USING JIGSAW TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE THE WRITING ABILITY OF THE SECOND YEAR STUDENTS OF *MTs AL-ISLAM NGANJUK*

Muhammad Lukman Syafii
Muhammadiyah University of Ponorogo
s.muhammadlukman@yahoo.com

Abstract

Writing as one of language skills plays significant roles in the teaching English as a foreign language. Since the teacher still uses the conventional way to teach writing, students' ability in the writing seems still unsatisfactory yet. So, teacher should explore and develop new strategies to encourage them to be productive in the task of writing in order that they can apply those strategies in constructing their improvements in writing independently and autonomously. This research is designed to improve their writing narrative text in English through Jigsaw technique. The objective of the research is to apply and adapt Jigsaw technique to improve their writing a narrative text. The method applied in this research was a classroom action research. The finding showed that Jigsaw technique was successful in improving their writing a narrative text. The improvement could be seen from the increase of their average writing scores. Besides, the finding showed that Jigsaw technique was effective in enhancing their participation, especially in motivating them in writing narrative text.

Key words: Writing Ability, Jigsaw technique

INTRODUCTION

Writing as one of the language skills is not acquired naturally. Writing is considered the most difficult and complicated language skill to be learned compared to other language skills**.** Nunan (1989:35) argues that learning to write fluently and expressively is the most difficult of four language skills for all students whether it is for first, second or foreign language students. Furthermore, Nunan (1999:271) highlights that the most difficult thing to do in learning a foreign language is probably in producing a coherent, fluent, and extended piece of writing. In line with Nunan, Richards and Renandya (2002:303) state that writing is the most difficult skill for second language (L2) students to master. The difficulty lies not only in organizing and generating ideas, but also in translating these ideas into readable texts. The skills involved in writing are highly complex. L2 students have to pay attention to higher level skills of planning and organizing as well as lower level skills of spelling, punctuation, word choice, and so on. The difficulty becomes even more pronounced if their language proficiency is weak.

Based on the School-Based Curriculum, as stated in *Depdiknas* (2006:287-290), the competence standard of writing of Junior High School level is to express meaning in functional written texts and simple short essays in the form of descriptive, procedure, narrative, recount, and report to interact with both the closer environment and the context of daily life. It becomes the reason why the teaching of writing is important. Harmer (1998:79) states that some reasons for teaching writing to the students of English as a foreign language include reinforcement, language development, learning style, and writing as a basic language skill. This means that in order to have a writing skill, students should write. In line with Harmer, Raimes (1987) in Widiati and Cahyono (2006:140) highlights that there are six purposes of teaching writing: writing for reinforcement, training, imitation, communication, fluency, and learning. Furthermore, Raimes (1983:3) highlights that teaching writing helps students learn to use language.

Considering the complexity and the importance of writing, an English teacher should be an effective teacher, who can draw students' talents and then use variety of teaching methods and strategies to improve their talents. The writing class should be facilitated

with activities which motivate students to learn. Teaching writing is not just opening the book, giving assignments, and grading paper. The students are not just writing based on the topic given and collecting the product at the end of a lesson. The students should be challenged and stimulated by interesting and fun activities during the teaching and learning process. According to Brown (2001:340) one of the challenges of becoming an effective writing teacher is by facilitating the students in learning writing. As the facilitator, the teacher must offer guidance in helping students to engage in the process of writing.

Many students of *MTs Al-Islam Nganjuk* find some difficulties in learning writing. The difficulties affect the students' result of writing. A preliminary study which was conducted on July 28th 20014 shows that the students' average score in writing a narrative text was 49.6 (forty-nine point six), while the minimum adequacy criteria (*KKM/Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal*) is 60.0 (sixty point zero). The result indicates that the students' writing achievement is not satisfactory yet. They often make mistakes in grammar, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and their paragraph organization and content are poor. Besides, it is supported by the students' results of questionnaire distributed in the preliminary study that many of the students have a big problem in writing due to some reasons. First, they do not know how to begin their writing especially when they have no idea what to write. Second, they find it difficult to generate and translate the ideas into a readable text because of lack of vocabulary. Third, they feel bored in writing class because the learning activities in writing are monotonous. The teacher usually asks the students to rearrange some words into a good sentence. The students are also asked to write a simple paragraph using their own words without the teacher's assistance. The questionnaire sheet and the result of students' perception about the questionnaire could be seen in the preliminary study.

