

## IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING ABILITY THROUGH THE USE OF DICTOGLOSS TECHNIQUE

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### ABSTRAK

Dalam proses belajar-mengajar bahasa Inggris terdapat empat keterampilan yang harus dikuasai oleh pembelajar, yaitu *listening*, *speaking*, *reading*, dan *writing*. Salah satu keterampilan yang dianggap sebagian pembelajar bahasa Inggris sebagai keterampilan tersulit untuk dikuasai adalah *writing*. Salah satu teknik yang dapat digunakan untuk pengajaran *writing* adalah teknik *dictogloss*. Tahap *reconstruction* pada teknik *dictogloss* memfasilitasi pembelajar untuk merekonstruksi teks yang telah disampaikan dengan mempergunakan bahasa mereka sendiri. Selanjutnya, tahap *correction-analysis* menyediakan *feedback* yang memfasilitasi pembelajar untuk mengoreksi kesalahan-kesalahan pada aspek-aspek *writing*, seperti *content*, *organization*, *language use*, dan *mechanics*.

Kata kunci: *assessing writing*, *dictogloss technique*, *writing*

### 1. BACKGROUND

Richards and Renandya (2002: 303) state that writing is the most difficult skill for second or foreign language learners to master. The difficulties are not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating these ideas into a readable text. The difficulty becomes more noticeable if their language proficiency is weak.

Teaching writing for students who learn English is one of the important things that has to be done well because it will influence the students' ability in developing their writing ability. It is commonly believed that an appropriate teaching technique will have a contribution to the

success of students' writing ability. Furthermore, it will be true that teaching writing will be influenced by the teaching technique which is used by the teacher.

Dictogloss is one of the teaching techniques that can be used to teach writing. It is because dictogloss has some stages that facilitate the students to improve their writing ability. The reconstruction stage of dictogloss facilitates the students to be able to reconstruct a dictated-text by using their own language. Then the correction-analysis stage provides feedbacks that facilitate them to correct their mistakes in the writing aspects, namely content, organization, language use and mechanics.

## **2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **A. The Nature of Writing**

Language learners already know that there are two skills that are included in productive skills, i.e. speaking and writing. Emig (McDonald & McDonald, 2002: 47) differentiates that writing is originating and creating a unique verbal construct that is graphically recorded; while speaking is creating and originating a verbal construct that is not graphically recorded.

The other differences between speaking and writing are also proposed by Brown (Weigle, 2002: 15). Brown provides the characteristics that differentiate written language from spoken language in terms of the permanency, production time, distance, orthography, complexity, formality and vocabulary. However, in this paper the writer only presents some of them.

The first term is permanency. In this term, oral language is transitory and must be processed in real time, while written language is permanent and can be read and reread as often as one likes. The second term is production time in which writers generally have more time to plan, review and revise their words before they are finalized, while speakers must plan, formulate, and deliver their utterances in a few moments if they want to do a conversation. The next term is distance which explains that distance between the writer and the reader in both time and space, which eliminates much of the shared context that is present between the speaker and the listener in an ordinary face-to-face contact. The last is formality in which writing tends to be more formal than speaking.

Writing is one of the productive skills which need to be learned by language learners. They learn writing as an essential component not only for their academic practice but also later

in their professional life. Later on, they will have appropriate background knowledge about writing.

Writing is not an easy skill to be mastered. Many learners think that writing is the most difficult skill to be mastered. Richards and Renandya (2002: 303) state that writing is the most difficult skill for second language learners. The difficulty lies not only in generating and organizing ideas but also in translating these ideas into a readable text. The skills that are involved in writing are highly complex. Second language writers have to pay attention to their skill of planning and organizing as well as their skill of spelling and giving punctuation.

Learners realize that writing is not a simple activity. It is an activity that should be done continuously. Means and Lindner (1998: 108) state that learning to write is like learning to drive in that one is learning to do several things simultaneously.

It is important to view writing not only as the product of an individual, but also as a social act. Writing is not only writing a sentence but it is an activity of producing a text in a context. This idea also supported by Lyons and Kroll (Weigle, 2002: 19) who define writing as an act that takes place within a context, that accomplishes a particular purpose, and that is appropriately shaped for its intended audience.

