

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGY-BASED INSTRUCTION TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

Learning strategy becomes an essential factor in the success of language learning. It is the first step for language learners to enhance their own learning because the learning strategies are tools for active, self-directed involvement, and essential to develop communicative competence (Oxford, 1990). Therefore, students need to be introduced to the various types of learning strategies through integrated strategy-based instruction. This research is aimed at improving students' writing skills, which is focused on the improvement of students' English grammatical competence through Strategy-Based Instruction (SBI).

In this classroom action research, the students were engaged in a weekly integrated writing strategy-based instruction or training. They employed some learning strategies to improve their writing skills, i.e. writing difficult or new words and grammatical patterns on some small pieces of cards or mobile phones, using electronic dictionary, discussing their feeling with the lecturer, and practicing peer review, with a guided editing checklist. The findings show that there was an increase in the students' awareness to use strategies (i.e. using mechanical techniques, highlighting, making efforts to find out how a word works in context by checking it in the dictionary, discussing the indiscipline attitude to the lecturer, and practicing peer review with a guided editing checklist). The finding also shows that the students' grammatical competence as one of competences needed in writing improved.

Key words: Strategy-Based Instruction, writing skills

INTRODUCTION

In the global communication people are highly demanded to be able to communicate in English. One of the indicators that people can communicate with others is to have communicative competence. According to Hymes (cited in Brown, 2007), communicative competence is the competence people have to be able to deliver and understand messages and to negotiate interpersonally in a certain context. Communicative competence consists of four aspects, i.e. grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence. Those aspects are intertwined one another.

Grammatical competence involves the knowledge about vocabulary and word form rules, syntax, sentence meaning, and phonological system. And, discourse competence is the ability to organize sentences into a good text or discourse. Sociolinguistics competence means the ability to vary the use of language in certain setting and with different participants, for example knowing when to use formal or informal language within a certain context. In communication people also are required to be able to maintain communication despite having limitation in language knowledge, for example by using several communication strategies. This competence is called strategic competence.

Teachers who are responsible for preparing students who can meet the global era demands have to have those aspects of communicative competence, both in spoken and written communication. The students of English Education Department, Yogyakarta State University are also prepared to be good teachers. Consequently, they also are highly required to have communicative competence. To prepare them, the institution has developed a curriculum in which the students have to take some compulsory subjects, such as language skills (listening, speaking, writing, and reading), structure, translation, and so on.

At the end of their study they have to make a thesis as one the requirements to get a degree of *Sarjana Pendidikan* on English language teaching. Here the students will show their knowledge and skill not only on doing a research but also their knowledge/ skills on their several fields; they are for examples teaching methods and writing skills.

According to Brown (2001:335), writing is the process of expressing idea, organizing it, using appropriate cohesive and rhetorical devices, revising, editing, using correct grammar, and producing the final product/ writing. Spratt, et al

(2005:26) also state that writing is communication activity using letters, words, phrases, and clauses for making coherent sentences.

However, in fact the conditions did not meet those requirements. The problems are as follows:

- a. The students still made many minimum requirements mistakes, such as the uses of passive voice, subject and verb, modals, articles, and the choice of words .

Here are some examples of grammatical mistakes made by some students.

Table 1. The examples of the students' grammatical mistakes

Types of mistakes	Examples of mistakes
Passive voice	That <u>words who always said</u> by...
Modals	...I <u>should though</u> the cost.
To inf.	I had be able <u>to studied</u> hard...
Adj	<u>It was very happy</u> in the way to get there.
Quantifier	The tree was full of <u>many rose -apple</u> , so there were many student who... I only got <u>some mark</u> in my face. Last week I went to Dieng Plateu with <u>some of my friend</u> .
Choice of word	I totally forgot that I was doing <u>fast</u> . Though I was a mosque <u>keeper</u> . I spent most of my time to do many <u>schedule of mosque</u> . His assistant <u>appeared a deer</u> .
Articles	We could know what the purpose that <u>story</u> from their moving. When we would go to home, we take a picture with <u>dancer</u> .

- b. The students' awareness in using learning strategies was still low.

In the communicative language teaching, there is a new paradigm in which teachers and textbooks, and teaching methods are not put as the main factors to make students succeed in language learning; it is the students themselves who are responsible for being successful. As Brown states that:

Successful mastery of the second language will be due to a large extent to a learner's own personal "investment" of time, effort, and attention to the second language in the form of an individualized battery of strategies for comprehending and producing the language (2001: 60).

