

Improving Students' Writing Skill by Using Guided Writing

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Abstract: The objectives of this classroom action research are: (1) to identify whether guided writing can improve the students' writing skill; (2) to identify the improvement of classroom situation in using guided writing when teaching and learning process. The research data were collected by using techniques of interview, observation, and tests (pre-test and post-test). The qualitative data were analysed by using assembling, coding, comparing the data, building interpretation, and reporting outcomes. Then, the quantitative data were analysed by using descriptive statistics method. The research findings show that guided writing technique can improve the students' writing skill and the classroom situation. It can improve the students' writing skill in five aspects including content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. The classroom situation shows that the students are more active in participation, attention, interaction, and suggestion in writing class.

Keywords: *guided writing, writing skill, classroom situation*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English at school should concern in developing language practice in each language skill, including writing skill. Writing will help students master the speaking and reading skill. Sometimes students are afraid and shy to express their ideas in speaking but they can tell what they want to say by writing it down on a paper in order to express their thought. Then, the students themselves or possibly the reader will understand it. However, there are still some English teachers who haven't given sufficient attention to this case. Writing as a basic language skill for students should get close attention from the teacher.

Hedge (1998: 19) stated that writing is a complex process with a number of operations going on simultaneously. Moreover, some writers seem to have a much better understanding of how to make the process work effectively for them and

Consequently produce more successful pieces of writing. So, writing is a process which involves complex activities to produce successful piece of writing.

In line with Hedge, Bell and Burnaby in Nunan (1989: 36) point out 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 level, the writer must be able to structure and integrate the supporting information into cohesive and coherent paragraphs.

Brown (2004: 218) also states that writing is a skill with its own features and conventions for recording speech and for reinforcing grammatical and lexical features of language. We fully understand the difficulty of learning to write "well" in any

language, even in our own native language. In writing, we learn to express ourselves clearly with logical, well-developed organization that accomplishes an intended purpose, and to write coherent essays with artfully chosen rhetorical and discourse devices.

From all the definition above, it can be concluded that writing is a complex process to produce successful piece of writing based on particular rules. The rules include the control of content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, and letter formation. It expresses the ideas clearly with logical, well-developed organization that accomplishes an intended purpose. It can be understood for others as a means of communication between writer and readers.

The students should master writing skill as good as the other skills since writing skill gives the big contribution to improve students' competence in communication. Globalization era also affects students to have more chance to get in touch with written English text. Based on the 2004 senior high school curriculum, students need to know how to write the letters, short message, advertisement, news, electronic mail, etc. In addition, students also should be able to write some genres of the text. Furthermore, good writing skills are needed to achieve both academic purpose and communicative purpose.

Based on the observation at one of state senior high school in Surakarta, the researcher found the students' problems in writing skill and classroom situation. The problems above are caused by some reasons. The researcher found out those reasons from the questionnaire, the interview, pre-observation, and the pre-test result. The problem indicators can be seen from the students' competence in writing skill. The problems of writing which students faced

are that they found the difficulty in developing the main idea. They got difficulty in finding the most appropriate word or diction to express their ideas. Then, they also got the difficulties in producing grammatical sentences, in the form of tenses, article, preposition, and pronoun. Moreover, some students also lacked of vocabulary. The last, the students were difficult to use correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization in writing.

Based on the classroom situation, it can be seen that: (1) the students did not actively participate during the lesson, (2) the students did not pay attention to the teacher, (3) some students did non-academic activities, (4) some students rarely asked and gave her/his opinion in learning activity.

There are many techniques that can be used to improve students writing skill. Based on the problems stated above, the researcher wants to improve the students' writing skills through guided writing. Guided writing is teaching strategy that can be used to extend and develop the students' writing. It involves a teacher guiding a small group of attempts to create individual written texts; responding to the students' attempts; extending students' thinking during the process. Furthermore, guided writing makes the class more interesting. Guided writing is used since it covers some stages which are very important to increase students' writing skills.

Guided writing is also useful in range of teaching purposes. It allows students to consider audience, purpose, topic, selection of type, etc, when planning their writing. It also allows writers to focus on conventions such as spelling, punctuation, standard usage, and handwriting. It also may be used to encourage students to revise and edit their writing. The focus of each session could be one of the "authorial" aspects of writing,

such as clarifying and extending ideas or organizing and planning the structure of a text.

