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# The Use of Guided Writing to Improve Students' Writing Skill

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Abstract: This article reports a study on the implementation and the improvement of guided writing towards the student's writing skill and to know the respond of the students towards the implementation of guided writing in the teaching and learning process at the second semester students of English Diploma III of Language and Culture Faculty in 17 Agustus 1945 Semarang University in the academic year of 2017/2018. The second semester students had problems dealing with writing skill. They have difficulties on: (1) expressing their idea in writing; (2) constructing correct sentences; and (3) vocabulary mastery. This study was categorized as a classroom action research. The study was conducted in two cycles. Each cycle was consisted of four steps: plan, action, observation, and reflection. To collect the qualitative data, the researcher used observation. To collect the quantitative data, the researcher conducted tests before and after the research implementation. In this research, the researcher used guided writing and communicative & process approach to improve student's writing skill. The result of the research shows that guided writing could improve the students' writing skill. Through guided writing, the students showed great interest to be actively involved to the teaching and learning process. The students were able to construct sentences correctly. In this case, the sentences they constructed were based on the researcher's explanation. They also used more vocabularies in their writing. Their mean score of the pre-test was 63.3, while their mean score at the post-test, increased up to 76.1.

**Keywords:** guided writing, improve, writing skill

#### INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the most important things in communication. It is used as a tool of communication among the nations in all over the world. As an international

language, English is very important and has many interrelationships with various aspects of life owned by human being. In Indonesia, English is considered as the first foreign language and taught formally from elementary school up to the university level. Even now, it begins to be introduced in some kindergartens.

There are four aspects to a language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This is the exact order in which the learner picks up his native tongue as a child and, later on, the way he approaches a foreign language. First, he hears sounds and tries to understand them; then he attempts to reproduce them. Next, he learns to read the written and printed symbols of the language, and finally he expresses himself in written form.

Writing (as one of the four skills) has always formed part of the syllabus in the teaching of English. However, it can be used for a variety of purposes, ranging from being merely a 'backup' for grammar teaching to a major syllabus strand in its own right, where mastering the ability to write effectively is seen as an objective's key for learners. Writing will help students mastering the other skills and of course in mastering English completely. The students are sometimes afraid and shy to speak what they want to say but they can tell what they think and what they want to say into draft or writing before speaking. Writing skills help the learner gain independence, comprehensibility, fluency, and creativity in writing. If learners have mastered these skills, they will be able to write so that they can not only read what they have written, but other speakers of that language can read and understand it.

Harmer states that "the importance given to writing in teaching learning process differs from teaching situation to teaching situation" (Harmer, 2004: 31). In some cases it shares equal billing with the other skills, in other curricula it is only used, if at all, in its 'writing-for-learning' role where students write predominantly to augment their learning of the grammar and vocabulary of the language. Moreover, students should be able to master some requirements in writing, such as grammar, vocabulary, etc., to achieve the goal in the academic purposes. As Harmer states that "writing has been seen

as only a support system for learning grammar and vocabulary, rather than as a skill in its own right" (Harmer, 2004: v).

But in the real condition, the students' writing skill is low. Most of them are unable to fulfill those requirements. This condition appeared in several indicators. Based on the observation data, the researcher found that the students have some difficulties in writing. They lacked in vocabulary mastery, they have difficulties in tenses, they have difficulties in using appropriate grammar and sentence structure mastery, and they have difficulties in organizing the idea.

This research was done in English Diploma III of Language and Culture Faculty of 17 Agustus 1945 Semarang University. It is located on Seteran Dalam Street 9, Semarang. The researcher decided to choose this place; Firstly, there is problem in English teaching there. Secondly, the allocated time to study written English for the students is very limited and some students still have difficulties in writing.

Based on the pre-research observation, the researcher found some problems dealing with writing as follows: (1) Students lacked in vocabulary mastery; (2) Students lacked in grammar and sentence structure mastery; (3) Students cannot explore and express their idea in a good writing; and (4) Students have difficulties on how to start writing. To reinforce students' ability in writing, the researcher took a method to help them. The method is guided writing.

