

The Teacher's Strategy in Teaching Writing to Vocational High School

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Abstract:

The aim of this study is to describe the teacher's strategy in teaching writing to Vocational High School students. There are some difficulties faced by the students in writing English texts such as grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, stating the idea, etc. In this case, the researcher wanted to see how the teacher's strategy could minimize the students' problem in writing. This study employs descriptive qualitative research that describes the findings and discussion mostly in words rather than number. This study was conducted in 10th grader class. The instruments used are field notes, observation sheet, students' questionnaire consisting of seven questions, and teacher's interview guide, and questionnaire. It was found that the students of the 10th grader class were enjoying the activity in their teaching and learning process that were prepared by the teacher. They found how moving tables were enjoyable and fun to learn to write English text. In addition, the students feel more motivated to learn how to write in English better using the moving table. Therefore, the teacher's method is considered more interesting so that its use becomes more effective than just presenting material and questions as usual. The method used is more like a game, therefore this method is more liked and in demand by students.

Keywords: *Teaching Strategy, Vocational High School Teacher, Writing*

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is the skill that is used to express the feeling, ideas, and opinions in a written form. People also use writing to communicate in their daily activity. Since writing is an important skill to be acquired. The researcher decided to do some research regarding writing, teaching writing to be exact. Here the researcher would explain about the definition of writing, the teaching of writing, the difficulties in learning and teaching writing, and the reason why the researcher did this research in the first place. There are some definitions about writing according to some researchers. Nunan (2003) noted, "Writing is both a physical and mental act. At the most basic level, writing is the physical act of committing words or ideas to some

medium. On the other hand, writing is the mental work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into statements and paragraphs that will be clear to a reader". While Harmer (2001:79) stated writing is a form of communication to deliver through or to express feeling through written form. Jonah (2006:14) argues that writing is a series of activities going on and involves several phases, the preparatory phase, the content development and review, as well as revisions or improvements posts. From these three definitions of writing, there is some understanding that writing is a process of visualizing an idea into a product. Thus, if it is done by a native English speaker, it would be no problem, but for EFL students, this process will likely be a complex one. As writing is a complex process, most of the students have trouble in acquiring a good writing skill. It refers to Hayes-Flower (1981), which writes that different stages that a writer goes through when writing is controlled by an overarching factor; a component within the writer's writing ability, through which the different thought processes in the writing takes place.

Adas and Bakir (2013) stated in their article about EFL writer's writing difficulties in their article that the students identified that the teaching method and the environment are the main causes of their weaknesses in English. Their weak qualification in English is either related to the lack of student motivation, or the teacher's interest. Many learners use their mother tongue because of the isolated culture. Yet, methods of teaching English included the medium of instruction, using Indonesian in English classes, teachers' low proficiency in English, and lack of writing practice in educational institutions. Based on this argument, it is understandable that it is not only the students' will of learning that influences the success of the teaching process but also the teacher's way of teaching. It is a need for the teacher to provide an enjoyable yet meaningful teaching and learning process.

Vocational High School students are usually prepared to get a job after graduating. Therefore, English ability is a necessary thing for them. In other ways, teachers should have an innovative way of teaching especially for Vocational High School students. This problem of teaching made the researcher want to know if the teacher had any innovative way of teaching writing or not. Furthermore, the researcher needs to know how it affected the students' outcome. The researcher decided to do the research on this matter by observing a class when a teacher is teaching them writing skills. In this research, the researcher observed how an English teacher taught their class and how they managed to cope with students' problem in learning writing skill.

2. METHOD

This study is a descriptive qualitative research design, since it tries to identify, figure out, and describe the qualitative degree to which variables were related. It was also reasonable that the researcher intended to observe and describe the condition of the class and teaching strategy. According to Adnan (2016), "qualitative study was constructed in the form of deep and creative narration and showed its natural setting". The data represented not in form number. The data collected by observing the class.

The research was conducted in Vocational High School in Malang. The researcher observed one teacher for two meetings.

The time allotment for English subjects is two meetings per week, each meeting contains two hours of lessons. Each hour lesson for Vocational High School level is 45 minutes.

The researcher used three kinds of instruments to obtain the data. They were an observation sheet, interview and questionnaire. While on the data analysis, the researcher used the data from the teacher's interview in the form of transcripts that were categorized and summarized based on the observation. The data from the interview and questionnaire is also used to elaborate the observation data. All data were grouped together, summarized and presented as findings and discussion.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Implementing of Teacher's Teaching Strategy

Here, the researcher presents the strategies of teaching writing implemented that were used by the teacher. The researcher divided the description into 2 parts; meeting 1 and meeting 2. The teacher taught narrative text to 10th graders.