## **B. Teaching**

According to Brown (2007: 8), teaching may be defined as showing or helping someone to learn how to do something, giving someone instructions, guiding someone in the study of something, providing someone with knowledge, and causing someone to know or understand. He also adds that teaching is guiding and facilitating learning, enabling the learner to learn, and setting the conditions for learning. Furthermore, according to Gazarian (2002), teaching is a skill and an art. Teaching is always creating because there is no class which has the same criteria.

Teaching cannot be defined apart from learning. Dewey (1933) as quoted by Jackson (1986: 81) in Labaree (2000) asserts that teaching may be compared to selling commodities: no one can sell unless someone buys. There is the same exact equation between teaching and learning as there is between selling and buying. According to Brown (2007: 8), breaking down the components of the definition of learning, it can be extracted the domains of research and inquiry as follows.

- 1) Learning is acquisition or 'getting'.
- 2) Learning is retention of information or skill.
- 3) Retention implies storage systems, memory, and cognitive organization.
- 4) Learning involves active, conscious focus on and acting upon events outside or inside the organism.
- 5) Learning is relatively permanent, but subject to forgetting.
- 6) Learning involves some form of practice, perhaps reinforced practice.
- 7) Learning is a change in behavior.

In conclusion, teaching and learning cannot be defined apart from each other. Teaching may be defined as a skill and art in showing or helping someone to learn how to do something, giving someone instructions, guiding someone in the study of something, providing someone with knowledge and causing someone to know or understand. What is learned is not only about information or knowledge, but also an expression of values and attitudes.

### **C. Teaching Writing**

There is no doubt that writing is the most difficult skill for language learners to master. Teachers should know and understand the appropriate approach that can be used in teaching writing so that the learners are easily able to produce a good writing.

At the beginning of a lesson, the teacher should make sure that the students know about the purpose of the activity in the lesson. He or she should give a clear explanation about what they will learn, so the students will get an advantage in the teaching and learning process. Harmer (2004: 31) argues that writing should encourage students to focus on accurate language use and, because they think as they write, it may well provoke language development as they resolve problems which the writing puts into their minds.

The essence of teaching writing is guiding and facilitating students to work. This is supported by Brown (2007: 8) who proposes that "teaching is guiding and facilitating learning, enabling the learner to learn, and setting the conditions for learning". It implies that teaching cannot be separated from learning. When teachers teach writing to the students, they do not only teach how to develop ideas in writing, but they also need a serious attention of how to write

English sentences grammatically and systematically. Hence, teaching writing depends on the teachers' ability of how to teach writing effectively which can make students' ability improved.

Kimble and Garnezy in Brown (2000: 7) state that learning is a relatively permanent change in behavioral tendency and learning is the result of reinforced practice. It means that in teaching writing, the teacher has to show and help students to learn how to write, give instructions, guide students in writing, provide students with knowledge of writing, and make students understand how to write effectively.

#### **D. Assessing Writing**

Teachers who recognize the importance of writing as a tool for learning understand that writing helps students connect their thoughts and communicate with others. Regarding to that point, the researcher realizes that the most important part to know the students' writing ability is from their product, i.e. their writings. It can be assumed that if the students have a good writing ability, their writing also will be good and vice versa. Therefore, teachers have to be able to assess students' writing in an appropriate way. However, to assess students' writing product is not a simple thing to do. Urquhart & McIver (2005: 26) argue that the most time-intensive part of teaching writing is assessment. Miller (Urquhart & McIver, 2005: 27) defines that assessment as gathering information to meet the particular needs of a student.

##### **1. How to assess**

A teacher has some responsibilities to the success of the students' writing. The first responsibility is to provide opportunities for writing and encouragement for students who attempt to writing. The second responsibility is to promote students' success in writing. The teacher does this by carefully monitoring students' writing to assess strengths and weaknesses, teaching specific skills and strategies in response to students' needs, and giving careful feedback that will correct students' mistakes in writing.

##### **2. Rubrics**

Teachers need to use an appropriate tool which helps them in assessing students' writing performance. Rubric is an important tool to be prepared by the teachers in order to give an

objective score. Urquhart & McIver (2005: 31) argue that rubrics are very effective assessment tools because they describe specific levels of performance. Besides, rubrics also explain the students' performance clearly. Research also supports using rubrics because they clearly communicate expectations for both teaching and learning.

