

USING 'BRAINSTORMING' TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' ABILITY IN WRITING ESSAYS

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to improve students' ability in writing essays. "Listing" technique in Brainstorming activity was applied to students taking Writing III subject. Before and after the action, a pre-test and a posttest were conducted. After the action (two cycles), there was an increase of the mean score from the pre-test (53.77) to posttest (63.49). The result of observation also showed that the students' activity in following Listing technique is 68.6%. This fulfilled the criteria applied (≥ 61). Besides, t-test was also used to see the effectiveness of the Listing technique. The result showed that 't' observed (3.92) is greater than 't' table at the level of 0.05 (2.021) and 0.01 (2.704). This indicates that Listing technique is effective in improving the students' ability in writing essays.

Key Words: Brainstorming Technique, Listing, Writing Essays.

INTRODUCTION

Writing Course is one of the Language Skill Courses offered at the English study Program. It consists of Writing I, Writing II, dan Writing III. At writing course, students are taught good writing techniques from how to write simple sentences, paragraphs to various kinds of text types. Since writing course is the application of other related courses such as Structure, Vocabulary, Reading, etc, it is true to some extent that it has high difficulty level. The complexity of writing course causes students' grades unsatisfactory. This can be seen from writing III course grades at the odd semester of 2011-2012 academic year, where only three students among 26 got A grade (11.5%), 8 students (30.8%) got B grade, 13

students (50%) got C grade, and 2 students (7.7%) got D grade. This condition is quite understood as when they write, they also need to think about ideas to write, good sentence structure as well as appropriate vocabulary to be used.

There might be several factors responsible to the students' low ability in writing essay at Writing III course, among others are the inappropriate methods used by the lecturers of the complexity of the writing activities. In this research, the writer solves the problem related to the method/technique used by the lecturer in teaching writing, the application of brainstorming technique: Listing.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Oshima and Ann (1991) describes that there are three kinds of brainstorming techniques: Listing, Freewriting, and Clustering. At this research, the first brainstorming technique, Listing was applied. It can help a writer finds and collects ideas, activating schemata, and organizing thoughts. Leki (1996) explains that listing technique works faster than freewriting. In applying listing technique, the writer writes all ideas related to the topic, then groups them then cross out similar ideas. In the teaching and learning writing, the lecturer can allocate time for students to do brainstorming activities (listing) as a warming up activities to write and think.

Leki (1996) states that listing technique is very useful to look for samples or specific information about a topic. This technique is one of the beneficial ways for the writer to restart writing when he/she runs out of ideas when writing draft. The procedures for listing technique are: 1. Write down the topic at the top of your paper. 2. Make a list of every idea that comes into your mind about the topic. 3. Use words, phrases, or sentences, and don't worry about spelling or grammar. 4. Rewrite your list and group similar ideas

together (Alice and Oshima). Cross out items that don't belong or that are duplications. By applying this brainstorming technique, the students' ability in writing essay is expected to increase.

Writing Skills

Among the four language skills, Writing is considered to be a productive skill. In this skill, the product of writing is the target of the writing process (Syameducation, 2011). In writing an essay, the writer needs to realize that essay consists of several paragraphs, introductory paragraph, body paragraphs and concluding paragraph. Therefore, the structure of essay is just the same as the paragraph structure with the opening, content and closing.

Essay can be developed in various organizations, among others are: Chronological order, Logical Division of ideas, Cause and Effect order, Comparison and Contrast order, Classification order, Definition order, dan Argumentative order, (Oshima and Ann (1991: 121-150) dan Fitzpatrick (2005:75-259). Some of these essay organizations are discussed in Writing III course and the students are trained in developing their ideas in accordance with the topic discussed.

RESEARCH METHODS

This is a classroom action research with two variables: X variable (listing technique) and variable Y (students' ability in writing an essay). This research was conducted at the English Study Program of FKIP UR started from April to December 2013. The subject of this research was the

third semester students, class B which consists of 35 students.