Table 1. Teacher's Technique and Activities in Teaching Writing

Meeting	Activity
Meeting 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The teacher started with small talk about novels then introduced narrative text to the student. - The teacher gave an example of narrative text and gave some comprehensive questions. <p>The teacher explained about the generic structure of narrative text.</p> 2. Drafting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The teacher gave assignments to the students and asked them to classify the new narrative text based on the generic structure. - Giving feedback to the assignment.
Meeting 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Re-explaining the generic structure of narrative text. - Explaining about the moving table activity. 2. Drafting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Writing the narrative text on the moving table activity. 3. Revising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Re-arranging and re-writing the narrative text. 4. Publishing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Performing the story in front of the class.

Based on findings, the researcher found that the teacher used the four steps suggested by Harmer (2004). In the theory proposed by Harmer (2004), the steps used to write are planning, drafting, revising, and publishing. In this step, the

teacher applied it in two meetings. This was done so that each step can be done well, especially the process writing stage that needs a lot of time because the steps that need to be done on this stage were quite a lot.

In the planning stage, the teacher did some brainstorming by telling the story of the novel he read before. This is in line with Imane (2015:13) brainstorming is one of the numerous ways that help the students plan their writing. Then, in drafting for the first meeting, the teacher provided basic knowledge in writing narrative text by describing the generic structure of narrative text. Of course, in this case the teacher does not explicitly provide explanations but rather interacts by providing comprehensive questions about the text displayed in the slide. This was done so that students were directly involved in learning. This way of teaching was supported by Belcher (2006: 136) who stated, "Focusing not only on what people do but learn learner investment and participation". From that statement, pupil involvement does become a point in student centred learning. Ananyeva (2014: 9) also stated, "Explores the full potential of learners and provides them with support to meet their goals".

At the first meeting, the appropriate way of teaching based on the NSW Department of Education and Training (2007) was modelled writing. This was supported by how the teacher gave the students a narrative text example while the teaching was on its way. Besides that, the activities at the first meeting had the purpose that was suitable with the theory mentioned which is "To gain knowledge about language, vocabulary, and text structures required to write for a range of purposes."

In the second meeting, the teacher packed the four stages written by Harmer (2004) in a moving table method. First, the planning step includes explaining the activities the students will be doing at the second meeting and explaining the rules of the game. Secondly, the drafting step was done when the students took turns writing on different papers, where the students wrote the ideas on their mind in the form of a sentence. Revising is also included in the moving table method because the teacher asked his students to compose and rewrite their work after they got their paperback. Of course, this was done because the students could not be expected to be able to write neatly directly. This step of practicing to write on a moving table and then later re-arranging the text and reviewing the text was supported by Akerson and Young (2005) who noted, "Learning to write well is a long process that comes through teacher modeling, instruction, practice, and feedback." The teacher first gave the model of the narrative text on the first meeting and then later on the second meeting was the time for the practice, as the teacher proposed on the moving table activities. Then the teacher would give the feedback later after the students performed their work in front of the class.

The last step is publishing. The teacher asked three students to perform the work of a collaboration of 36 students at the end of the writing process to provide feedback on them. Giving feedback is certainly very useful to motivate students to write better. Hattie (2007:81) also stated that feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement. However, Kluger and De Nisi (1996) stated certain types of feedback could actually make student performance worse.

Therefore, the teacher should give feedback in a good way to improve the students' performance.

In the second meeting, the NSW Department of Education and Training (2007) used guided writing. The students were asked to write according to the guidelines given by the teacher when the activity was about to start. At the second meeting, the teacher did not use any media. Fortunately, activities that took place during the lesson remain effective and conducive. This means that the teacher was more focused on building the interaction in the classroom so that the active and conducive atmosphere in the class could be maintained. Not that the media usage is not important, but if the media is not necessarily needed, then there is no reason to keep using it too.

In the teaching process, the researcher found that teaching method was consistent with Brown (2007) which clarified how to teach Communicative Learning and Teaching or CLT. Brown (2007) said that interactive teachers, students and materials are important. At the planning stage in the first meeting, the teacher also applied communicative learning to their students. Comprehensive questions about narrative text were included in interactive teachers – students' stage. In addition, the activities in the second meeting provided also made the students communicate with each other, according to the purpose of CLT. It was just that the teacher did not use much variety of media. In this case, the teacher's way of teaching has applied to about 80% of CLT.

