroom are those in which learners are actively involved in their own learning processes”.

By following Round Table procedures, each students took part in the learning process. Therefore, all students were involved in their own learning process. The students no longer only sat and listened to the teacher’s lecture. They had writing exercises in class and guided by the teacher. The students also got chance to help each other during this activity.

In addition, the learner-centeredness brings advantages. Budiningsih (2005: 5) states that students’ activeness become a very important factor in

determining the success of learning. In addition, Tudor (1996: 15) says that an activity is likely to produce more relevant language and be more motivating if learners are allowed to invest it with a content which is 'their own'. Therefore, the students could successfully improve their writing skill because the students actively participated in the learner-centered classroom and used their own ideas to compose a text.

The activities done by the students were taking turns to jot down ideas and discussion. The teacher distributed work sheet to each group. The work sheet were in the form of storyboard. The teacher also put keywords on the storyboard to guide the students in jotting down ideas to construct a text. After that, the students took turn in writing the first draft and then discussed the draft in the editing process.

The research findings also showed that there were improvements toward the students' writing skill. Before the research was conducted, the students' ability in writing was below the standard. The students' average score in the pre – test was 56. The students also found that it was difficult for them to develop a main idea and provide sufficient detail information to construct a text. The students got difficulty in finding the appropriate vocabularies in expressing their ideas. They also rarely got writing exercise during the class and lack of feedback toward their writing assignment.

After the action, the students were able to provide sufficient details and write a longer paragraph in developing the main idea. The students' compositions were about 3 to 7 paragraphs long with sufficient and appropriate supporting

ideas. At the end of the action implementation, the students made improvements in composing a more well-organized text compared to their writing before the implementation of Round Table technique. The students could also compose a more creative plots. Moreover, the students' plots varied one another. The students could arrange a text based on its generic structure. Their texts consisted of orientation, complication, and resolution. The storyboard helped the students determined the development of orientation through answering the guiding questions.

The students could also compose a more creative plots. The students were given keywords to make a story. In post – test 1 the keywords were: *a Swiss penknife with magic powers to get you out of difficult situation, a suitcase that will hold anything, training shoes that will make you run at supersonic speeds.* Meanwhile, the keywords in post – test 2 were: *a telephone line to your Fairy Godmother, a talking goldfish, a flying car.* The students could use those keywords to compose an interesting story. Moreover, the students' plots varied one another. For example: a story about a character who started a restaurant and became succeed because of using some magic tools stated in keywords, a heroism story, a friendship story, a detective story, a fairy tale, and a story about family.

The students could arrange a text based on its generic structure. Their texts consisted of orientation, complication, and resolution. The storyboard helped the students determined the development of orientation through answering the questions : *“Who?”* , *“ Where?”* , and *“What begins the story?”*. Meanwhile, the group through Round Table sessions helped the students in finding the ideas by

answering the questions by each members. This activity went the same in developing the complication and resolution. The students developed the complication by answering the question: “*How does it develop?*” and composed the resolution by answering the question: “*How does it end?*”.

The students were provided adequate options of vocabularies to express their ideas through Round Table technique. Each member of the group was required to write their ideas during Round Table sessions on the storyboard. The result of this activity was plenty of ideas written on the storyboard which meant a lot of vocabulary options for the students. Therefore, the students could use a various opening sentences such as: “*Once upon a time, there was a boy named Dante*”, “*This story began from a boy named Lukman*”, “*One day in a city, lived a detective named Conan*”. The students’ score was as follows:

Table 1 Students’ Score on Pre – Test, Post – Test 1, and Post – Test 2

	Mean Score (Scale 1 – 100)	Focus/ Organization (Out of 35)	Elaboration/ Support/Style (Out of 35)	Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics (Out of 30)
Pre – Test	56	20	19	17
Post – Test 1	71	26	25	20
Post – Test 2	82	30	29	22

Practically, Round Table technique is an appropriate technique to teach writing in the classroom. In order to achieve improvements on the students’ writing as explained before, the researcher noted that there were some points to ponder in implementing Round Table technique effectively. The points were as follows:

- (1) Determining the students’ group

In this study, the researcher used formal groups. The groups worked together in generating ideas, writing the draft, and producing the final version of their writing. The whole process took place in 3 meetings or 1 cycle. According to Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (in Barkley, Cross, and Major, 2005: 43), “Formal groups are formed to work together to achieve a more complex goal such as writing a report or developing presentation. These groups work together until that task is accomplished, which generally takes several class sessions or even weeks.”