There are four main types of rubrics, i.e. holistic rubrics, analytic rubrics, primary trait rubrics, and multi-trait rubrics. However, in this study the researcher only presents two of them, i.e. holistic rubrics and analytic rubrics.

**a. Holistic rubrics**

It assigns a level of performance by assessing performance across multiple criteria as a whole. The emphasis in holistic rubrics is on what a student does well. Weigle (2002: 112) argue that holistic scoring has an advantage to focus on the students' attention on the strengths of their writing, not on their deficiencies.

However, holistic scoring also has several disadvantages. It is less useful for classroom purposes because it provides little information to students about their performance because holistic scoring assesses students' performance of several criteria as a whole or in a single score. Weigle (2002: 114) says that "a single score does not provide useful diagnostic information about a person's writing ability."

Another disadvantage of holistic rubrics is in the way of interpreting the scores. It is because in holistic scoring, raters do not use the same criteria to arrive at the same score. This idea is supported by Weigle's explanation. According to Weigle (2002: 114), holistic scoring also has a disadvantage in which it is not always easy to interpret, as raters do not necessarily use the same criteria to arrive at the same scores.

**b. Analytic rubrics**

Analytic scales are divided into separate categories representing different aspects or dimensions of performance. For example, dimensions for writing performance might include content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. Each dimension is scored separately, and then dimension scores are added to determine an overall score. Weigle (2002: 114) states that "in analytic scoring, scripts are rated on several aspects of writing or criteria rather than given a single score depending on the purpose of the assessment."

Analytic rubrics provide more detailed information about students' ability. It is because when using analytic scoring, teachers use different aspects of writing such as content, organization, mechanics, or grammar that can give more information about students' writing ability.

Assessment rubric used in this paper is based on Ratnaningsih (2011: 18-20) that was adapted based on ESL Composition profile proposed by Jacobs et al. (1981) from Weigle (2002: 116). The writing assessment rubric is shown below.

Aspects of Writing	Level	Score	Criteria
Content	Excellent to very good	20-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant to the points of the dictated-text</li> <li>• Match the purpose of a narrative text</li> </ul>
	Good to average	17-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mostly relevant to the points of dictated-text but lacks detail of information</li> <li>• Match the purpose of a narrative text</li> </ul>
	Fair to Poor	13-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate development of the points of the dictated-text</li> <li>• Almost match the purpose of a narrative text</li> </ul>
	Very Poor	9-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not relate to the points of the dictated-text or not enough to evaluate</li> <li>• Does not match the purpose of a narrative text</li> </ul>
Organization	Excellent to very good	20-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well-organized of a narrative text</li> </ul>
	Good to average	17-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loosely organized of a narrative text but main ideas stand out</li> </ul>
	Fair to Poor	13-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideas confused or disconnected</li> </ul>
	Very Poor	9-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No organization or not enough to evaluate</li> </ul>
Language use	Excellent to very good	20-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few errors of agreement, tense, articles</li> </ul>
	Good to average	17-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several errors of agreement, tense, articles, pronouns and prepositions</li> <li>• Meaning seldom obscured</li> </ul>
	Fair to Poor	13-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequent errors of agreement, tense, articles, pronouns and prepositions</li> <li>• Meaning obscured or confused</li> </ul>
	Very Poor	9-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dominated by errors</li> <li>• Does not communicate or not enough to evaluate.</li> </ul>
Mechanics	Excellent to very good	20-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates mastery of conventions</li> <li>• Few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization</li> </ul>
	Good to average	17-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization</li> </ul>
	Fair to Poor	13-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization</li> <li>• Poor handwriting</li> </ul>
	Very Poor	9-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization</li> <li>• Handwriting illegible or not enough to evaluate</li> </ul>

In relation to the participation aspect in dictogloss technique, an assessment rubric of participation aspect based on Ratnaningsih (2011: 20) is shown below.

