USING THE PROCESS APPROACH FOR TEACHING ENGLISH DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on the application of the Process Approach for teaching English descriptive writing. The purpose of this study was to find out whether this approach would work well for the teaching-learning of EFL descriptive writing by 10th grade students at MAN 1 Takengon. An experimental research method was used for this study. The subjects of this study were 61 students of the 10th grade at MAN 1 Takengon that were divided into an experimental group of 31 students and a control group of 30 students. The experimental group was treated by teaching using the Process Approach. Each group was given a pre-test and a post-test. The pre-test and post-test each consisted of one task which asked them to describe their family and Indonesia, respectively. The data were analyzed using SPSS. Before the data were processed, the normality and the homogeneity of the data were tested. The results of the normality and homogeneity tests showed that the data was normal and homogenous. Based on the t-test results the alternative hypothesis Ha was accepted hence the study concluded that there was a positive improvement in the results for writing a descriptive text from the students taught with the Process Approach.

Key words: *English Descriptive Text, Process Approach, Writing.*

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study
The term language not only serves as a single term for language but also for all its parts such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Of

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these skills, two of them are considered receptive skills – via: listening and reading, while the other two are productive skills – namely speaking and writing. Every language in the world has these skills which everyone using a language needs for the interactive use of it, including the English language.

The curriculum also requires that our EFL students be good at both receptive and productive skills. In promoting that, teachers need to look more closely at the process of teaching, to discern the output where they can see what their students do not have rather than what they have, especially in writing (Harmer, 2007: 127). This raised interesting speculations in the researcher's head. The School-Based Curriculum expects 10th graders to learn to be able to express ideas and rhetoric in writing narratives, descriptive stories and news items in a smooth, accurate and acceptable way.

In on an interview with the English teacher at MAN 1 Takengon, she informed the researcher that most of her students still had low achievement in writing. She said that only 40% of her students could reach the passing grade (KKM) which is 70 and has to be achieved by at least 80% of the students. She assumed that her students could not do so due to their lack of interest in writing. When the researcher asked some students several questions they also told the researcher that, similar to what their teacher said, they did not like writing because they had less vocabulary than they needed for writing; they barely had any idea what to write about; and they were confused what to put first, second, third, and so on in a good sequence.

To try to find a solution for these problems, the researcher decided to try a technique for teaching-learning to produce better writing called the *Process Approach*. A number of researchers believe that this approach works for students who are attempting to write, but the writer was very interested in its performance and wanted to use it with a particular group of students at a particular school.

The Process Approach works by giving students steps and drills to follow when writing so that they can manage to build paragraphs based on the topic(s) given through following certain processes. According to this approach, writing is not actually so hard that whoever can follow the process can write as it also attempts to build students' understanding of rhetoric for their writing before they write. It focuses on the process of writing, not on the product.

Several researchers have done similar studies. Ding (2009: 25) conducted a process-approach study for teaching-learning writing with

a group of ESP (English for Specific Purpose) students at a university in Malaysia and he reported that the respondents could write a lot better after using the process-approach. In his abstract he wrote that learners do write better when they are made aware of rhetorical structure and are provided with individual assistance. Next, Ho (2006: 26) did research on the process-approach with regular academic classes in Hong Kong, and after three weeks she found that the students could more easily understand the ideas they were to write about because they already understood the rhetorical sequence of the texts that they should write. They knew what to write first, second, and third, and the way the paragraphs should be tied together. Voonfoo (2007: 37) conducted a study in an academic class with Malaysian students. The findings showed that these students could more easily undertake the writing processes even though before they had had huge problems with the organization of their ideas and the way to construct good rhetoric.

The Study Problem

The writer formulated the following problem as the core problem for this study: Will there be any significant difference in the achievements of students taught English descriptive writing using the Process Approach and other students taught by a standard method not using the Process Approach?