Brown (1994: 328), also states that “Guided writing loosens the teacher’s control but still offers a series of stimulators, for example, by asking students a series of questions”. According to Huebener (1965: 78) “guided writing is the third writing step after imitative writing and dictation. It is called guided writing because the short written responses of the pupils are guided by the teacher.” From the definitions above, it can be concluded that guided writing is a process of writing after imitative writing and dictation guided by the teacher with stimulators.

In line with statement above, Doff (1997: 153) states that “as soon as students have mastered basic skills of sentence writing, students need to progress beyond very controlled writing exercises to free paragraph writing. However, they will make this transition more easily and learn more if we can guide their writing.”

Another definition comes from Reid (1993: 25-27) who states that: “Guided writing is free writing limited to structuring sentences, often in direct answers to questions, the result of which like a short piece of discourse, usually a paragraph. Moreover, the exercises were language-based; they usually concentrated on vocabulary building, reading comprehension, grammar, and even oral skills that culminated in a piece of writing”.

In this research the researcher used the procedure of Guided Writing from Reid (1993: 25) to teach writing and solve the problems. There are several steps; modeling, comprehension questions, language based exercises, oral composition, and written composition.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research was conducted at one state senior high school in Surakarta. The subject of the research was the eleventh grade students. It consisted of 16 males and 18 females. The researcher used an action research as the method and the model of action research developed by Kemmis and Mc Taggart in Burns (1999: 33). They explain that action research occurs through a dynamic and complementary process, which consists of four essential steps: planning, action, observation and reflection.

The four steps at the model can be expanded into six steps which included in the procedure of action research. The procedures are identifying the problem, planning the action, implementing the action, observing the action, reflecting the action, and revising the plan.

In this research, the data were collected by using techniques of interview, observation, and tests (pre-test and post-test). The researcher used the unstructured or informal interview where the interviewer and interviewee engage in free-flowing conversational process based on the issues and topics of the research study. The observation was more than just looking and seeing. The task of the observation represented the real condition happen in the place of the research. The observation was done when conducting the pre-research and the implementation of the research. When conducting the pre-research, the researcher observed not only the class situation in the teaching and learning process but also some available facilities in the school. During pre-observation in the teaching and learning process, the researcher found some students’ problems in writing. The researcher tested the students by using written test that consists of pre-test, post-test 1 and post test

2. The result of the test was analyzed to know the students’ writing skill.

The qualitative data were analyzed by using assembling, coding, comparing the data, building interpretation, and reporting outcomes by Burns. Then, the quantitative data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics method.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on pre-research in SMA N 1 Karanganyar, the researcher found some problems dealing with writing at the eleventh grade students. Their problems in writing skills were indicated from students' writing and classroom situation. Based on the pre-test conducted, the researcher found that the students had low writing competence. They should have at least 75.00 as their minimum score for listening,

speaking, reading and writing skill. It is very different from the fact taken from the results of pre-test conducted by the researcher on October 21st 2013.

The students only got 64.89 for the mean of students' writing scores. 23.52% of students passed the minimum scores but 76.33% students did not achieve the score of writing yet. The students' score of pre-test would be compared with the post-test in cycle 1 and cycle 2 to know the students' improvement in writing skill. After conducting the pre-test, the researcher held the first post-test. The researcher got improvement in students' result of first-post test. The mean score of first post-test was 76.26. The improvement of students' mean score from pre-test to first post-test is presented in the Table.1.

Table 1. The Improvement of Students' Writing Skill

No.	Elements of Writing	The mean score of Pre-Test	The mean score of Post-Test 1
1.	Content	19.2	22.01
2.	Organization	14.1	16.31
3.	Vocabulary	14.3	16.1
4.	Language Use	14.59	18,24
5.	Mechanics	2.8	3,62
Total		64.89	76.26

Based on the table, it can be concluded that the students' mean score improved from pre-test to first post-test. The mean score of every element of writing increased, but the elements of writing that could passed the passing grade were organization, vocabulary, and mechanics. The table shows the mean score of organization was 16.31 from the passing grade 15, the mean score of vocabulary was 16 from the passing grade 15, and then the mean score of mechanics 3.6 from the passing grade 3. Besides, the researcher still

found some problems that were faced by the students. The mean score in content was 22.01. It was still below the passing grade. The students still got difficulties in producing long paragraphs and they still repeated the same part of story in the other generic structures. Then, the mean score of language use was 18.24, still below the passing grade. It happened because the students missed to use past form and they still mixed past with present form.