Ahlsén and Lundh (2010) stated on their research, "... what she calls, "pit-stops" where the students stop their writing and go through what they have accomplished, check if everything is understood and help each other". This is almost the same as the Moving Table technique used by the teacher observed by the researcher. However, the teacher observed by Ahlsén and Lundh (2010) said that the process was not too important, what mattered was the outcome. That was why the teacher used a more interesting pit stop technique than paying attention to formal and structured writing methods such as Flower and Hayes (1981) suggestions. The teacher observed by the researcher also expressed that the results are the important ones. However, Vocational High School teachers keep saying that the process is important because the process can produce good work.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the teacher in Vocational High School Negeri 4 Malang (SMKN 4 Malang) is applying the stage taken from the theory of Harmer (2004) by teaching using the theory of Brown (2007) that makes his students more active. The teacher also used a teaching technique on the NSW Department of Education and Training (2007). The teacher divides the meeting into two so that each stage can run well. In addition, teachers use their own method called "Moving Table" during the writing process so students do not get bored and become more active.

Teacher Consideration to Implement the Strategy

According to the teacher's interview, the important thing when teaching writing for Vocational High School is the vocabulary they have and the way they put the word together. Grammar is also necessary but their way of arranging sentences is more important, because one sentence can form a neat and appropriate

paragraph of the genre. If they are able to arrange paragraphs well, usually grammar will also follow. Most importantly, they need to have a lot of vocabulary first. This is likely to become students' difficulties; therefore, the teacher uses a moving table technique so that students become more open with their friends and can learn vocab, grammar, etc. from their friends by discussion. In the moving table activities, the students who have their turn need to read the previous students have written first, so they can continue the story. Here, indirectly, the students will likely gather more vocabulary.

Enthusiastic students here are also high. They are happy with this way of teaching. They become more active, easier to absorb knowledge, and hardly feel bored. Especially with the discussions and pressures to continue writing, so they cannot help but to explore ideas in their heads. By discussing also, they learn to work together in groups.

The teacher really relies heavily on the moving table in the writing process rather than having structured writing individually. Of course, the main reason why the teacher decided to use this method was because of his judgment that this technique makes students become more active, creative and open to each other. Moreover, they are forced to work in a group. Of course, the classroom atmosphere would be more comfortable if the students are able to interact with each other actively, rather than just keep silent in class. The statement of Storch (2007) which said that arranging students in pairs and groups permits them to combine the necessary linguistic resources to come up with new constructed knowledge supports this. With the pairing inside the moving table, each student will of course be forced to come up with exciting new ideas to continue each story in turn, inevitably making them more creative.

In addition, unlike the first meeting focusing on narrative introductions of the text as basic knowledge, this second meeting also emphasized student centered learning. Many teachers misperceive the way students are centered by teaching students to just take notes or copy material without leading them to solve the problems they face. With the technique used, the teacher keeps an eye on his students in solving problems such as difficulty in exploring ideas. With this technique, students can be centered to run well and teachers can perform their role well. Hattie (2009) supports this by stating, they offer their own explanations, views and thoughts with the emphasis on them asking questions about things they do not understand.

Then, the teacher also believes that moving table techniques build students' enthusiasm. It also affects students' grades. Most students are less concerned with the topic being taught so that at the time of the test or doing the task, they have a lot of trouble because they do not understand the material well. In accordance with the argument of Vygotsky (1978: 16) that make-believe play, drawing and writing comprise of different moments in an essential combined process of development of written language, this means with the practice of writing directly, students can immediately understand what the problem them as well as their problem solving. It also helps them in developing their writing skills.

The technique used is of course not always applied at any time. There are times when teachers use other techniques, depending on the existing classroom

situation and the needs of the students. However, as much as possible the teacher chooses the proper techniques such as the use of AREL techniques or debates for the higher classes. This is done to build an active, conducive, and comfortable class.

Students Opinion towards the Strategy

The result of the open-ended question about the students' difficulties to write in English is stated as follows on figure 1.