There are four types of learning strategies; they are cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, social strategies, and resource management strategies or affective strategies (Richards and Schmidt, 2002).

Based on a survey the students' learning strategies that were **seldom used** can be identified as follows (Dwiyani, et al, 2010):

Table 2. The learning strategies which were seldom used by the students

No.	Grammar Strategies
1.	I make visual aids, like a chart or 'tree', to help me remember grammatical structures.
2.	I write grammar rules and examples on note cards.
3.	I write down structures on note cards so that I can think about how they work.
4.	I keep a notebook of examples of any structure for which I am trying to discern the rule.
5.	If I hear a new structure that keeps me from understanding, I write it down.
6.	I preview the lesson to identify the key structures to be covered.
7.	I color-code different grammar categories in my notebook.
8.	I make a diagram to remember and understand new grammars.
9.	I review grammar note cards on the subway on the way to the university.
10.	I repeat new grammar points before going to bed.
11.	After discovering a rule, I try to apply it as soon as possible in a meaningful context
12.	I try out new structures in my own conversations
13.	I try to apply the rule carefully and accurately in specific sentences
14.	I memorize how structures change their forms (for instance, from a noun to an adjective, from an adjective to an adverb)
15.	I use newly learnt rules/structures in context as soon as possible
16.	I listen carefully for any feedback the teacher gives me about structures I use (metalinguistic feedback)

Regarding the principle of language teaching, that is to enable students to utilize certain learning strategies, and the problems occurring in writing, collaboratively the lecturer (as the researcher) through action research taught and guided students explicitly to use learning strategies. The teaching in which students are taught certain learning strategies is called **Strategy-Based Instruction (SBI)**.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategy-Based Instruction (SBI) is one of methods in language teaching under Communicative Language Teaching. There are many studies concerning the use of this method to increase the students' competence in language learning. It is defined as a teaching-approach to help students know what, how, and why to learn, and to facilitate them to learn (Yin Ze-Sheng, 2008). Explicitly, the teacher teaches the students language learning strategies. According to Chamot (in Brown, 2007:140), teaching how to use certain learning strategies is more effective than just asking the students to use more strategies.

Strategy-Based Instruction may help students in different ways. Firstly, the students will be more responsible for their learning. They will find their own learning strategies, so it is more challenging for them. Secondly, the students will be more confident because they have their own learning strategies that are suitable with their learning problems or their learning style. Thirdly, they become autonomous learners. The teacher does not teach them the materials, but using their own learning strategies, they will learn the new language. Finally, because they know what they learn, why they learn, and how to learn, they will be more successful in language learning (Yin Ze-sheng, 2008).

In addition, people who are good language learners are able to “(a) find a learning style that suits them, (b) involve in the language learning process, (c) develop an awareness of language both as system and as communication, (d) pay constant attention to expanding their language knowledge, (e) develop the second language as a separate system, and (f) take into account the demands that L2 learning imposes” (Cook, 2008: 114-115).

There are four principles to consider in developing SBI. They are: (a) the teaching is directly related to the students' problems, (b) the students have to know that the strategy-based instructions gives benefits in learning language, (c) students with different background should be facilitated properly, and (d) the teaching consists of sufficient scaffolding, modelling, practice, and development of self-assessment.

As stated in the fourth principle above that there are four steps in developing strategic-based language learning, i.e. scaffolding, modelling, practicing, and developing self-assessment. These steps of strategy-based instruction development are also introduced by Cotterall and Reinders (2004).

They proposed five main stages in the development of SBI. Third model was implemented in this research.

The steps are:

- (1) Raising awareness of the strategy
Asking students their problems in learning language and showing how implementing learning strategies may solve the problems
- (2) Modelling the strategy
Teaching and showing how to use certain learning strategies
- (3) Trying out the strategy
Practicing the new learning strategies taught
- (4) Evaluating the strategy
Asking the students their feeling, opinions, benefits, and problems in using the strategies
- (5) Encouraging transfer to the strategy to new contexts

Here the students should be provided with a lot of practice to use learning strategies, of reflection to take positive values from their experience in using learning strategies (Coterral and Reinders, 2004).