Based on the facts above, the difficulties of students and the unsatisfactory results in writing at *MTs Al-Islam Nganjuk* might be due to the ineffective technique of teaching writing and this causes the teaching and learning activities to be inactive. In this case, firstly, the teacher does not make a good planning which includes general and specific instructional objectives, instructional materials and media for teaching writing. Burden and Byrd (1999:137) state that the use of instructional media during instruction can facilitate and enhance students' learning. However, to help students to be able to write, a teacher should be more creative to find out the authentic material and appropriate media which help the students to engage in teaching writing.

Secondly, the teacher possibly assumes that writing is a product–oriented which focuses on the end result of the learning process. The students are expected to be able to do as fluent and competent as user of the language does. Meanwhile, writing is not a single activity, but one which is recursive, it means that writing has several stages and these can be performed from the initial to the final stages, and can proceed through again, until the final product is presented. Nunan (1991:87) states that writing is a long and often painful process. Due to this situation, the teacher has to involve the students with various classroom activities which are believed to promote the development of language skill.

The last is, potentially, the domination by the teacher. The teacher dominates the classroom activities. The activities in the teaching and learning of writing are likely to be teacher-centered. Students rarely work cooperatively. They are often given individual works that induce them to give up dealing with difficult tasks. The students actually prefer to be more frequently engaged in cooperative learning. As a result, students find writing instruction dreary. These are the factors that cause the low level of students' motivation. However, the teacher has to transform the teaching and learning process to be student-centered to increase the students' motivation. Brown (2001:82) states that learner-centered, cooperative teaching, helps the students to develop intrinsic motives. In

addition, Nunan (1991:87) states that collaborative group work between students is a way of enhancing motivation and developing positive attitudes towards writing.

Considering the problems in the teaching of writing at *MTs Al-Islam Nganjuk* above, there is a need to implement a strategy or technique that can solve the problems. First, since the students have low motivation in writing activities, involving them with a strategy which promotes cooperative and interesting activities will motivate them in writing activities. Jigsaw is one of the cooperative learning strategies as one alternative strategy which engages students in learning to write. According to Coelho, et al (1989:5) Jigsaw refers to a particular technique of cooperative learning to enhance academic performance and improve interracial relations in the classroom. In Jigsaw technique, the students work in the same group of four to six members and each member in a team becomes an expert on a topic. If group and individual performances are components of the final assessment, individuals are motivated not only to learn the material but also to encourage all group members to understand the basis of the knowledge. No student can succeed completely unless everyone works well together as a team. The affective benefit of small-group work is an increase in students' motivation (Brown, 2001:178). Being motivated, students will participate actively during the lesson.

Second, because generating ideas is a common problem encountered by the majority of the students, providing them with interesting media is worth doing, for example, by giving picture sequences as the media. Related to the technique, each student is given a specific picture sequence to make a story using the principle of information gap. Brown (2001:185) points out that Jigsaw technique is a special form of information gap in which each member of a group is given some specific information which aims to pool all information to achieve some objectives. The students will achieve success in generating their ideas as a consequence of paying attention to their peers, sharing ideas, asking questions, helping each other, teaching each other, and helping each other to teach.

Based on the benefits of the technique, the students are not only motivated and helped in generating ideas but they also feel enjoyed during the teaching and learning writing process. Brown (2001:185) states that the students enjoy the Jigsaw technique and almost always find challenging things because the sense of competition and fun. There is less boredom in Jigsaw classroom than in traditional classroom. Students in Jigsaw classes respond better while being in the position of the teacher and it can be an exciting change of place for all students. If smart students are encouraged to develop to be "the intellectual teacher", the learning experience can be transformed from a boring task into an exciting challenge.

The connections between reading and writing are significant. It is realized that reading skill is never taught separately from other skills. It means that reading is taught by integrating with other three skills, namely listening, speaking, and writing. Braunger and Lewis (2006: 64) state that current research clearly reaffirms that engaging learners in many combined reading–and–writing experience leads to a higher level of thinking than when either process is taught alone. Vacca and Vacca (1999: 261) state that when teachers integrate writing and reading, they help students use writing to think about what they will read and understand what they have read. Teachers can put students into write-to-read or read-to-write situation because the writing process is a powerful tool for exploring and clarifying meaning. Cox (1999: 339-340) states that both reading and writing are dynamic and interactive processes construct meaning, and the roles of both readers and writers are active and recursive. Reading gives children ideas for writing, and writing can clarify children's understanding of what they read (Cox, 1999: 339-340). In addition, Tompkins and Hoskisson (1995:197) argue that reading and writing are both processes of constructing meaning; readers and writers use similar problem–solving strategies, and there are practical benefits of connecting reading and writing. Reading

contributes to students' writing development, and writing contributes to students' reading development.

