

IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING ABILITY USING GUIDED COMPOSITION

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Abstract

The phenomenon that emerge in the schools, particularly in Junior High School, just few students have a good ability in writing. Most of them have limited ability in writing. They usually take plenty of time if their teacher gives them a writing assignment. The students' English achievement, especially in their writing ability is not sufficient. The students' writing achievement is still low. One method that is considered to be effective to apply in language classroom is Guided Composition. It is a kind of writing composition which trains the students to write step by step. Composition might be defined as an act of putting sentences together (Spencer, 1967: 67). Constructing composition is not easy since it is a long process. Meanwhile, guided is giving the step or the way to do something.

Keywords : Guided Composition, Writing Ability

Introduction

English is considered as a foreign language in Indonesia. It is taught from Elementary School to University. The English language teaching in Indonesia is focused on the ability of the students' communication which can be in the written or spoken form. Learning English as a matter fact is a complex process. English comprises of four skills that should be mastered if someone really wants to be successful in English. The skills cover reading and listening which belong to receptive

skills and speaking and writing which belong to productive skills. They are inter-correlated and interdependent. Although speaking ability is dominant during the activities of English language teaching, writing ability also needs to be mastered. The importance of writing does not emerge without any reason. Writing emerges in societies as a result of cultural changes which later create new communicative needs (Nunan, 1991: 8).

The writing ability is something complex since it needs many aspects to be mastered like vocabulary, grammar, and idea. The students should master grammar and vocabulary since they are used to convey the ideas (Suryadiputra, 1992: 7). If the ideas are still vague, the students will not be able to write well, although they are good in vocabulary and grammar.

This difficulty may occur across levels of education. It also takes place in English instructional process at MTs As-Syafi'iyah 03, Jatiwaringin, Bekasi.

The KKM (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimum) of English in the seventh grade is 65. This score comes from the scores of the four skills. So the students can be said having good ability in writing at least if they get 65 in their writing. Ideally they get 70. However, most of the students have low scores in writing. The data of writing score obtained in preliminary research showing that the highest score was 67. There was 1 student getting score which is 67 while the rest getting score under the passing grade which is 65 consisting of 29 students. It means that the students' writing ability needs to be improved.

For this reason, a suitable method in teaching writing should be found so that the students can explore their ideas and make good English writing. Guided composition is one way in teaching writing especially in intermediate level, although it can be used to teach both elementary and intermediate level (Fauziati, 2002: 148). It

introduces the type, function, and structure of written text. It also encourages the students to write well, clearly, and correctly based on the guided pattern. The students can write a composition easily after they comprehend the systematic of writing. At last the students will be capable of writing composition with a minimum error and they will be ready to move into composition.

Literature

The Notion of Guided Composition

Composition might be defined as an act of putting sentences together (Spencer, 1967: 67). Constructing composition is not easy since it is a long process. Meanwhile, guided is giving the step or the way to do something. Guided composition is one way in teaching writing especially in intermediate level, although it can be used to teach both elementary and intermediate level (Fauziati, 2002: 148). It introduces the type, function, and structure of written text. It also encourages the students to write well, clearly, and correctly based on the guided pattern. The students can write a composition easily after they comprehend the systematic of writing. At last the students will be capable of writing composition with a minimum error and they will be ready to move into composition.

Guided composition is one of good techniques that are appropriately used in teaching writing particularly to the pre-intermediate level. The writing ability could be improved through carefully controlled guidelines given. The students will be given some freedom in selecting lexical items and structural patterns for their written exercise, but the exercise within a framework retraining them from attempting to compose at a level beyond his state knowledge (Rivers, 1994: 250). The framework will provide rhetorical pattern and grammatical rules to help students before they

write a composition. The exercise of guided composition is language – based on which the learners usually concentrated on vocabulary building, reading comprehension, grammar, spelling, punctuation and even oral ability that culminate in the writing.

