PROCESS APPROACH TO IMPROVE STUDENTS’ WRITING SKILLS
FOR ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS
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Writing is considered as the most difficult skill for language learners because they need to have a certain amount of English background knowledge about the rhetorical organizations, appropriate language use or specific lexicon with which they want to communicate to their readers. To assist language instructors to improve learners’ writing competence and produce good writing, this paper aims to identify how the use of process approach improves students’ skill in writing. The first section of this paper provides the importance of using the process approach for English learners. The second part includes the strengths and drawbacks as well as an adapted use of it.

Keywords: Process Approach, Writing

Introduction

The purpose of teaching and learning English is that the students are able to analyze and comprehend English skills and maintain a good written and oral communication as well. Halliday in Nunan (2001:85) states that there are some features which distinguish oral from written communication. It is sometimes suggested that spoken language is simpler than written one; that is, it is less structured. However, speech is no less structured or complex than writing. Transcriptions of spoken language look less structured because they present “unedited” language.

Teaching English must focus on the four basic skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing in order to gain the success of teaching learning process. Writing is a process to express feelings, experience, ideas and thoughts. Langan (2001: 137) mentions that expressing thought in writing is a complex subject because it involves the thought of ideas to write, coherence and cohesion of the text, spelling, grammar, and punctuation, etc.

Writing is felt difficult by students. There are some reasons why writing is considered difficult. One of them lies in the Indonesian culture, which traditionally uses a lot of spoken language so that writing is not a way of expressing oneself. Furthermore, the tasks of writing will become more difficult when they have to write in a foreign language, like English.

Due to the difficulty mentioned before, the result of teaching and learning especially writing in this institution is not satisfying. Most students find that
combining sentences into paragraphs and paragraphs into well-structured compositions is uneasy to do.

Since writing is a skill that requires training, process approach is considered as the most suitable one because the concept of this approach is as an activity in which teachers encourage learners to see writing not as grammar exercise, but as the discovery of meaning and ideas.

**Writing**

Writing is as forms of graphic symbols that consist of letters which relate to the sound we produce when we speak. The symbols have to be arranged according to certain conventions to form words, and words have to be arranged to form sentences (Byrne, 1993:10).

According to Oshima (1999:2) writing is a progressive activity. This means that when we first write something down, we have already been thinking about what we are going to say and how we are going to say it. Then after we have finished writing, we read over what we have written and make changes and corrections. The third definition is given by Harris (1993: 10) who states that writing is a process that occurs over period of time, particularly if we take into account of extended periods of thinking that precede creating an initial draft. The fourth definition is taken from Langan (2001: 137) who mentions that expressing thought in writing is a complex subject which involves organization of thought and imagination of usage of English language.

**Writing Skill**

Skill refers to the ability to perform a task or activity consistently over period of time (http://www.ntatt.org/glossary.html). Skill cannot be acquired instantly. It is acquired through training a lot. Writing skill is an ability to express the idea, opinion or feeling in the written form beginning from the simplest one to the advanced level on a certain medium consistency period of time.

According to Heaton (1989: 135) there are five necessary skills for writing. They are:

1. **Language Use**
   - It is the ability to write correct and appropriate sentences

2. **Mechanical Skills**
   - It is the ability to use correctly those conventions peculiar to the written language e.g. punctuation and spelling

3. **Treatment of Content**
   - It is the ability to think creatively and develop thoughts, excluding all irrelevant information

4. **Stylistic Skills**
   - It is the ability to manipulate sentences and paragraphs, and use language effectively
5. Judgment Skill

It is the ability to write an appropriate manner for a particular purpose with a particular audience in mind, together with an ability to select, organize and order relevant information.

Based on the theories presented above, it can be formulated that writing is an act of putting letters, symbols, numbers, or words on paper to communicate, express, explain ideas, and retell events for the purpose of informing or entertaining to readers. To be able to achieve the intended purposes of writing, one should master some aspects of writing skills: organization, content, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanical aspects.

Process Approach

According to Stanley (1993) the process approach treats all writing as a creative act which requires time and positive feedback to be done well. In process writing, the teacher moves away from being someone who sets students a writing topic and receives the finished product for correction without any intervention in the writing process itself.

During the writing process, teachers can enable learners to explore their thoughts and develop their own writing by using the five-step writing process (Scott, 2001: 106):

a) Prewriting

Teachers will provide a writing task and help them to generate vocabulary and ideas by applying a number of strategies in class namely brainstorming, clustering, and discussion, without concern for correctness or appropriateness in the first stage of writing.

(1) Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a useful technique in writing because it allows the writer to close a topic with an open mind (Brown, 2001: 349). Brainstorming is finding ideas quickly and spontaneously. The intention is to write down as many ideas as possible without worrying whether they will be used or how they will be used or whether they are good enough.

(2) Clustering

Clustering is a more visual way of generating ideas (Langan, 2001: 22). Clustering shows the relationship between ideas and progression or sequence of ideas using circles, boxes, arrows, and lines.