Significance of Study

Theoretically, this study was aimed at the development of a scientific basis for improving teaching-learning processes in the field of education for writing EFL. Practically, this research was done for guidance for other teachers and for the academic community for education. For teachers, the Process-Approach can be used as a new technique for teaching writing EFL to vary their teaching methods and to help students to not digress during writing exercises. To academics in education, this study is an extension from earlier research for additional support.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An Overview of Writing

Nunan (2003: 231) defines writing as both a physical and a mental activity aimed to express and impress. It is categorized as a physical activity because the writer is required to physically commit words or

ideas to paper or computer. Meanwhile, as mental work, the activities of writing focus more on the act of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express and organize them into clear statements and paragraphs that enable readers to understand the ideas in the written work. Next, Harmer (2004: 88) says that writing is a form of communication to deliver thoughts or to express feelings in a written form. It also enables students to put the knowledge that they have into an acceptable text that is appropriate and relevant to the given topic.

However, to the tenth graders of senior high school, writing is limited to performing tasks in the genre types of narrative, descriptive, and news item texts as cited in the excerpt from the national School Based Curriculum below:

> Expressing meanings in writing short functional texts and essays in narrative, descriptive, and news item based on the daily basis (SK). Expressing meanings and rhetorical steps in texts and essays accurately, smoothly, and acceptably in narrative, descriptive, and news items (KD). (Ref. SK. 12/KD. 12.2)

In this study, the researcher only focused on descriptive writing, which means that the treatment using the Process Approach was aimed at upgrading the students' ability to write descriptive texts accurately, smoothly, and acceptably based on a regular basis. *Accurately* means that their piece of writing should be written with good grammatical order; *smoothly* means that there is an understandable development of paragraphs with transitions connecting them and *acceptably* means the ideas in the writing are logical and acceptable concerning the unity and coherence of the piece.

Descriptive Writing

Descriptive writing is a genre of writing which asks students to describe a person, place, object, experience, situation, emotion, etc. (Baker, 2013). Kane (2000: 352) adds that "description is about sensory experience - how something looks, sounds, tastes. Mostly, it is about visual experience, but description also deals with other kinds of perceptions". This genre requires students to use particular word choices so that they can leave their readers with good mental images. Hence, this genre involves the five senses via: hearing, taste, touch, smell, and sight. This kind of writing can sometimes be so intimate to readers that it gives impressions, not definitions.

Process Approach

The *Process Approach* is an approach with several steps in it; the core of this approach is not the product of the writing, but the process itself. This section will discuss the Process Approach in detail.

The five important elements in teaching writing using this approach are elaborated as follows:

Brainstorming

Zamel (2003: 40) divides brainstorming into two categories: traditional brainstorming and advanced brainstorming. Traditional brainstorming is a casual way of brainstorming in which a group of people, students, speak about their ideas and discuss them with their classmates. In traditional brainstorming, the participants do not worry about being criticized as they are free to say whatever comes into their minds. Meanwhile, advanced brainstorming is an improvement on traditional brainstorming by involving the help of technology like books, computers or other learning aids to help people generate ideas (Scholes & Comley, 1985).

Drafting

According to Strunk and White (2006: 17), drafting is considered the first attempt in writing. At the drafting stage, the writer must develop a more cohesive text, organize thoughts, explain examples or ideas, find and use transitions, discover the main argument, and elaborate on key ideas. The writers must place more focus on the fluency of writing ideas rather than on the grammatical accuracy or the neatness of the draft. Moreover, if the writers are not completely satisfied with what they have written, they still have a chance to rework to gain the best arrangement that suits them or to find different ways of expressing themselves in writing.

Revising

According to Harwick (2011: 89), revising is the process of evaluating the arguments or the ideas behind the paper. The writer is allowed to refine his writing and develop the focus, nuance, and style. Besides, the writer can also correct and smooth the ideas in the piece of writing. Murray (2000a: 35) also says that revising is a stage for fixing the mess in a piece of writing. It involves several activities such as shifting paragraphs around, checking out word choice, shortening sentences and checking grammar and spelling.