Guided composition is about small group instruction. Ideally, guided composition groups should have 4-6 students in them. Guided composition groups are based on need, not writing ability. Students use their own writing while they are with the group. After the teacher delivers the writing principle and goes through the procedural steps, the teacher confers with each student while the rest of the kids are working on their own writing. In short, guided composition is an opportunity to provide explicit instruction to a small since it is an individual or group activity where learners use word maps to organize their ideas and write texts.

In the implementation of guided composition, the students are given a short text and instructed to change the all singular nouns to plural nouns or to form present tense to past tense, and so on. It is suitable used for the students who are not ready yet to create text themselves; they are only ready to manipulate forms.

The Principles of Guided Composition

In guided composition, started from the pre writing discussion, the modeling, and especially the support and scaffolding throughout the process, provides writer with practical help bolster their confidence. Sullivan (2008 : 21) proposes there are several principles and practices that guided composition embodies, as follows:

- a. It provides instruction in the characteristics of the genre so that the students have strategies in participating to learn the task.
- b. It articulates the criteria for success of the writing task so that the students can see the target clearly and can assess their progress and performance.

- c. It presents writing task in manageable component or stages of larger complex composition.
- d. It involves the students in revision with the teacher and peers to provide support of the improvement for some aspects of their work.
- e. It provides students to experience success for certain level.
- f. It is shared writing, in which a group of students can create texts; product and process can be analyzed and celebrated.

The Types of Guided Composition

According to Alter (1991: iii) there are two types of guided composition, they are as follows:

a. Preceding comprehension passage

The guidelines are given on the composition topics to write. Some of the guidelines should be given to the students first to help them organize what they are supposed to write. Then they can start from their comprehension of the passage. This type demands the teacher to provide the students with the necessary vocabulary and pattern to write their own composition.

b. Picture composition

The sequences of pictures putting together will lead questions and key expressions given to help the students write with high confidence and enjoyment. The sequence of pictures is given followed by leading questions for the students to answer. By so – doing, the writing of the composition can be smoothly guided.

Methodology

This Classroom Action research was conducted at MTs As-Syafi'iyah 03 Jatiwaringin, Bekasi. The researcher also investigated the students' problem,

classroom situation, the cause of the problem, indicators of the problem, solution and suitable material to prepare for the research implementation. These are shown in table.

Table 3.2: The Description of Initial Reflection

| No | Topics | Descriptions |
|----|--------------------------------|---|
| 1 | The Problem of the research | During the first semester, the researcher investigated that the students find some difficulties to express their ideas in written language. |
| 2 | The Indicators of the Research | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The students make mistakes when they arrange their writing into a cohesive and coherent paragraph. b. They have difficulties to describe or give explanation for the main ideas in their paragraphs. c. They use incorrect diction (words choice) and the meaning of words. d. They afraid of making mistakes in writing. They are shy if their work is not good enough. e. They have low self-confidence in many aspects of writing, such as vocabulary and grammar. f. They also have low motivation. Most of students have low motivation in learning English. It is caused by the fact that the students were not motivated to write in English and most of the students consider that writing is a difficult task and always makes them bored. |
| 3 | The classroom situation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The students are not active and creative. Some of them cheat their friend's work or rewrite from the books. b. The students are boring with the teaching learning process. Some of them often lay their head on the table or yawn lazily. c. The students are lazy to practice writing in the school or out of the school. d. The teaching technique offered by the teacher is very uninteresting. |
| 4 | The causes of the problem | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The students: the students do not get sufficient writing exercises to explore their ideas, do not have self-confidence, and are afraid of making mistakes. b. The teacher: the teacher does not give enough exercises and suitable teaching method to support the teaching – learning process, especially in teaching writing. The teacher's choice of methods |