In addition, the researcher found that students were still lazy in revising their

writing because not all of the students used their time to revise their work. It happened because they preferred to talk with their friends than revised their writing. In the next cycle, the researcher would give more

attention to the time allotment so the students can focus on their writing.

The researcher also found the improvements of classroom situation in the teaching learning process. The improvement of classroom situation can be seen in table 2.

Table 2. The Improvement of Classroom Situation in the End of Cycle 1

Pre-Research	After the action
1. The students did not respond to the teacher's commands	1. Most of the students could respond and followed the teacher's commands.
2. They did improper activities in the classroom like chatting, did the homework of another lesson, etc.	2. The students paid attention to the teacher's explanations; they were not doing their own business.
3. They did not participate in the class, they refuse if they were asked to show their writing in front of class	3. Most of the students were seen courage to show their idea or their work in front of class
4. Not all of the students were active during the writing class	4. The students more active in the teaching learning process.
5. They preferred to have writing assignment as homework	5. The students always finished the task before the class end and the task would be corrected together

After the end of cycle 1, the researcher still found some problems related with the students' writing ability and classroom situation. The problems related with the students' writing ability were: (1) the students could develop their idea, but were still limited, they still repeated the same part of story in the other generic structures and they just changed it with the other vocabularies, (2) Some students still produced incorrect grammatical sentence; they still mixed the use of past and present in their writing, and (3) some students had difficulties in using correct mechanics in writing. Sometimes, they didn't give attention to their writing. They still used incorrect capitalization or spelling. In other hands, the problems related with classroom situation was some students still asked their friends and the researcher about English vocabulary, so it made the classroom situation became a little bit noisy.

Based on the problems that found after cycle 1, the researcher made strategies

on the next cycle to avoid the problem. In the students' writing ability, the researcher would focus on the guided writing steps which called language based exercise. The researcher also would remind the students about the time allotment, so the students can focus on their writing. Then, the researcher would give a text from their pre-test that consisted incorrect tenses and mechanics, so the students accustom to use correct grammar and mechanics in their writing. In the classroom situation, the teacher would guide the students' who had problems in constructing sentences. She would ask the students to bring the dictionary or use the teacher's dictionary, so they couldn't ask their friend about English vocabulary and made the situation more manageable and conducive.

There were some positive results reflected in the second cycle. The result of the second post-test showed the students' progress in writing ability. The mean score of second post test is 80.56. It was better

than the mean of post-test 1. It was 76.26. It also higher than the KKM of English lesson (75). There were 3 students who don't pass the KKM.

The improvement of students' score in writing element can be shown in the following table 3.

Table 3. The Improvement of Students' Score in Writing Elements

Elements	C	O	V	LU	M
Pre-Test	19.2	14.1	14.3	14.55	2.8
Post-Test 1	22.01	16.31	16.1	18.24	3.6
Post-Test 2	23.43	17.6	17.45	19.68	3.9
Passing Grade	23	15	15	19	3

In the end of cycle 1, the elements below the passing grade were content, language use, and mechanics. But, in the end of cycle 2, these elements increased. The table 3. showed the mean score of content is 23.43, above than the passing grade (23), and the mean score of language use is 19.68 (passing grade is 19), and the mean score of mechanics is 3.9 (passing grade is 3). From the table 3. above, it also could be seen that the improvements of the students' writing skill covered all the elements in writing skill.

The result of second post-test also showed the improvement of elements of writing especially in content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. In content element shows the positive result. It happened because the students can develop their idea freely, it means that the students can dig their idea that will be developed and then they can combine their imagination about characters, setting, situation, problems, and conclusion of the story in a good way. So, their story was interesting to be read.

In organization element, the students constructed their idea to cohesive and coherence paragraph using connection

words between one to the other sentences. The students also arranged their idea in line with the generic structure of narrative text. So their story was easy to be read and did not make the reader felt confused about the plot of the story. Then, in the vocabulary element, the students can vary their vocabulary. When they were creating a story, they didn't repeat the same vocabularies in their writing. Last, in language use, the students could correct grammatical sentence. Most of them known the use of past tense and they gave attention to use it in their writing. In mechanics, the students applied the correct mechanics in their writing. They gave attention in using the punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

Besides, the researcher also presented the example of students' score from their writing, the sample of the students score were taken from different level of intelligence. The improvement was summarized in Table 4.

Student A was indeed known as the smart students. She always paid attention to the lesson in class. She was enthusiastic in writing class. She could understand the lesson quickly, if she found difficulties she always asked to the researcher.