Essay writing test was used to collect the data of the research. Pretest was held before the action while posttest was also conducted after the action. Writing test was graded using "Analitical Scoring Methods" by Hyland

(2008:229). The three aspects graded are: Format and Content, Organization and Coherence, Sentence Construction and Vocabulary. In addition, observation sheet was also used to collect the data about the students' and the lecturer's

activities during the teaching and learning process. Then, the students' writing ability level was analyzed and interpreted using Harris' (1974:134) classification as follows:

Table 1. Ability Level

Test Score	Ability Level
80 – 100	Good to excellent
60 – 79	Average to good
50 – 59	Poor to average
0 – 49	Poor

In addition, in order to test the data statistically, they were analyzed using t-test formula (0.5 level) to find

out mean difference between pretest and posttest scores (Hatch and Lazaraton :1991).

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Essay writing pre-test was conducted at the second meeting, September 20th, 2013. The result was nearly half of the subjects (46 %) were at the Poor level. The students' mean score was 53.77.

The results at Cycle 1

After the application of listing technique in the Writing III course (6 meetings), the writer conducted posttest at September 30th, 2013 to know whether the students' writing ability increases. Posttest results at were nearly half of the subjects (43 %) were at the Poor to Average level of ability. This condition is better than that in the pretest score where 46% of the subjects at Poor level. There is also an increase in the students' score at the Good to Excellent level (8.5 %). Furthermore, the results of observation for the four activities observed were 54,28 %. This means that the students still have problems participating in the application of listing technique.

The results at Cycle 2

After cycle 1 where the students' average score in writing was 60,14, it was continued to cycle 2 which was also conducted during 6 meetings. Post test 2 was held at Desember 21st, 2013. The results were no students at the Poor level of ability while it was 20 % at post-test 1. This means that the increase is significant. Then, there were 14 subjects (40 %) at the Average to Good level. There is also an increase in the subjects' level of ability at the Average to Good or Good to Excellent levels.

In order to know whether the action at cycle 2 meets the criteria of the successful action, the results of post test 2 was analyzed, then the students' average score was obtained, 63.49. The results of observation on the students' activities at cycle 2 was 68.6%. It was bigger than the criteria applied for this research. This means that the students are successful in following activities in the teaching and learning process with the application of listing technique.

With the posttest result at cycle 2 (63.49) and the results of observation (68.6%), it can be said that those data have met the criteria applied. Therefore,

it can be concluded that the application of brainstorming technique, listing, can improve the students' ability in writing essay.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The results of the research with with 2 cycles can answer the purpose of the research. In other words, the students' ability in writing essay improve significantly after the application of brainstorming teknik, listing in the teaching and learning process. This can be shown from the posttest and observation results as in the following table.

Table 2. The results of Observation at Cycles 1 & 2

No	Variabel observed	Observation Results (%)	
		Cycle 1	Cycle 2
1.	Write down the topic at the top of your paper	85.7 %	100 %
2.	Make a list of every idea about the topic.	42.9 %	54.3 %
3.	Use words, phrases, or sentences, and don't worry about spelling or grammar.	57.1 %	77.1 %
4.	Rewrite the list and group similar ideas together, then cross out items that don't belong or that are duplications	31.4 %	42.9 %

Furthermore, posttest results were analyzed using t-test, the following data were found:

Average scores of Pretest	Average Scores of Post Test 2	Difference (d)	Difference Square (d2)
53.77	63.49	337	10.555

Those data were then analyzed to find out t value as in the following:

Standard Error	Standard Deviation	t-observed Value
2.48	14.61	3.92

The data showed that t-observed (3.92) is bigger than t-table (2,021) at the significant level 0.05 and (2, 704) 2, 704 at the significant level 0.01. Statistically, the increase of the score from pretest to cycle 2 is significant and

this shows that alternative hypothesis is received. Therefore, using brainstorming technique, listing, can improve the students' ability in writing essay significantly.

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