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| | | <p>and techniques is not appropriate yet.</p> <p>c. The class situation: the situation in the writing class is uncomfortable for the students so they are stressed, afraid, and strained when the teacher give them writing exercises.</p> |
| 5 | <p>a. Solution</p> <p>b. What is Guided Composition?</p> <p>c. Why is Guided Composition Chosen?</p> | <p>The researcher use Guided Composition can improve the students' writing ability.</p> <p>It is a kind of writing composition which trains the students to write step by step. Composition might be defined as an act of putting sentences together (Spencer, 1967: 67). Constructing composition is not easy since it is a long process. Meanwhile, guided is giving the step or the way to do something. Guided composition is one way in teaching writing especially in intermediate level, although it can be used to teach both elementary and intermediate level (Fauziati, 2002: 148). It introduces the type, function, and structure of written text. It also encourages the students to write well, clearly, and correctly based on the guided pattern.</p> <p>a. It provides instruction in the characteristics of the genre so that the students have strategies in participating to learn the task.</p> <p>b. It articulates the criteria for success of the writing task so that the students can see the target clearly and can assess their progress and performance.</p> <p>c. It presents writing task in manageable component or stages of larger complex composition.</p> <p>d. It involves the students in revision with the teacher and peers to provide support of the improvement for some aspects of their work.</p> <p>e. It provides students to experience success for certain level.</p> <p>f. It is shared writing, in which a group of students can create texts; product and process can be analyzed and celebrated.</p> |
| 6 | How to implement the Guided Composition? | <p>a. Before writing – to support students' planning and drafting of their work. The previous shared session should be referred back to and then extended to further children's learning in the writing process.</p> <p>b. At the point of writing – this can be when the students are beginning to, or have already begun to write independently. The sessions should be used to praise efforts and offer constructive criticism in order to move learning on.</p> <p>c. After writing – feedback sessions - Students should be given the opportunity to assess their independent writing. This can be achieved independently or with peer support.</p> |

The initial reflection of the students' writing ability and classroom situation before the Action Research implementation as summarized in Table 3.2 are described in more detailed as in the following. The teacher found out the problem of the

research. During the first month, the researcher investigate that the students have some difficulties to express their ideas in writing. It means that they lack of writing ability. There are some indicators of the problem, they are: they still make mistakes in constructing sentences, it is seen from the students' writing assignment, they still make mistakes when they arrange their writing into a cohesive and coherent paragraph, they have difficulties to describe or give explanation for the main ideas in their paragraphs, they use incorrect diction (words choice) and the meaning of words.

Findings and Discussion

The researcher would like to present research findings as the answer for the problems which have been stated in the first chapter. It involves introduction and then it is continued with cycle 1, cycle 2 and cycle 3, which include planning the action, implementing the action, observing the action, evaluating and reflecting, and revising the plan at every cycle. The result gained from cycle 1 determines the next cycle.

Table 4.5 Overall Implementation of the Research

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| 1. Problem : Students had low writing ability | |
| 2. Solution : Teaching writing through Guided Composition | |
| 3. Students : Seventh Grade | |
| 4. No of Cycle: 1 | |
| 1. Cycle 1 | Describing Animals |
| Planning | 1)Sharing ideas with collaborator 2)Making lesson plan 3)Preparing the suitable materials using guided composition. 4) Dividing the main teaching activities into three |

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| | <p>parts: Preparation, main activities, post activities.</p> <p>5) Designing post test.</p> |
| Action | <p>1)Meeting 1</p> <p>Explaining about the generic structure of descriptive text, example of animals, organization of idea, and developing idea, how to spell words correctly, appropriate vocabularies to express their idea, making descriptive text using guided composition.</p> <p>2)Meeting 2</p> <p>Discussing the take home assignment.</p> <p>3)Meeting 3</p> <p>Discussing the student's draft and</p> <p>4)Meeting 4</p> <p>post test 1.</p> |
| Observation | <p>Students : Many students were interested in the activity and group work, tried to write, tried to explore their ideas but some students were still confused what should they do.</p> <p>The teacher: The teacher prepared worksheet, did not give enough example of written model and grammar discussion, gave too many translation of English words to students, lack of monitoring.</p> <p>Classroom situation: Enjoyable, alive, most students were active to participate in the class activities.</p> |
| Reflection | <p>(+): There were various activities of vocabulary building, the exploration of ideas was increased make</p> |