(3) Free writing

Many people do this instinctively and it certainly can be a very effective method to help them find focus on a broad topic or work through a topic exploring various points of view. Free writing is an activity in which the writer writes freely about a
topic because the writer is looking for a specific focus (Oshima, 1999: 6). The purpose of free writing is to generate as many ideas as possible and to write them down without worrying about appropriateness, grammar, spelling, logic, or organization.

(4) Listing

Listing is a prewriting technique in which the writer thinks about the topic and quickly makes a list of whatever words or phrases come into the writer’s mind. The purpose is to produce as many ideas as possible in a short time, and the goal is to find a specific focus for the topic (Oshima, 1999: 4).

b) First draft composing

Learners will use vocabulary and ideas which they have got from the previous stage to express what they want to convey in their writing.

c) Feedback

In this writing stage, learners will receive comment from real audiences which can be a writing teacher or their peers and move on to new ideas in another draft.

d) Second draft writing

Based on the comment of teachers and peers, learners will modify their previous draft by revising, adding, and rearranging ideas.

e) Proofreading

In the final stage, student writers will not only discover new ideas and language forms to express their ideas in writing but also focus on the appropriate use of vocabulary, layout, grammar, and mechanics.

There are six categories or aspects of writing evaluation (Brown, 2001: 357):

1. Content: thesis statement, related ideas, development of ideas through personal experience, illustration, facts, opinions, use of description, cause/effect, comparison/contrast, and consistent focus.

2. Organization: effectiveness of introduction, logical sequence of ideas, conclusion, and appropriate length.


4. Syntax

5. Vocabulary: using meaningful words or phrases

6. Mechanics: spelling, punctuation, citation of references (if applicable), and neatness and appearance.

Process Approach Improves Students’ Writing Skill
1. Prewriting

Here, the students were asked to write down everything in their mind related to the topic they were thinking. The teacher helped the students by asking them to write down everything that came in their mind spontaneously. They did not have to worry whether the words or phrases were suitable or not. Then, the students started to write down some words and phrases on the paper.

2. First Draft Composing

Learners used vocabularies and ideas which they have got from the previous stage to express what they wanted to convey in their writing. In this part, the students developed their words and phrases in the form of paragraphs.

3. Feedback

In this writing stage, the students exchanged their works with another group. They gave comments to other groups’ works, and they used editor’s check list to check and write any comments or suggestions for improvement.

4. Second Draft Writing

Based on the comment of teachers and peers, the students modified their previous drafts by revising, adding, and rearranging ideas. They focused on the organization and content.

5. Proofreading

It was the last stages of writing process. In this stage, the students who were guided by the teacher focused on the appropriate use of content, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. After that, they wrote the final draft and read their work in front of the class.

Therefore, process approach is able to solve the students’ problems in writing a recount text. Every stage in process approach really helped their writing well. As stated by Nunan (2001: 56) that process writing allows for the fact that no text can be perfect, but a writer will get closer to perfection by producing, reflecting on, discussing, and reworking successive draft of a text.

Process approach also increases students’ behavior most of the students participated fully, they joined and got involved in the discussions during the learning processes yielding to a better result of writing recount text. It was strengthened by Harris (1993: 60) who emphasized that giving pupils access to the processes of writing should be a developing awareness of the kinds of behavior that will enhance the possibilities of success and satisfaction in writing.
Moreover, in editing or feedback stage in which the students involved in checking their peers’ works will create a much more positive attitude than the traditional method of the teacher correcting pupil’s text. This sharing of the work helped to keep motivation and concentration at high level (Harris, 1993).

Conclusion

The conclusions of this paper can be drawn as follows:

1. Through the use of Process Approach, by following proper stages i.e. prewriting, first draft composing, feedback, second draft writing, and proofreading, the students’ skill in writing recount text improves significantly.

2. The Process Approach applied to teach writing improves the writing skill, especially in recount text.

3. The improvement of the classroom situation
   a. By implementing Process Approach in teaching writing, the students’ behavior in learning writing recount text changes gradually.
   b. The application of Process Approach to teach writing especially in recount text is helpful to increase the students’ motivation in learning it.

4. The strengths and weaknesses

   There are some strengths and weaknesses of the process approach that need to be considered. There are more strengths than weaknesses.

   a. The strengths

   1) The process approach, covering the pre-writing, first draft composing, feedback, second draft writing, and proofreading, to teach writing in recount text helps the students to compose their writing better.

   2) When doing the third part of process approach, namely feedback, the students are asked to change the work with their peers’. By working in pairs or groups, the students improve their writing by the help of their partner’s and teacher’s comment and also develop their critical skills.

   3) The process-writing activity in the class is able to help students to develop their critical thinking and learn not to depend only on the teacher’s feedback.

   4) By implementing process approach, the students understand their writing development from the beginning to the end.
5) The students have become more motivated to study English. It is indicated that more and more students join and get involved in any given activities enthusiastically. By looking at that fact, it can also be said that students’ behavior changes gradually.

b. The weaknesses

1) The students have to spend quite a long time to complete one particular piece of writing in the classroom.

2) In the feedback stage, the students who do not have good English mastery feel difficult in checking and giving comment or suggestion to their friends’ works.

Bibliography