Editing

According to Lyons (2000: 78), editing is a stage of the writing process in which a writer improves a draft to prepare it for publication by correcting errors and making words and sentences clearer, more precise, and more effective. Murray (2000(b): 86) argues that revision is different from editing. Unlike revising that mainly concerns improving ideas, editing primarily concerns improving grammar, word choice, spelling, punctuation, citation, and capitalization by making corrections.

Publishing

According to Hannett (2010: 72), publishing is the last stage that is necessary to do since writing is aimed for someone to read, even if the person is only the writer himself. Publishing an essay means the writer is releasing it to the public to read. Dickson (2003: 57) asserts that writing for publication will benefit the writer since readers can review the work and provide helpful feedback or suggestions. Student writers normally publish their pieces of writing to the teacher, their classmates, or the school magazine.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In attempts to prove the research hypothesis, a quantitative research method was employed in this study. The researcher adopted a quasi-experimental design since the researcher had to adapt the research design based on the real life situation in the school as well as its curriculum, schedule and classroom organization (Seliger & Shohamy, 1990: 23). This research method also studied the cause-effect relationship, where the Process Approach was the cause, the independent variable, and student writing was the effect, the dependent variable. In this study, there were two groups, an experimental group (EG) who received the Process-Approach treatment and a control group (CG), who were taught the same as usual and did not receive any special treatment whose abilities in writing were compared with those of the EG both before and after the experimental treatment .

At the end, both groups were post-tested to see if there was more improvement of the writing ability of the EG compared to that of the CG for writing EFL descriptive texts.

Population and Sample

According to Arikunto (2006: 46), the population is the potential respondents of the research or all the potential subjects of the research. In this study, the population means all of the 10th grade students at MAN 1, Takengon, Central Aceh. He further states that a sample is a representation that represents the whole population or subject of the research.

Characteristics of an experimental sample as stated by Brown (2007: 38) are "a sample is a group of subjects chosen from a larger group (population) to which research findings are assumed to apply". The sample must be taken in a random way so that everyone or every group has a chance to be chosen. Similarly, Sudjana (2003: 58) also adds that every individual in the true experimental research subject should have an equal opportunity to be selected as part of the sample. In addition, the sampling technique required for an experimental study as Best (1993: 80) says must ensure that "the individual observations or individuals are chosen in such a way that each has an equal chance of being selected, and each choice is independent of any other choice".

The samples for this research were two classes of the 10th grade, one, with 31 students as the EG and the other, with 30 students, as the CG.

Research Instrument

The instruments for this study were tests. According to Supardi (2013: 73), a test is an instrument to measure students' ability in mastering something. In this research, tests were specifically used to test the abilities of the sample 10th grade students of MAN 1 Takengon in writing English descriptive texts.

Data Collection

The Pre-tests

The pre-tests were done on Wednesday, April 1st 2015 to both groups but at different times due to their different English lesson schedules. The sample students were asked to compose one descriptive paragraph. They were given 40 minutes to write a paragraph of 100-120 words about their family. The pre-test was given to test the basic ability of the students in writing before the researcher implemented the experimental Process Approach. The writing test was considered valid and reliable since it was taken from the students' textbook, *Look Ahead 1.*

The Post-tests

The post-tests were done on Tuesday, 21st April 2015 to both groups. In the post-tests, the students were required to write a paragraph with the topic *Indonesia* of 100-120 words in 40 minutes. The test was given to see whether the EG students who had been treated with the Process Approach could perform better in writing.

Data Analysis

The procedures for data analysis using *SPSS Ver.20 we*re as follows:

Step 1: Test for data normality
Step 2: Test for data homogeneity
Step 3: Determine the mean scores
Step 4: Determine the standard deviations
Step 5: Do the t-tests

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Normality and Homogeneity Tests

The distribution of data was considered normal if the following hypothesis was fulfilled with the level of significance 5% (α =0.05):

Ho = Data distribution is normal if the value of significance was higher than α=0.05.