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| | <p>students interested to write with logical development of ideas suitable to the topic (content).</p> <p>(-): Lack of monitoring, lack discussion about grammar, too many tasks to do in a single meeting, limited time because so much time to review the last material / basic English because the students forgot it, the students still had difficulties in organization, syntax / grammar, and mechanics of writing.</p> |
| 2. Cycle 2 | Describing Trees |
| Planning | <p>Meeting 1: Vocabulary building using various tasks in Guided Composition.</p> <p>Meeting 2: Main tasks.</p> <p>Meeting 3: Language focus by explaining, analyzing and practicing materials in tasks using Guided Composition.</p> <p>Meeting 4: Post – test.</p> |
| Action | <p>Meeting 1: Pre – task.</p> <p>Meeting 2: Task: Describe a tree.</p> <p>Meeting 3: Language Focus by explaining, analyzing and practicing materials in tasks using Guided Composition.</p> |

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| | Meeting 4: Post – test. |
| Observation | <p>Students : The students were more active.</p> <p>The teacher: The teacher was more innovative by giving interesting picture and activity, giving enough tasks, grammar and vocabulary discussion.</p> <p>Classroom situation: More alive, more fun and enjoyable because the topic was interesting.</p> |
| Reflection | <p>(+): Encourage the students to participate, keep giving enjoyable task and interesting pictures, giving enough tasks, grammar, and vocabulary discussion.</p> <p>(-) : Waste time for laughing and did not enough control of class, the students made many Indonesian translation style, the students too often to look into their dictionary to translate the words, the evaluation could not be done right away, the students were still had difficulties in organization and mechanics.</p> |
| 3. Cycle 3 | Describing Things |
| Planning | <p>Meeting 1: Vocabulary building using various tasks in Guided Composition.</p> <p>Meeting 2: Main task.</p> <p>Meeting 3: Language focus by explaining, analyzing</p> |

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|-------------|---|
| | <p>and practicing materials in tasks using Guided Composition.</p> <p>Meeting 4: Post – test.</p> |
| Action | <p>Meeting 1: Pre – task.</p> <p>Meeting 2: Task: Describe the Things!</p> <p>Meeting 3: Language focus by explaining, analyzing and practicing materials in tasks using Guided Composition.</p> <p>Meeting 4: Post - test.</p> |
| Observation | <p>Students: Their writing ability improved in exploring their ideas and using many aspects of writing such as organization, content, syntax / grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary.</p> <p>The teacher: More innovative, gave clear explanation and motivation to the students.</p> <p>Classroom situation: More alive and enjoyable in doing the tasks.</p> |
| Reflection | <p>(+): Improve writing ability in organization, content, grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary, encourage the students to explore their ideas, class situation was more alive, the students were more active, Indonesian</p> |

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| | <p>translation style was reduced.</p> <p>(-): the challenging of tasks need to be increased.</p> |
| Final Reflection | <p>Writing ability increased in all aspects of writing from cycle to cycle, Indonesian translation style was reduced, and the students were active in conducting the tasks.</p> <p>Classroom situation: The students' participation was increased in exploring their ideas, the teacher was more innovative, and the teacher explored the students' potentials in writing.</p> |

RESULT OF ALL SCORES

| No. Subject | Pre - test | Cycle 1 | Cycle 2 | Cycle 3 |
|-------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1 | 35 | 68 | 78 | 90 |
| 2 | 46 | 76 | 85 | 83 |
| 3 | 40 | 54 | 59 | 73 |
| 4 | 67 | 78 | 92 | 95 |
| 5 | 32 | 75 | 76 | 89 |
| 6 | 55 | 70 | 84 | 80 |
| 7 | 34 | 51 | 56 | 69 |
| 8 | 41 | 56 | 64 | 64 |
| 9 | 40 | 63 | 76 | 89 |
| 10 | 36 | 63 | 64 | 66 |
| 11 | 41 | 72 | 79 | 81 |
| 12 | 57 | 68 | 73 | 82 |
| 13 | 42 | 63 | 73 | 83 |
| 14 | 47 | 62 | 76 | 76 |
| 15 | 29 | 59 | 66 | 78 |
| 16 | 58 | 63 | 72 | 87 |
| 17 | 44 | 66 | 68 | 84 |
| 18 | 41 | 52 | 55 | 73 |