Therefore, considering the close integration between reading and writing, it is strongly assumed that Jigsaw technique used in the teaching of reading have also a great chance to be implemented in the teaching of writing. Based on his study, Hedge (2005: 40) state that Jigsaw technique was well established to motivate students in writing story in which each student gives a specific picture sequence to make a story by using the principle of information gap. An information gap is basically one where a student or group of students is given some specific information which is unknown to another student or group.

Related to the benefits of Jigsaw technique, the researcher involves the students in Jigsaw technique. The researcher focuses on improvement of writing ability of the second year students of narrative text by using one of the cooperative learning strategies, namely Jigsaw.

METHOD

The design of this research was Classroom Action Research (CAR) since this research was focused on the teaching and learning activities in the classroom. This action was designed to improve the students' writing ability through Jigsaw technique. The classroom action research design of this study was a collaborative classroom action research in which the researcher was assisted by one of the English teachers of *MTs Al-Islam Nganjuk*.

In conducting the research, the researcher followed a number of steps. The steps included preliminary study to analyze and identify the problems as the preparation, followed by planning the action, implementing the action, observing, analyzing, and reflecting. The researcher conducted the research procedure that follows the Kemmis and Mc Taggart's procedure (Kemmis & Mc Taggart, 1988:15).

In the planning stage, the researcher and his collaborator made a careful action preparation prior to the implementation of the action based on the result of the preliminary study. The preparation consisted of designing a suitable model of Jigsaw technique and the lesson plans for teaching of writing, developing the materials and media and determining the success criteria. The success criteria encompassed (1) the students' motivation toward the implementation of Jigsaw technique during the teaching and learning process, it was considered motivated if there were 70% (29 out of 42) of students are enthusiastic in writing narrative text as well as developed social interaction one to another in their group starting from the pre-activity up to the post-activity of the teaching process and (2) the students' improvement in writing, it is considered successful if 65% (27 out of 42) of the students with individual score in writing narrative text achieve at least the same as or above 60.0.

In the implementation stage, the plan concerning with the teaching and learning of writing through Jigsaw technique was implemented after all of the preparations had been made. In implementing the action, it was decided that the researcher acted as the implementer of Jigsaw technique in teaching of writing whereas his collaborator acted as the observer whose job was conducting the observation during the teaching and learning process.

In the observation stage, the data gathering using students' writing product in addition to questionnaire, observation checklist and filed notes were carried out. The data gained from these instruments were used to confirm whether the success criteria were conformed or not. Besides, they were also used to identify aspects of the technique that needed to be modified in the subsequent plan.

In the reflection stage, the researcher and the collaborative teacher discussed together the implementation and observation during the teaching and learning process in the classroom. The researcher made two kinds of conclusion, the each cycle-based conclusion and the final conclusion. The conclusion of each cycle was made to determine whether or not another cycle was needed while the final conclusion was made to describe the model of teaching of writing using Jigsaw technique that had been improved.

RESULT

The research finding yielded the appropriate model of Jigsaw activity in teaching writing encompasses the following procedures: (1) giving the students a model of narrative text provided with the picture sequence related to the text as a reading text to build the students' knowledge of the story and language input in vocabulary, grammatical usage, and the generic structure of narrative texts, (2) assigning students to read the story and pay attention in vocabulary and sentence structure or language feature of narrative texts, (3) questioning to ensure that the students have understood about the story and generic structure of narrative texts, (4) organizing students into groups of four called Expert Group, (5) distributing the different part of picture sequence provided some key words to stimulate and help students in describing the events, (6) asking each student to write a description of a picture or part of the story, (7) collecting the pictures, (8) reorganizing students into Jigsaw Groups, (9) asking each student to present and share her or his part of the story to the group, in order to get the whole story, (10) floating from group to group, observing the process, (11) asking students to write the complete story individually so that students quickly come to realize that these sessions are not just fun and games but really count, (12) asking students to revise their draft on content and organization using the revising guide, (13) giving students a chance to edit their writing in terms of grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation using editing guide, and (14) publishing the students' revision and completed versions by reading aloud at the end of the session or displaying on the wall magazine.

Furthermore, the implementation of Jigsaw technique in teaching of writing has successfully improved the second year students' writing ability in narrative text at *MTs Al-Islam Nganjuk*. The improvement could be seen from the increase of students' average writing score from 49.6 in the preliminary study, and 60.2 in the first cycle, to 70.2 in the second cycle. Besides, the finding indicated that Jigsaw technique was effective in motivating and encouraging the students to participate actively in writing a narrative text. It was found that there were 74.0% students who were motivated in the first cycle and 83.8% students were motivated in the second cycle. In addition, it showed that there were 83.1% students participated actively in the first cycle and 88.9% students participated enthusiastically in the second cycle.