Table 4. The Improvement of Students' Score

	Pre-test	Post-test 1	Post-test 2	Mean Score
Student A (AAS)	83.5	90	90.5	88
Student B (RH)	72	78.5	84	78.3
Student C (SBW)	56	76	78	70

Student B considered in the average level. Actually, she had good writing ability. Nevertheless, she sometimes was not interested to the lesson. Although she knew the answers of given questions sometimes she were lazy to answer. Furthermore, she easily got bored and tended to make noise in the class. However, she became more active in every meeting. In the teaching learning process, the teacher always monitors the students' activity by walking around the class and checks the students' writing. She also makes short conversation with the students while monitoring the students' activity. So, the students can feel closer with the teacher and they can share their difficulties without being shy or afraid to the teacher. Then, teacher also praises the students that can answer the question or do

the teacher's command so it can motivate the students to learn better.

Student C is included in the lower level. He sat at the back row. Actually, he did not like writing in the class but he preferred to do something with his laptop. He had difficulties in organizing and developing the content of his text, but the researcher tried to help him and concerned on his difficulties. Finally, he could get better score in two cycles. The result of the test showed the improvement of his writing skill. Based on the result of the tests, it could be seen that there was improvement of the score between pre-test, post test 1, and post test 2.

Moreover, in the cycle 2, the classroom situation also shows the positive result. The improvement of the classroom climate is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. The Improvement of Classroom Situation in the End of Cycle 2

After The Action of Cycle 1	After The Action of Cycle 2
1. The students paid attention to the teacher's commands.	1. Most of the students can respond and follow the teacher's commands by doing the teacher's commands and do not refuse it
2. The students paid attention to the teacher's explanation.	2. Most of the students give full attention to the teacher's explanation by making notes without commands. They do not work their own business like chatting.
3. Most of the students were seen courage to show their idea or their work in front of class.	3. Most of the students are confident to show their idea or their work in front of class
4. The students more active in the teaching learning process.	4. Most of students are active in the teaching learning process.
5. The students always finished the task before the class end and the task would be corrected together	5. The students have higher motivation to finish the task in the given time.

After conducting cycle 2, the researcher notes that the teaching learning process can run well. The students participate in the teaching learning process by giving attention to the teacher's explanation without doing their own business. Then, they are active in answering the teacher question, doing the exercise, and giving question if they get difficulties. They also can participate and active in discussion with their partner. They do the task cooperatively with their partner. Next, they are courageous to share their opinion or their answer in front of class.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the research findings, the researcher can draw some conclusion as follows; Guided writing could improve the students' writing skill. It is supported by the results of the test scores and the coverage problem indicators. It could be seen from the mean score of pre-test 64.89, it improved to 76.26 in first post-test, and it increased up to 80.56 in second post-test. From the result of post-questionnaire that 74% of students assumed that their score in writing increased after implementing guided writing. Then, the students could explore their ideas when guided writing was implemented in teaching learning process and 72% of students agreed that guided writing make them easier to explore their ideas. They could also organize the narrative text coherently by using proper words and grammatically correct in sentence. They were more careful in using spelling, punctuation, and capitalization in their writing. Based on the result of questionnaire, 88% of students agreed that they could write and arrange a paragraph and 68% of students also agreed that they more understand about mechanics and grammar after implementing guided writing.

In fact, guided writing can make the students become active in teaching and

learning process. The students pay more attention to the teachers' explanation and focus on the involvement of teaching activities. Moreover, guided writing can create an enjoyable situation in the classroom. The students give more participation in responding or answering the teachers' questions in the teaching and learning process. The center of the teaching and learning process is no longer the teacher but the learner.

Based on the conclusion, there are some suggestions related to writing teaching. It is important that the teacher uses the effective technique and appropriate with the students' competence. The English teacher is not only explaining the material in front of class but also the English teacher involving the students during the teaching learning process. The students are suggested to practice in writing by using guided writing.

English teachers have responsibility to give effective technique and appropriate with the students' competence. They have to deliver the materials to the students clearly. The English teacher is not only explaining the material in front of class but also the English teacher involving the students during the teaching learning process. They can practice to write with the teacher's guidance. By using guided writing technique, the students will be interested and focused to do academic activities. The students were as the center of teaching learning process in class and the teacher was as facilitator, motivator, and controller. The teacher gave guidance and help to the students when they got difficulties in teaching learning process.

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