Aspects	Level	Score	Criteria
Participation	Excellent to very good	10-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gives a high contribution to the teaching-learning process</li> </ul>
	Good to average	8-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gives a standard contribution</li> </ul>
	Fair to Poor	5-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sometimes gives a contribution to the teaching-learning process</li> </ul>
	Very Poor	3-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does not give any contribution to the teaching-learning process</li> </ul>

There are some aspects which were assessed in this study. Those aspects are the writing aspects and the participation aspect. The writing aspects include content, organization, language use and mechanics. In the content aspect, the students' writing should relevant to the points of the dictated-text. It also should match the purpose of a narrative text. Then in term of the organization aspect, it should be well-organized. While in term of the language use, it should show few errors of agreement, tense, articles, pronouns, and prepositions. Then in the mechanics aspect, it should demonstrate mastery of conventions which shows few errors of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Finally in term of the participation aspect, the students should give their contribution to the success of the group work. They should participate in the dictogloss activity.

### **E. Narrative Text**

In this paper, the writer presents information about a narrative text because this paper used a narrative text as the material in the dictogloss activity. Narrative is a text that tells a story and has functions to entertain or educate the reader or listener. According to Anderson and Anderson (2003: 8) a narrative is a piece of text which tells a story and, in doing so, entertains or informs the reader or listener. The same idea is also stated by Lipson and Cooper (2002) who define a narrative as a text that is read by people for entertainment.

A narrative text has some parts, i.e. orientation, complication, sequence of events, resolution, and coda. Anderson and Anderson (2003: 12) says that a narrative text can have five main parts: orientation, complication, sequence of events, resolution, and coda. Moreover, Stein and Glenn (Lipson & Cooper, 2002) add that narrative texts have a setting, characters, a problem or initiating event, the important events, and an outcome or resolution.



In the orientation part, the narrator introduces the characters and informs the time and the place. Then the complication part is the part when the crises arise. Moreover, in the sequence of events the narrator tells how the characters react to the complication. Furthermore, the narrator tells the ending of the story in the resolution part. It can be a happy ending or sad ending. While the coda part is an optional part because the narrator includes this part if there is a moral value from the story.

In a narrative text, learners can do several things. They can learn about the generic structure or the parts of a narrative text. They also learn about the purpose of a narrative text and the language features which are used in a narrative text.

### **3. DICTOGLOSS**

#### **A. Definition of Dictogloss**

Anderson and Anderson (2003:46) defines that the word ‘dictogloss’ comes from two words, i.e. ‘dictation’ and ‘glossary.’ Dictation is an activity of a person who reads a passage aloud and the audience writes what is said (dictated). A glossary is a list of words with their meanings written beside them. Wajnryb (1995: 12) defines the word ‘gloss’ as a paraphrase in the learners’ own words. Jacobs (2003) describes that dictogloss is an integrated skill technique for language learning in which students work together to create a reconstructed version of a text read to them by their teacher. Furthermore, Wajnryb (1995:5) says dictogloss as, “a relatively recent procedure in language teaching.” It is because there are still few teachers who use dictogloss in conducting their teaching and learning process. They might not know this technique yet.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that dictogloss is a technique for language learning in which students work together to reconstruct a dictated-text. They reconstruct the dictated-text by using their own words or in other words they do not write exactly what the teacher read.

#### **1. Stages of Dictogloss**

Dictation has a long history in literacy education. In the standard dictation procedure, the teacher reads a passage slowly and repeatedly. Students write exactly what the teacher says.

Dictation in this traditional form has been criticized as a rote learning technique in which students merely make a copy of the text the teacher reads without doing any thinking.

Jacobs (2003) states that a new way to do dictation, known as dictogloss, developed by Wajnryb. Furthermore, Wajnryb writes the basic stages of dictogloss in her book. These stages are presented below.

**a. Preparation**

At this stage, teachers should:

- a) prepare learners for the text;
- b) prepare learners for the vocabulary of the text;
- c) ensure that learners know what they are expected to do at each stage of the technique;
- d) organize learners into groups.

**b. Dictation**

As a standard procedure, learners should hear the dictation twice. The first time, they should not write. They get a global feeling for the whole passage. The second time, they should take down notes. When the students take notes during the dictation, they should be encouraged to write down the word that will help them to piece together the text in the later reconstruction stage.

The text should be dictated at a normal spoken speed. The general pace is comparable to that of a news broadcast on radio or TV. The dictating should not be conducted in the traditional way where the sentence is broken up into word units. Between sentences, the pauses should be slightly longer than usual.