DISCUSSION

Jigsaw is a cooperative learning strategy that is effective to develop a rich understanding of the assigned topic and enable each student to specialize in one aspect of a learning unit. Each team member is responsible for mastering part of the learning material and then teaching that part to the other team members (Arends, 1979:363). Jigsaw can be used in majority of subject—social studies, literature, and some parts of science—which all the materials written in the narrative or descriptive form (Slavin, 1995:122). This is because its uniqueness and its adaptiveness. Besides, Jigsaw encouraged students to participate actively in the lesson and build social-relationship, positive interdependence, and individual accountability.

Concerning the implementation of the action, there were some points which have to be noticed on the teaching procedure and media in the teaching of writing a narrative text. In terms of the teaching procedure, the teacher can modify and vary the procedure in

implementing Jigsaw which is appropriate with the learning objectives. Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (1991) and Kagan (1992) in Ledlow (2008:1) recommend many variations for implementation of Jigsaw. Moreover, Jigsaw can be used in a variety of ways for a variety of goals (Hakkarainen, 2008:1).Therefore, it was a good way to organize the students to Expert Group directly in order to eliminate students' boredom and timesaving so that the students could discuss and present their part of a story within their group longer.

In terms of media, the picture sequence was used in stimulating the students' background knowledge. A picture can be used as a specific reference point or stimulus and can attract students' interest and motivation (Wright, 1989:2). In this study, the key words were added on the picture sequence which helped the students develop their ideas based on the key words and the picture sequence. Besides, they were permitted to speak both English and Indonesian which aimed to help lower and moderate achievers to participate actively in discussing and presenting their part of a story.

The result of the research using Jigsaw technique indicated that there was an increase in students' motivation in writing a narrative text from 74.0% in the first cycle to 83.8% in the second cycle. The implementation of Jigsaw technique gradually improved students' motivation to write. The result was similar with the result of the Hedge study (2005:40) in stimulating elementary to upper-intermediate students in narrative writing through Jigsaw. The finding revealed that Jigsaw technique was well established in stimulating students in writing a story. The Jigsaw technique stimulated students to write with enthusiasm (Harmer, 2004:80)

The result of this study also indicated that students' writing product increased significantly from 49.6 in the preliminary study, 60.2 in the first cycle, to 70.2 in the second cycle. This result was in line with the result of Corbett study in White (1995:63). He studied on improving the learning of high intermediate students in constructing a coherent summary by using the Jigsaw technique. The findings revealed that Jigsaw technique could be applied to improve students' summary writing.

Relating to the implementation of Jigsaw, this study is in contrast with the study conducted by Musta'in (2004) in terms of language skill. His study focused on improving the second year students' reading comprehension at *SMP Negeri 6 Malang*. His study showed that the students' reading comprehension achievement gradually improved. Most of the students gradually gained good scores in the quizzes given in each meeting. The students' reading comprehension achievement improved from 62.77 in the pre–test, 68.11 in quiz 1, 75.82 in quiz 2, 81.05 in quiz 3, to 90.45 in quiz 4. It showed that Jigsaw strategy gradually and positively improved students' ability in reading comprehension.

Some points that can be concluded from the research are that Jigsaw technique (1) stimulates the students to be active participants in English classes through a series of its activities, (2) increases students' achievement and motivation, (3) produces a live, interesting, and fun English class, and (4) activates the four language skills at the same time.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

After two cycles consisting of three meetings each were conducted, the appropriate model of Jigsaw activity in teaching writing narrative text encompassed the following steps: (1) giving the students the modeled of narrative text provided with the picture sequence related to the text as reading text to build the students' knowledge of the story and language input in vocabulary, grammatical usage, and the generic structure of narrative text, (2) assigning students to read the story and pay attention in vocabulary and sentence

structure or language feature of narrative text, (3) questioning to ensure that the students have understood about the story and generic structure of narrative text, (4) organizing students into groups of four called expert group, (5) distributing the different part of picture sequence provided some key words to stimulate and help students to describe the events, (6) asking each student to write a description of a picture or part of the story, (7) collecting the pictures, (8) reorganizing students into home groups, (10) asking each student to present and share her or his part of the story to the group, in order to get the whole story, (11) floating from group to group, observing the process, (12) asking students to write the complete story individually so that students quickly come to realize that these sessions are not just fun and games but really count, (13) asking students to revise their draft on content and organization using the revising guide, (14) giving students a chance to edit their writing in terms of grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation using editing guide, and (15) publishing the students' revision and completed versions by reading aloud at the end of the session or displaying on the wall magazine.