The group membership was heterogeneous. It aimed to encourage the students to help each other during the teaching and learning process. Each group consisted of 3 students in cycle 1 and became 4 students in cycle 2 which worked better because the number of groups was reduced. The composition of each group was students with high, average, and low achievement on English which based on the students’ score on the previous semester. In addition, research support heterogeneous grouping because working with diverse students exposes individuals to people with different ideas, background, and experiences and the fact that diverse groups are more productive (Barkley, Cross, and Major, 2005: 45). In selecting the group members, the researcher used the combination of student selection and instructor determined.

(2) Classroom management

During the research, the researcher found that classroom management was important in order to make the teaching and learning process ran well. In cycle 1, the researcher found difficulty in keeping the students focussed on their task. Many of the students did non academic activity, such as chatting with other

students. This caused by the students' seat which was not well arranged. In cycle 2, the researcher designed the seat arrangement for the students. It aimed to make the class more organized, prevent the students chatting, create more space between groups to facilitate the teacher in supervising classroom.

Jones (in Dunbar, 2004: 3) says, "A good classroom seating arrangement is the cheapest form of classroom management. It's discipline for free." Therefore, the researcher decided to arrange the students' seats on cycle 2 after her finding on the cycle 1 that an unwell-organized seat arrangement caused problems in the teaching and learning process. Dunbar (2004: 3) sets rules to guide classroom arrangement: (1) Students should be seated where their attention is directed toward the teacher, (2) High traffic areas should be free from congestion, (3) Students should be able to clearly see chalk board, screens, and teacher, (4) Students should be seated facing the front of the room and away from the windows, (5) Classroom arrangements should be flexible to accommodate a variety of teaching activities.

(3) The adaptation to Round Table technique

In this study, Round Table technique was used to help foster imaginative storytelling. The text used in this study was narrative text. Basically, Round Table technique is particularly useful for practicing writing informally and creating a written record of ideas (Barkley, Cross, and Major, 2005: 235). Therefore, the researcher made some adaptation in implementing Round Table technique to suit the students' condition and the purpose of this study.

The researcher chose to use storyboard as an adaptation of Round Table technique. The use of storyboard aimed to guide the students in jotting down ideas to develop detail information. The storyboard consisted of 4 columns in which each column contained guiding question. Each column led the students to develop narrative text based on its' generic structures.

In implementing Round Table technique, the researcher used 4 Round Table sessions to fill the story board and 1 session to write the draft. Each session of Round Table followed by group discussion. The group discussion had purpose to give chance to the students to check on their writing. Moreover, students also had discussion in the editing stage in order to provide opportunity to get feedback both from the other group members or teacher. The students improvements on writing are as follows:

Table 2 The Students' Improvements on Writing

Before the Action	After the Action
- The students average score was 56.	- The students average score on post – test 1 was 71 and 82 on post – test 2.
- The students' writings were 1 to 3 paragraphs long.	- The students' writings were 3 to 7 paragraphs long.
- The students' writing contained grammatical mistakes.	- The students' writing contained fewer grammatical mistakes.
- The students' plot was an imitation of famous narrative text, for example: Snow White or Cinderella.	- The Students' plot was more creative, for example: a heroism story, a friendship story, a detective story, a fairy tale, and a story about family.
- The students used inappropriate vocabulary.	- The students were able to use various and appropriate vocabulary.
- The students' writing was lack of detail information.	- The students were able to provide sufficient detail information.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the findings of the research, the researcher found important aspects to conclude. The first conclusion is when Round Table technique was used, the teaching and learning process was described as: active learning, learner – centered, the activities were taking turns to jot down phrases and group discussion.

The second conclusion is the implementation of Round Table to improve students writing skill should consider the formation of students' group, classroom management, and the adaptation to Round Table technique.

Based on the research findings, the writer would like to give suggestions that teachers needs adjust Round Table technique to meet the students' condition and the purpose of the teaching and learning activity. In developing writing skill, the students should practice their writing not only during the lessons and asked by the teacher to do so, but also on their own will.

Meanwhile, to other researcher, it is expected that other researchers can conduct further research to different subject using a more complex research design to improve the outcome of the use of Round Table technique to teach writing. In addition, the education department should facilitate English teachers to enrich their knowledge related to the development of teaching technique.

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