Techniques in Implementing SBI in the Classroom

Mainly there are three techniques in implementing Strategy-Based Instruction in the teaching process. They are delicated instruction, integrated instruction, and adjunct instruction.

Delicated instruction

The teaching is focused on the teaching of learning strategies only. This instruction is separated from teaching other subjects. Sometimes it is as a part of school curriculum. In other words, the one lesson the teacher only teaches learning strategies.

Using this technique, the teacher and students will get some benefits, such as the teacher will have more time to prepare and design the instruction, the students will focus more on learning strategies, and because it is a part of curriculum, the program will be more prepared and the students are more serious in joining the program. However, having more focus on a topic about learning strategies will give negative effects such as other important things or topics are not taught, the students will easily get bored with the same program, and teaching and practicing a certain strategy, i.e. need whole learning process in which it is difficult to implement in a separated teaching.

Integrated instruction

In this model of SBI, the process of teaching/introducing new learning strategies is integrated with the process of teaching. In the research context, for example, the teaching and learning process used the current model of Communicative Language Teaching, i.e. Genre-Based Instruction. It consists of four main stages Building Knowledge of the Field (BKOF), Modelling of the Text (MOT), Joint Construction of the Text (JCOT), and Independent Construction of the Text (ICOT), which are adapted from five stages proposed by Feez (1998: v). The learning strategies instruction can be applied in any stage or all stages.

By using this model, the teacher does not need to change the curriculum, the students can implement the strategies in more meaningful situation, and it is more appropriate and easier for beginning or introduction. In this research, this model was implemented for those reasons.

Adjunct instruction

Almost the same as the second model, this type of strategy-based instruction is also implemented integratedly within the regular teaching process. However, it is not used in the whole parts of the process; it is used in the beginning of the lesson or at the end.

METHOD OF STUDY

This study is classroom action research. It aimed at improving the students' writing skills using Strategy-Based Instruction. The students, as the subjects of the research, were Class 3D students taking Writing III course in the academic year of 2011/2012. The research was conducted in Class 3D, English Education Study Program, Faculty of Languages and Arts, Yogyakarta State University from September 2011 to November 2011.

This study included 2 cycles and in each cycle four basic stages were implemented, i.e. Planning, Action, Observation, and Reflection. Observations, journals, and interviews were used to get the data, which are qualitative. Accordingly, the researcher used observation guidelines, interview guidelines, and journal guidelines in collecting the data. The data collected were analysed through several steps assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building meanings and interpretation, and reporting the data (Burn, 2010). Five criteria of validity were considered to get the research validity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Implementation of Strategy-Based Instruction

Designing the integrated strategy-based instruction

As mentioned before that the development of learning strategies in this research was integrated with the regular teaching and learning process which was based on Text-Based Approach that consists of four essential stages BKOF, MOT, JCOT, and ICOT. At the end of this cycle, students produced written texts as stated in the syllabus of Writing II. Moreover, the process of teaching the strategies also followed four steps, i.e. raising the awareness of the strategy, modelling the strategy, trying out the strategy, evaluating the strategy, and encouraging students to transfer to the strategy to new contexts or purposes.

In the first cycle, the grammatical competence as one of competences to be able to make a good text, was improved through the use of some learning strategies by using small cards or note books as media to write some new words or sentence patterns in order to help students more easily memorize, understand, and study the information, and using dictionary to check the parts of speech of the new words found during learning the language.

In details the process of learning the language and the new strategies is explained in the following table.

Table 3. The process of learning the language using certain learning strategies

Step	Activities	Materials
BKOF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Showing model recount texts b. Asking pre-reading questions to know and activate the students background knowledge of the topic c. Discussing the questions and the answers together d. Students read the texts. e. Giving small note cards to students f. Giving explanation the functions of small note cards to help students understanding the texts and language features used in the texts g. Giving model how to use the cards h. Students identify and write unfamiliar words with the sentences on the note cards i. Together with the lecturer discussing the words on their note cards j. Talking about the reading tasks prepared for helping students to comprehend the texts k. Asking students to use their note cards to explore the second and the third texts (as modelled before) Students reread their notes on the cards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Small note cards (identifying unfamiliar words, identifying noun phrase, adjectives) 1. What is the function text? 2. What is the purpose of the writer? 3. How many activities are there? 4. Is there any message or coda at the end?