Furthermore, the implementation of Jigsaw technique in teaching of writing has successfully improved the second year students' writing ability in narrative text at *MTs Al-Islam Nganjuk*. The improvement could be seen from the increase of students' average writing score from 49.6 in the preliminary study, and 60.2 in the first cycle, to 70.2 in the second cycle. Besides, the finding indicated that Jigsaw technique was effective in motivating and encouraging the students to participate actively in writing a narrative text. It was found that there were 74.0% students who were motivated in the first cycle and 83.8% students were motivated in the second cycle. In addition, it showed that there were 83.1% students participated actively in the first cycle and 88.9% students participated enthusiastically in the second cycle.

Suggestions

Based on the effectiveness of the implementation of the Jigsaw technique in the teaching and learning of writing narrative texts and improving student's motivation, particularly in sharing ideas and describing the events in the picture, it is suggested that the English teachers implement the strategy as an alternative strategy in English instruction in addition to other strategies and create the student-centered instruction. Yet, in applying this technique, the teacher should be active in monitoring the students' activities in group discussion and the teacher should be creative in making the teaching and learning process alive so that students will never feel bored.

Besides, it is recommended that the English teacher use another strategy of cooperative learning as a learning strategy to enhance the students' competence not only in writing but also in the three other language skills.

To the future researcher teachers, particularly those who have the same problem and are interested in conducting research, it is suggested that they apply Jigsaw activity in the same field in their research or on the teaching of three other language skills, for instance listening. In listening, for example, students can hear the different parts of a text, and then exchange information with others in order to complete a task. The student can report the task orally or in a written form.

REFERENCES

Arends, R. I. 2004. *Learning to Teach (6th ed.)*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Braunger, J. & Lewis, J. P. 2006. *Building Knowledge Based in Reading (2nd ed.)*. Newark: International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English.

Brown, H. D. 2001. *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy (2nd ed.)*. White Plains: Addison Wesley Longman.

Burden, P. L. & Byrd, D. M. 1999. *Method for Effective Teaching (2nd ed.)*. Needham Heights: Allyn & Bacon.

Coelho, E., Winer, L. & Olsen, J. W. 1989. *All Sides of the Issues: Activities for Cooperative Jigsaw Groups*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Regents.

Cox, C. 1999. *Teaching Language Arts: A Student – and Response – Centered Classroom (3rd ed.)*. Needham Heights: Allyn & Bacon.

Depdiknas. 2006. *Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Nasional Repuplik Indonesia Nomor 22 Tahun 2006. (Ministery Decrees of National Education No 22 Year 2006)*. Jakarta: Direktorat Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah.

Hakkarainen, K. 2008. *Jigsaw*, (Online), (http://mlab.taik.fi/polut/Yhteisollinen/tyokalu_jigsaw.html, retrieved on February 23, 2008).

Harmer, J. 1998. *How to Teach English: An Introduction to Practice of English Language Teaching.* Essex: Addison Wesley Longman.

Harmer, J. 2004. *How to Teach Writing*. Essex**:** Pearson Education.

Hedge, T. 2005. *Writing.* (2nd ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press , (Online), (http://tesl-ej.org/ej35/r3.html, retrieved on March 14th, 2008).s

Kemmis, S. & McTaggart, R. (Eds.).1988. *The Action Research Planner (3rd ed.).* Victoria: Deakin University Press.

Ledlow, S. 2008. *Using Jigsaw in the College Classroom*, (Online), (www.public.asu.edu/~ledlow/sledlow/jigsaw.html, retrieved on February 23, 2008).

Musta'in. 2004. *Improving Students Reading Comprehension Through the Jigsaw Strategy.* Unpublished Thesis. Malang: Faculty of letters, State University of Malang.

Nunan, D. 1989. *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nunan, D. 1991. *Language Teaching Methodology: A Textbook for Teachers.* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Nunan, D.1999. *Second Language Teaching & Learning.* Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Raimes, A. 1983. *Techniques in Teaching Writing.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Richards, J. C. & Renandya, W. A. (Eds.). 2002. *Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Slavin, R. 1995. *Cooperative Learning (2nd ed.).* Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon

Tompkins, G. E. & Hoskisson, K. 1995. *Language Arts: Content and Teaching Strategies*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Widiati, U. & Cahyono, B.Y. 2006. The Teaching of EFL in The Indonesian Context: The State of the Art. *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan,* 13 (3): 139-150.

Vacca, R. T. & Vacca, J. I. 1999. *Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning across the Curriculum (6th ed.).* Boston: Addison – Wesley.

White, R. V. (Ed) 1995. *New Ways in Teaching Writing.* Virginia: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Language.

Wright, A. 1989. *Pictures for Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.