Ha = Data distribution is NOT normal if the value of significance was lower than α=0.05.

The results from the normality tests of both groups are shown below:

Table 1. Tests of normality of CG and EG.

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Pretest CG	.154	30	.066	.913	30	.017
Pretest EG	.142	30	.128	.934	30	.062

From the SPSS analysis above, it can be seen that the values of significance are higher than α=0.05, which means that the distribution of results from both groups was normal. The value of significance from the CG pre-test was 0.066 and that from the EG pre-test was 0.128.

Secondly, before going on, the homogeneity test was also done. The results from both groups were claimed to be homogeneous if the following hypothesis was confirmed, with the level of significance at 5% (α =0.05):

Ho = Results are homogenous if the value of significance is higher than α=0.05.

Ha = Results are NOT homogenous if the value of significance is lower than α=0.05

The results from the homogeneity test on the pre-test data from both groups were as shown below:

Table 2. Tests of homogeneity of CG and EG.

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.642	7	15	.715

From the table computed by using SPSS above, it can be seen that the value of significance was 0.715 which was higher than α=0.05. Thus, it can be concluded that the distribution of the pre-test results from both groups was homogenous.

T-tests of Hypotheses
Pre-tests of EG & CG (Test 1)
The results from the Pre-tests are shown below.

Table 3. Results from pretests of EG and CG.

No.	Mean	SD	Variance	t-value	t-value sig
Pretest-EG	54	5.376	28.899	2.46	0.003
Pretest-CG	53	5.880	34.575		

The previous table shows that the *t-value* result from the t-test of both groups is 2.46. To find out whether this area lies between the critical points, the t-table value is consulted. From the t-table value, for df=59 at the level of significance α =0.05, the critical area lies between +2.00 and -2.00. The t-count value as shown in Figure 4.4 was 2.46 which are outside the critical area.

EG Pre-test and Post-test (Test 2)
The results from the EG Pre-test and Post-test are as follows:

Table 4. Results from EG pre-test and EG post-test.

No.	Mean	SD	Variance	t-value	t-value sig
Pre-test EG	54	5.376	28.899	-1.435	0.157
Post-test EG	64	4.485	20.116		

The result from the t-count value as shown in Table 4 was -1.435 which is in the critical area.

CG Pre-test and Post-test (Test 3)

The statistical results for the CG Pre-test and Post-test are as follows:

Table 5. Results from CG pre-test and CG post-test.

No.	Mean	SD	Variance	t-value	t-value sig
Pre-test CG	53	5.880	34.575	-2.418	0.678
Post-test CG	55	5.809	33.748		

The result of the t-count value as shown in Figure 4.4 is -2.418 which is certainly not in the critical area.

EG Post-test and CG Post-test (Test 4)

The results for the EG and the CG post-tests are shown below:

Table 6. Statistics of EG post-test and CG post-test.

No.	Mean	SD	Variance	t-value	t-value sig
Posttest-EG	64	4.485	34.575	1.747	0.086
Posttest-CG	55	5.809	33.748		

The result from the t-test of both groups was 1.747. Thus the t-count value as shown in Figure 4.4 is 1.747 which certainly lies in the critical area.

Discussion

This section deals with the discussion of the research findings and how they relate to previous research findings. To see whether the students' post-test scores were significantly different from their pre-test scores, the researcher analyzed the data she obtained from both tests. using *SPSS version 20* for the data analysis.

Then the results from the pre-tests and the post-tests at the level of significance 5% or α=0.05 were as shown. The researcher used the null hypothesis (Ho) and the alternative hypothesis (Ha) to test the results.

There are two criteria needed to grant the Ha for α=0.05, the one-tailed test. First, the t-value has to remain in the critical area which is -2.00 ≤ t ≤ +2.00. So, if the t-value is between these limits, then Ha is accepted and Ho is rejected, and vice versa. Secondly, the significant t-value has to be higher than α=0.05 or symbolized as sig.t-value ≥ α=0.05.