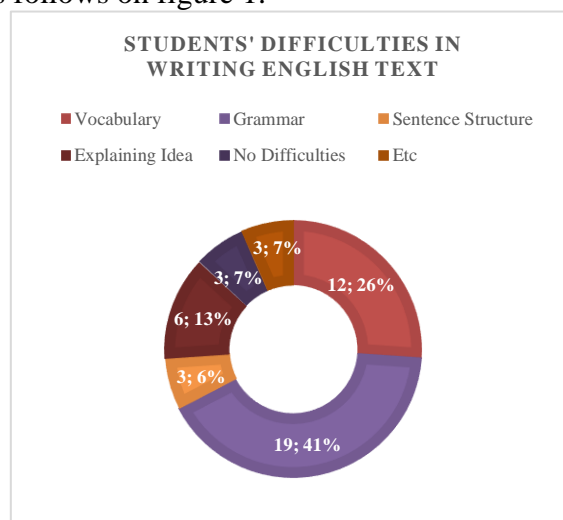


Figure 1. Students' Difficulties in Writing English Text

Based on the data above, the researcher found that most of the students had difficulty in using grammar, vocabulary mastery, and explaining ideas. Not only that, some also find it difficult in composing a sentence especially when they have to write it directly in English. In the etc. category, some students claim that they will be panic if they are told to write in English, and there are some students who are not confident with their ability to write. However, there are also those who claim to have found no significant difficulties.

The following is the result of the Yes or No questions on the questionnaire that has been distributed to the students and summarized in Figure 2.

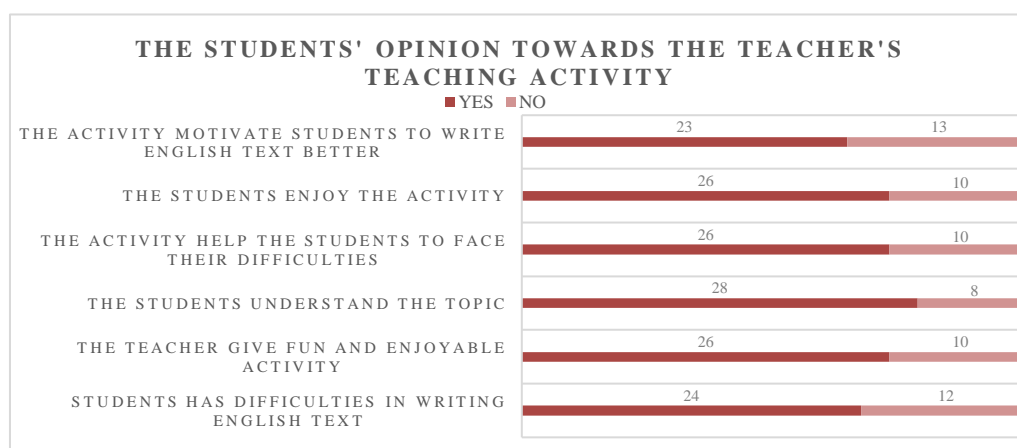


Figure 2. Students' Opinion the Teacher's Teaching Activity

Then from the figure about students' opinions on how the teacher taught the class, it could be concluded that most of them felt happy with the methods used by the teacher. However, for motivation the researcher found out that the students seemed a bit lazy to write further.

The students' opinions on how the teacher teaches could be considered good. The number of students who answered 'Yes' on the questionnaire that has been given supports this. In addition, the students also expressed their difficulties during their writing. From the students' statement, the teacher can make it as a benchmark of his success in teaching and what things the teacher should address.

Over 50% of students think that their teachers' teaching techniques are fun and able to help overcome the difficulties they face. Most of the students are not very interested in writing, especially if the topic they have to write is very boring. However, because of the techniques applied by the teacher, they inevitably have to write and after trying it, they stated that writing is not that difficult.

However, most students still find it difficult. Most of them say that the use of grammar is so difficult, and then vocabulary selection is also one of the main problems for them in writing. Exploring ideas is also difficult for them especially if the theme is not determined so that the scope of their thinking becomes too broad. Khan in Derakhshan and Shirejini (2020:2) mentions that they face several problems in phoneme clusters, spellings, grammar, mistakes due to first language interference, structure, doubling of subjects, doubling of preposition, tenses, articles, appropriate vocabulary, incorrect use of prefixes, suffixes, etc.

Students' enthusiasm, good grades, and students' understanding of a topic can be a benchmark for the teacher in determining whether the applied technique is good or not. From the results of the questionnaire, the researcher believes that the technique used by this teacher is considered successful by the students and can be used as a model for other teachers.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The teacher applied two kinds of strategies to teach the process of writing. This is supported by the stage that had been done by the teacher coherently in two meetings. At the first meeting, the teacher focused on planning and drafting which is taught by using modeled writing. At the second meeting, the teacher focused on the four stages, which are planning, drafting, revising, and publishing. In the second meeting, the teacher taught by using guided writing.

Students think that this technique is fun and feel helped by the existence of this technique. They become more eager to follow activities and interact with their classmates. Difficulties can also be solved together while following this activity. That means, the technique used by this teacher can be used as an effective learning model and student centred based. This is supported by student responses, researcher observations, as well as the teacher's own opinion about the classroom atmosphere that occurs in the classroom.

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