Guided writing is needed to use as the method in teaching writing. Guided writing involves an educator working with a group of learners on a writing task. The aims of the task are based on what they have previously been learning about the writing process. Guided writing is aimed to support learners in this psychologically and cognitively difficult activity. Guided writing can be fully exploited by providing learners with the language they need to complete the task together with the teacher or lecturer.

Besides that, guided writing has some advantages both for the lecturer and the students. For the lecturer, the first is guided writing allows the lecturer to adjust the teaching material to the needs of the group, the second is the lecturer is able to observe and respond to the needs of the students, the third is this method facilitates the teaching and learning of individual student. Advantages for the students are this method encourages the children to be active participants in discussions about writing and builds students' confidence. Therefore, the researcher assumed that guided writing can improve the students' writing skill.

By using guided writing, it will create a good interaction between the lecturer and students. Interaction is the key in the teaching language for communication. Through interaction, students can increase their language store as they listen to or read the authentic linguistic material, or even the output of their fellows in discussion, skits, joint problem-solving tasks, or dialogue journal. How interaction is achieved in formal situations is a matter of technique or classroom approach; in less formal situations it involves imaginative planning with students input. In other case, the lecturer has a number of options drawn from the experiences of predecessors and contemporaries.

Based on the explanation above, the student's condition, and the needs to improve student's productive skills, especially writing skill, the researcher decides to use guided writing to improve their writing skill. In order to measure the students' improvement who have been taught by guided writing, the researcher conducted a Classroom Action Research.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Another researchers have analyzed related the use of guided writing towards student's writing skill. The thesis are entitled *Improving Writing Skill Through Guided Writing (An Action Research at The First Year of SMA N 2 Sragen in the Academic Year of 2010/2011)*, written by Muhammad Taubah Setiawan from the English Department of Teacher Training and Education Faculty of Sebelas Maret University of Surakarta and *The Implementation of Guided Writing Procedures in Teaching English* 

Writing Skill of the Second Year Students of MAN Sukoharjo, written by Mamik Kridowati from the English Language and Letters Department of State Islamic Institute of Surakarta. Taubah used quantitative method with the explanation on his research like the researcher, while Mamik used qualitative method. The previous study showed that the English writing skill of students is improved by the use of guided writing. In their research showed that guided writing could not only help the students to write sentences well but also help the students who have difficulty in vocabulary in writing to share their ideas. Another difference with Taubah's research is he just conducted his research in one cycle, but the researcher conducted her research in two cycles. It is expected to know the significance of the improvement in the teaching and learning process. Subject of the study in both of the previous studies conducted to the Senior High School, but the researcher chose the university students as the subject of the study.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

In completing the data, the researcher used the action research since its nature is for improving the quality of action within it. In this study, the researcher conducted classroom action research aimed at overcoming the students' problems in writing by means of improving the students' vocabulary and sentence structure knowledge. This classroom action research was carried out by the researcher to the second semester students of English Diploma III of Language and Culture Faculty of 17 Agustus 1945 Semarang University by implementing guided writing technique. There are 13 students in this class. It is consisted of seven boys and six girls.

This action research used the model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart. There are four steps in action research, namely: plan, action, observation, and reflection (Hopkins, 2008: 48). These steps can be illustrated as follows (Kemmis and McTaggart in Hopkins, 2008: 51):

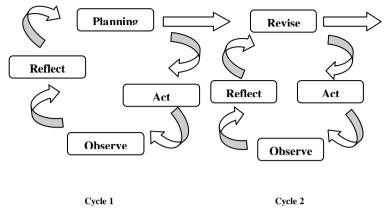


Diagram 1. Steps of Action Research

It is very important to collect the data in a research because the data are used to get the result of the research. In this classroom action research, the techniques of collecting the data used by the researcher are observation, questionnaire, and test. Another kind of data is quantitative data. Quantitative data comes from test result. The test techniques are conducted by giving pre-test before the action begins and post-test in the end of the action. The researcher gives writing test to know the students' ability in writing skill. The researcher conducts a pre-test and post-test in order to measure students' writing improvement. The results of the pre-test and post-test are calculated by using the following formula:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$
  $\bar{y} = \frac{\sum y}{N}$ 