MOT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Showing two recount texts though LCD slides. On there the students can see the information about generic structures and language features of the texts. b. Showing different recount text and asking students to identify verbs, adjectives, and conjunctions or sentence connectors c. Asking students the unfamiliar words, how to use them. Reminding the students to check dictionaries if they are not sure with meanings and the use of them especially in the meaningful sentences. Showing how to use dictionary. d. Asking the students to write down the new words on the note cards 	
JOT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Students arrange the jumbled paragraph into a good text. Then, they add the time order words or conjunctions. 	
ICOT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Students watched a video with English subtitle about a friendship between two people from Japan and Korea. Then they made a recount text based on the story in the video. b. After that they did peer review. 	

Using small cards as the media to write down new words or sentences

Using small cards as media to write down new words or sentences was introduced from the BKOF step. It is one of learning strategies to memorize new things. The procedures of teaching this strategy are as follows.

- ¶ The students were given two different recount texts and one small card each.
- ¶ The students found difficult words from the texts and wrote down the sentences with those difficult words on the card. The lecturer showed the students how to use the strategy and how the language learners could benefit from using the strategy.
- ¶ The students then were assigned to find another recount text and find the difficult words, and after that write them (in the sentence form) on another card.

In the next meeting the lecturer checked their home assignment. Here is the field note showing the process of strategy implementation monitoring.

The lecturer asked all of the students, “Well, last week I told you about the use of cards. Have you tried to use it? Cards?” One of the students named Dita, told us her experience in using the cards while she was watching an English movie that she wrote difficult words found in the movie. She said “When I watched movies, I write some words on the cards and read it”. She also said that this activity could also improve her vocabulary. She added that she opened her dictionary to find out the meanings of the words. Then the lecturer asked her, “Did you notice the types of the words? Noun or adjective?” She said “Not yet.” The lecturer suggested her to pay attention on the kinds of the words, whether as a noun, verb, adjective, or adverb. Another student named Wika also told us her experience in implementing the strategy. She said that she also uses the strategy in other subjects. Even she uses more colorful cards. She also attached them on the wall of her bedroom. For her, this strategy could improve her vocabulary as well.

In the interviews done after the lesson some students (taken randomly) also had the same opinions about the benefits of the use of cards. Moreover, this strategy inspired them to use other media (tools) to take notes the new materials. The followings are some of the interview extracts.

Extract one

Lecturer (Researcher):...Do you still remember what you learnt today about learning strategy?

Aulia: Writing new words on the cards and guessing the meanings from the context in the sentences given then checking the meanings in the dictionary.

Lecturer: Do you know why you should do so?

Aulia: to make us easy to remember the words, to know the meanings and to use them correctly...and to add our vocabulary

Extract two

Lecturer: Today you learnt and practiced using cards to make a note of new materials for example new words. What could you benefit from that activity?

Identit: I think it would be more effective if we use what Isa uses , not using cards but note books. Then at home we can make it better or tidier. Anyway those methods can be combined.

Aulia: When I find new words, I often write them on my mobile phone. Then I try to find the meanings, make new sentences with the words, sometimes make poems, status in facebook. So that I would be familiar with the words.

Erlina: When I watch movies with my friends, I write them on my mobile phone. Then I copy them on my note book and find the meanings in the dictionary. I think using cards is little bit complicated and I usually forget to bring them. So using mobile phone or note books is much easier.

Using dictionary

Besides making notes on the cards as a learning strategy to learn grammar, in this research the lecturer also encouraged the students to use dictionaries, especially when they found new words. Dictionary can help them to find the meanings and to know how the words are used in the sentences (in the appropriate context). In one lesson the lecturer gave some examples of how to use dictionaries, how to find words meanings in the dictionary, and how to use them in the appropriate context because a good dictionary like Oxford Dictionary and Cambridge Dictionary will give us that information. In that occasion, she used Electronic Cambridge Dictionary accessed from her laptop. It was effective enough to show how a dictionary helps us in the study of words. By encouraging the students to use dictionary has changed their perception on the functions of a dictionary. One of the students said “We cannot pretend as if we know the meanings and the use of the words. Like the word 'tremor'. We thought that it is a verb, but a noun”.

In the last stage of the lesson (Independent Construction of the Text) the students made a recount text. Before they wrote their text, they watched a movie

about two different people, one is from Korea and another is from Japan and they were provided with subtitles in English. The text was about the story of the movie.