**c. Reconstruction**

As soon as the dictation is finished, the learners, working in groups, proceed to pool their notes and work on their version of the text. The teacher's role during reconstruction is to monitor the activity. In this stage, a group of learners should maintain as much information as possible from the original text. However, they are not allowed to copy all words in the original text.

**d. Analysis and Correction**

The last stage of the dictogloss technique is the analysis and correction of the learners' texts. Wajnryb (1995) also adds in the analysis and correction stage, "Ideally, the original text should not be seen by learners until after their own versions have been analyzed." There are various ways of conducting this, such as using the blackboard and using an overhead projector. However, the teacher may use whiteboard or other media. Using the whiteboard, the students' texts are written up for all to see and discuss.

To sum up, the dictogloss technique has four stages i.e. preparation, dictation, reconstruction and analysis-correction stages. In the preparation stage, the teacher should prepare the text and organize the groups. Then in the dictation stage, the dictated-text read more than once. The next stage is the reconstruction stage in which the students work in group to reconstruct the dictated-text by using their own words. Finally, the last stage is the analysis-correction stage in which discussion and feedbacks are occurred.

## **2. Aims of Dictogloss**

Wajnryb (1995: 6) argues that dictogloss has a number of aims. The following are a number of aims of dictogloss:

- 1) It provides an opportunity for learners to use their grammatical knowledge to reconstruct the dictated-text;
- 2) It also encourages learners to find out what they do and do not know about English which is realized in the attempts to reconstruct the text and in the subsequent analysis of those attempts.

## **4. DISCUSSION**

There are many ways that teachers can do in teaching writing. In this study, the technique which is used to teach writing is the dictogloss. Furthermore, the way in teaching writing of this study is based on the steps of the dictogloss such as preparation, dictation, reconstruction, and analysis-correction stages.

In relation to that, the key to dictogloss is interaction. This technique requires learners in the classroom to interact with each other in small groups to reconstruct the text as a co-operative endeavour. Working in this way, learners are actively engaged in the learning

process. Students find out what they do not know, and then they find out what they need to know. It is through this process that they improve their language skills.

Wajnryb (1995: 10) argues that through active learner involvement students come to confront their own strengths and weaknesses in English language use. In teaching with dictogloss, teachers should remember that the aim is to improve learners' grammatical competence in using the language. With experience, students become familiar with the procedure and the phases become predictable parts of a familiar process. The students' confidence in both learning and using the language increases after students realize that they are learning and their English is improving.

Furthermore, the other point related to the dictogloss technique to teaching writing is the term grammar in context. One of the best methods of teaching grammar is to use passages or texts that illustrate grammatical functions within their context. Teaching the students grammar in context shows them how to apply various grammatical concepts. This is commonly believed to improve the students' ability to communicate through written language.

The issue of grammar in context is found in the dictogloss technique. In both the reconstruction stage and the analysis stage of dictogloss, the issue of grammar is approached contextually. In the reconstruction stage, learners are required to perform a context-based task. Using their notes and their knowledge of the language, they reconstruct a text whose topic, points of view are already known.

In the final stage, the analysis and correction stage, this technique also shows the issue of grammar in context. The various text versions that the groups of learners produce are treated in terms of the given context.

Finally, another important point that can be discussed in the dictogloss technique is motivation. Wajnryb (1995: 15) states that the integration of the functions of testing and teaching in dictogloss helps to stimulate the learners' motivation. It is because when the learners offer their contribution to the group in the context of the reconstruction stage, they are making commitment to the group, to the task, and to the learning process. Moreover, the students will have confidence to contribute to the success of the group work and they will be motivated in the teaching and learning process because the task is done in groups.

Another effect of dictogloss to the students' motivation is showed in the final stage. The final stage of analysis and correction is something that should be conducted to maximize

learning and encourage risk-taking in which students are motivated to give a response to their friends' work.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Dictogloss technique can be used to improve students' writing ability. This technique can be maximized to teach writing not only in term of grammar in context but also can be used to maximize interaction (students' involvement) because this technique requires the interaction of the learners to interact each other to reconstruct the text as cooperative endeavour. Moreover, the analysis-correction stage of dictogloss technique contributes to the occurrence of feedback in relation to the mistakes that are found in the students' writing so that learners get the right application of grammar and English use.

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