Explanation:

x : mean of pre-test

 $\sum x$ : amount of pre-test

y : mean of post-test

 $\Sigma$  y : amount of post-test

N : number of subject

(Sumanto, 1995: 210)

From the calculation result using the formula above, it can be seen whether there is improvement of the result of pre-test and the post-test. Finally, by analyzing the observation result, questionnaire result and test result, it can be concluded whether guided writing can improve students' writing skill or not.

By far the most complex criterion of an effective test and arguably the most important principle is validity (Brown, 2004: 22). The researcher used content validity in this research. If a test actually samples the subject matter about which conclusions are to be drawn, and if it requires the test-taker to perform behavior that is being measured, it can claim content-related validity, often popularly referred to as content validity (Brown, 2004: 22).

#### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

# 1. Research Findings

The research finding was taken from what happened in the teaching and learning process from the beginning until the last teaching-learning process done in this research. The research consists of two cycles. It was done from March – June 2017. The research schedule was based on the academic calendar of English Diploma III of Language and Culture Faculty of 17 Agustus 1945 Semarang University. After each cycle was done, the researcher conducted post-test to know the condition of the students' writing skill. The description of the research finding can be explained as follows:

#### a. The First Cycle

#### 1) Planning

After knowing the reality of the students, the researcher made a preparation to conduct the research. She made lesson plan for the first cycle. She prepared the teaching material. The action plan would be implemented by the researcher. The researcher as the lecturer in this research observed the whole phenomena during the teaching and learning process in the classroom.

The researcher also chose the appropriate techniques and media supporting the process of the teaching of writing using guided writing. The process of teaching writing using guided writing consisted of several steps. Those steps were teaching reading, modeling by thinking aloud, engaging students in shared reading, guiding students in cooperative, guided writing, and encouraging students to work independently. Here, the researcher used comprehension story in the movie, language-based exercise, oral composition, and writing composition. The researcher used movie as the media in the teaching and learning process.

# 2) Implementing the action in cycle one

In implementing the action, the researcher played a role as the lecturer. The researcher did the teaching-learning process in three phases: pre-activity, main activity, and post-activity. The pre-activity phase covered all the things done as the opening such as: greeting and checking the students' attendance. In this phase, the researcher also did brainstorming or gave some questions to the students to stimulate their participation in the lesson.

The main activity phase included the following exercises: comprehension story in the movie, language-based exercise, oral composition, and writing composition. The post-activity was done by summarizing the lesson, doing reflection, and closing the lesson.

# 3) Observing the action in cycle one

During the teaching and learning process, the researcher not only taught the students, but also observed the things happened in the class. The observations were done simultaneously when teaching and learning process happened. The observation was made based on the field notes written by the researcher.

# 4) Reflecting the result of the observation in cycle one

After analyzing the observation result in cycle one, the researcher made reflection in order to evaluate the teaching and learning process she did so far. Besides, after completing the first cycle of this research, the researcher conducted the first post-test. There are some positive and negative results from the observation that could be used as a guide to the reflection.

In short, the observation result showed that there were some improvements achieved after doing the action. The improvements were not only on the students' writing skill but also on the students' attitudes towards writing itself. Their writing was getting better from day to day since they were accustomed to writing, even simple composition in each meeting. Moreover, they used more vocabularies in writing. It means that there was an improvement of vocabulary mastery.

Moreover, the mean score of the first post-test result done at the end of the cycle one was 71. It showed that there was an improvement although it was not satisfying. In addition, the students became more active in joining the lesson taught by the researcher. They paid more attention in the instructional processes.