Based on the students' writing, it can be concluded that there was some improvement on the students' ability in making a text. Before the implementation of the actions, it was still found some basic mistakes in writing, for example: (a) the product was in the form of paragraph not a text, (b) the story or the content was monotonous, (c) there were many grammatical mistakes, and (d) the words were used in wrong sentences. After the lecturer taught them the learning strategies i.e. making notes on small cards and using dictionaries more appropriately), the students' writing ability improved. It can be indicated by some aspects: (a) the number of the paragraphs they made was increased; it means that the students could develop their ideas better, (b) the organization of the text was better; one of the indicators was the ability to use time order markers/ signals, and (d) the grammatical mistakes were less than before. The followings are several examples of the improvement in using grammar.

Table 4. The examples of the grammatical competence improvement

Names of the students	The use of grammar before the actions	The use of grammar after the actions
Khusnul Harsul Lisan	But I have to go Bromo if I <u>want to met</u> her. ...and they wanted me and my brother <u>to spent</u> our feast day there.	There, I wanted <u>to make</u> a good film... After that, I walked <u>to look for</u> some beautiful pictures.
Muhammad Isa	That words <u>who always said</u> by... Finally my dream <u>was came true</u> .	And then I <u>had been brhought</u> by policeman to the... (meskipun masih salah dalam ejaan kata brought tetapi sudah benar penggunaan aturan kalimat pasif). For 2 hours, I <u>had been intrograted</u> ...(masih salah ejaan/ penulisan kata interrogated).

During the process of the research in Cycle 1, the lecturer and the collaborators (other lecturers) also did some discussions to reflect the actions implemented and the effects on the students' writing performance. Based on the first plan, the actions were focused on the improvement of the students' grammatical competence in writing. However, in facts there were some students who did not make a well-organized paragraphs. Some even could not differentiate report and descriptive texts.

The discussions were also concerned on the other conditions in the classroom, for example, the students' attitude during the lesson. This was related to the students' discipline for coming on time. Actually, the lesson, which was held on Tuesday, began at 1. 30 p.m. This decision to change the time from 1.20 to 1.30 p.m. was based the agreement among the students and the lecturer. But, it often happened that some students came very late with various reasons, such as having lunch, having prayer, being caught in the rain, an so on. Once in a lesson, when the lecturer came at 13.30, there were only two students in the class. Here are the extract of a field note showing the condition and the lecturer's complaint said to the collaborators.

Field note:

At 2 p.m. there were only 4 students (of 15 students) and at 2.20 two other students came. At 2.42. in the class there were still 9 students.

The lecturer's complaint:

I sometimes get angry with the students, Bu. I came at 1.30 as the agreement, but you see there were only two students there.

After all planned actions were implemented, the lecturer and the collaborators did a reflection. The main points to reflect were not only about the positive impacts of the actions but also the weaknesses which were still found. The results of the reflection show that:

1. teaching learning strategies could improve the students awareness of the importance of using cards or other media (such as note books and mobile phones) improved and the students' grammatical competence to support the ability in writing good texts also increased,
2. most of the students implemented the strategy in improving their writing skills and used different taking note media, such as cards and mobile phones,

3. some of the students also used the strategy in other subjects,
4. students got new knowledge and experience in using monolingual (English monolingual dictionary) to improve their vocabulary use skills, although they still needed some encouragement to bring more complete dictionary because they used the small one or pocket dictionary in which sometimes they could not find the certain words there,
5. the lecturer still found it difficult to deal with students with undisciplinatory attitudes such as coming late and not bringing the coursebook, and
6. all participants had contributed in the research as the class lecturers and collaborators so they have new experiences in teaching, doing a research, giving feedback to each other, and doing reflection on the teaching.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

In the research a Strategy-Based Instruction has been implemented. The learning strategies taught and practiced were writing difficult or new materials on small cards or mobile phones and using dictionary. Those strategies were also supported by some actions or activities, i.e. using dictionaries, practicing peer review with guided review checklist, and discussing the students' problems with the lecturer. These actions improved the students' writing skills and their awareness to use certain learning strategies to improve their language skills.

Regarding the result of the research that teaching learning strategies improved the students' awareness to use certain leaning strategies and their writing skills, it is suggested that the other lecturers or teachers should also show explicitly and teach how to use certain learning strategies to improve their language competence.

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