Results from the hypothesis testing are as follows:

- In Test 1, Ho was accepted and Ha was rejected because the t-value of 2.46 was outside the critical area.
- In Test 2, Ho is rejected and Ha is accepted because the t-value of -1.435 lies in the critical area.
- In Test 3, Ho is accepted and Ha is rejected because the t-value of 0.418 was outside the critical area.
- In Test 4, Ho is rejected and Ha is accepted because the t-value of 1.747 lies in the critical area for the t-value. Moreover, the difference was significant as, 0.086 ≥ α = 0.05.

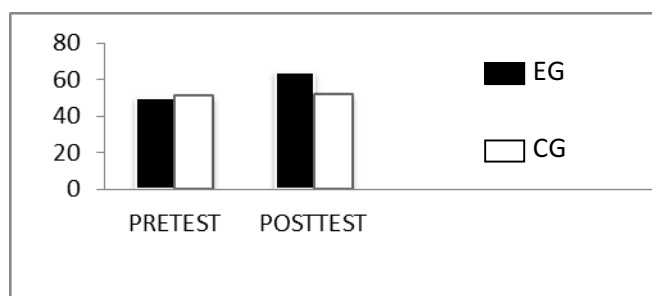These results are shown in Figure 1 that follows:

Figure 1. Comparison of pre-test and post-test results from EG and CG.

From the results, the researcher found that the most notable improvement after the Process Approach treatment was in the content. This is similar to what Ding (2009) and Ho (2006) have found in their studies that students can write a lot better after they are aware of the rhetorical structures for the texts that they are writing. The rhetorical sequence helps a lot in the writing process in leading the students to focus their ideas based on the topic and to avoid the temptations to digress.

More specifically, this result derived from the fact that the Process Approach plays an important role in developing the students' thinking skills (Nunan, 1991). Besides, the fact that there was no time limit when they did the task was also one factor that helped the students to

think clearer rather than in a rush, Raimes (1983). In addition, Nunan (ibid) also affirms that the Process Approach develops positive attitudes toward writing since the students can work together in the brainstorming and revision stages. The fact that this collaboration raises their motivation and confidence can also possibly transmit bright ideas during the writing process. This explains why the students' writing improved significantly in content.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

Based on this experimental study with 10th grade students at MAN 1, Takengon, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Teaching of writing can basically put more emphasis on the process, to help learners to retrieve information and to take actions that they need to do to shape up their ideas in the early phase of writing. From the implementation of the Process Approach, it was found that this approach considerably helped the writing process. The research results showed that the experimental group which was treated using the Process Approach got considerably better results in writing in the post-test, compared to the results from the control group.

The implementation of the Process Approach is effective for classrooms of students with different abilities because this approach works through individual assistance. However, very large classes with over 30 students may not be compatible with this approach due to the constraints of time for individual assistance to each student.

Suggestions
To English Teachers

Considering that the Process Approach can effectively engage students in writing better descriptive texts, it is recommended that English teachers use this approach in teaching writing for descriptive texts or other similar text genres.

To School Principals

Implementing a new method or approach in teaching a class at a certain school demands an extraordinary commitment from all parties in the school, especially the principal. It is suggested that the school principal provide instruments and resources needed by English teachers for implementing any new approach at their school. An overhead

projector, for example, could be useful for the teacher who is willing to practice the brainstorming process through live pictures or watching videos however brainstorming can still be done using white boards with or without posters and or flip charts.

To Academics in the Field of Teaching EFL

The Process Approach works very well for training in the process skills for -descriptive-text writing in EFL. To further know its efficacy, the researcher hopes that other research will be done with a similar approach but with different genres of English texts. Besides, the researcher also hopes that her research findings and conclusions can be an additional source for other ongoing research for better teaching of writing EFL.

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