| | | | | |
|------------|------|-----------|------|-----------|
| 19 | 28 | 61 | 67 | 70 |
| 20 | 45 | 77 | 86 | 90 |
| 21 | 28 | 42 | 62 | 69 |
| 22 | 44 | 59 | 62 | 78 |
| 23 | 48 | 72 | 76 | 85 |
| 24 | 35 | 57 | 64 | 62 |
| 25 | 36 | 55 | 69 | 81 |
| 26 | 26 | 48 | 58 | 70 |
| 27 | 34 | 64 | 77 | 80 |
| 28 | 35 | 63 | 71 | 79 |
| 29 | 37 | 76 | 75 | 80 |
| 30 | 36 | 67 | 77 | 83 |
| TOTAL | 1210 | 1900 | 2140 | 2369 |
| MEAN | 40 | 63 | 71 | 79 |
| MIN SCORES | 26 | 42 | 55 | 62 |
| MAX SCORES | 67 | 78 | 92 | 95 |

Conclusion

Based on the findings of improving students' writing ability through guided composition technique in this research, the researcher drew some conclusions. The major conclusion of this research was that the implementation of Guided composition technique had many advantages to help the students improve their writing competence and encourage them to be more active in writing class. Based on the result of the research above, the conclusion could be drawn into three points as follows:

1. Guided composition technique could improve the students' writing ability.

The students could state main ideas of the topic, then express or organize their ideas dealing with a descriptive text such as identification and description in written form. The identification part is the part where the students were able to identify phenomenon to be described. The description part, the students were able to describe logically about parts, qualities, and characteristics about an animal and a tree. Besides,

the students could improve their vocabulary. It means that they were able to choose appropriate words and use them in making sentences.

The students were able to perform minimum grammatical errors especially in the use of simple present tense. And the last, they could avoid mechanics (spelling and punctuation) mistakes on their composition. It means they were carefully to use mechanics in their writing. Then, the students' writing achievement was also improved from pre-test to post-test cycle 1 to cycle 2.

2. Guided composition technique could improve the students' behavior and motivation.
 - a. The students were more actively in asking to the teacher about their problems of writing. When they got difficulty to find the new vocabulary or to apply the correct grammar, they were more confident to ask for to the teacher individually or through discussing in pair. Besides, they felt happy and interested in learning English focusing on writing.
 - b. The implementation of writing process could be implemented effectively in teaching writing and the students were enthusiastic to follow the steps of the writing process: (1) Ideas/pre-writing. In this step the teacher wanted to motivate and brainstorm the students to get ideas or generate ideas for the topic. The teacher led the helper to raise questions to stimulate the writer's ideas. (2) Drafting. This step, the teacher asked the students (writers) to begin writing a rough draft as the first draft based on the discovered ideas and review from the helper. (3) Reading. In this step, the teacher gave chances to 14 students as writer to read the rough draft, and the other 14 students as their partner or helper to correct the draft. (4) Editing. In this step the pair was incorporated with editing activities. They were assigned to edit their drafts in

term of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. (5) Copying. In this step the teacher asked the students (writers) to write the best version of the product. And (6) Evaluating. The teacher held a conference by asking the students to exchange their works with another pair. They gave comments to other pairs' works, and they used editing guidelines to check and write any comments or corrections for improvement. Those steps were carried out by the pair of the students based on their role as a writer and a helper. Their motivation also increased gradually in doing their own writing with his/her partner from cycle one to cycle two.

- c. The way the students doing self reflection to their writing activity and to the response of the process of the research improved from cycle one to cycle two. They had interest and awareness in doing the steps of the writing process to produce the final writing.
- d. The teacher was more innovative not only in planning teaching writing to make the students to be more motivated in writing, but also in conducting discussion, evaluating and doing teaching reflection.

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