Nevertheless, the improvement of the students' writing skill was not effective enough since there were still some students who were reluctant to write. There were some barriers the researcher found, among others:

- a. The students still found difficulties in constructing sentences and expressing their ideas in writing.
- b. Some students still needed guidance in their writing dealing with the content and expanding the outline.
- c. The researcher did not control the class well enough so that sometimes the students were busy with themselves and some of them were not involved well in the lesson.

Therefore, the researcher decided to take the second cycle in order to make better improvement of the students' writing skill.

# b. The Second Cycle

### 1) Revising the plan

The reflection demanded the researcher to do better efforts in improving the students' writing skill. She decided to take the second cycle and revise the plan. In this cycle, the researcher tried to overcome the barriers. She decided to teach the students by giving more allocation time with language function exercise.

She taught the students by giving enough exercise about the vocabulary and sentence structure. Besides, she became more active in controlling the class so that the students could join the lesson optimally. She provided the students with discussion text as the material to make the students more active in the lesson and to improve their participation in the lesson.

#### 2) Implementing the action in cycle two

The researcher implemented the action in three meetings.

## 3) Observing the action in cycle two

In the first meeting of cycle two, the students seemed to have better understanding about the way of constructing simple sentences. Most of the students could construct sentences correctly when they were asked to write in their worksheet. Furthermore, they felt easier to express their idea in their writing.

The researcher had applied better control towards the students' behavior in the class so that the teaching and learning process could run smoothly and the students could concentrate well. Moreover, the researcher gave individual feedback to some students who still had problems. The essence of the second meeting in cycle two was just to give more modeled paragraph and practice to write.

In this meeting, they had applied *guided writing* in writing their own paragraph from the outline provided in the white board. All students were active enough in joining the lesson since the researcher did the class control better. They enjoyed their writing activity. Besides, they wrote without any feeling of aversion or burden. They made better writing.

The essence of the third meeting in cycle two was to do the post-test two. The students did not find any difficulties in developing their sentences into paragraph. They had applied *guided writing* in writing their own paragraph from the outline provided. All students were ready in joining the lesson. They enjoyed their writing activity. Besides, they wrote without any feeling of aversion or burden. They made better writing.

# 4) Reflecting the result of the observation in cycle two

After analyzing the observation results in the second cycle, the researcher found some improvements. The improvements were as follows:

- a. The students were able to construct sentences correctly. In this case, the sentences they constructed were based on the researcher's explanation and examples. They also used more vocabularies in their writing.
- b. They got better understanding about the essence of guided writing so that they could write without any burden.
- c. All students were active enough in joining the lesson since the researcher did better class control.
- d. The mean score of the second post-test result done at the end of the action showed that there was satisfying improvement of the students' writing skill on the aspect of sentence construction. The mean score reached was 76.1. It was much better than the mean score of the first post-test result which was just 71.

The result of the tests also showed the improvement of the students' writing skill. Based on the result of the tests, it could be seen that there was improvement of the mean score between pre-test and post-test one where the mean score of the pre-test was 63.3 and the mean score of the post-test one was 71.

Moreover, the implementation of guided writing in the class did not give any burden to the students. They showed positive attitudes towards guided writing. These statements were wrapped up from the questionnaire given to the students. However, these achievements did not mean that the actions done by the researcher were already perfect and final. The use of guided writing was only one of the ways of improving the students' writing skill. It still can be improved by the lecturer as long as he or she is willing to do betterment on his/her teaching, especially in teaching writing. He or she can make use of any appropriate techniques in teaching writing.

There were two drawbacks the researcher found in applying guided writing in order to improve the students' writing skill, among others:

- a. This activity requires proper lesson plan and material. It should be designed to gain the students interest so that they are actively involved in the lesson. It also needs considerable efforts from the lecturer to find suitable materials especially in modeling paragraph.
- b. Guided writing takes a lot of time to carry out. Guided writing cannot be accomplished in two or three sessions, because there are some essential steps that require a lot of time, such as shared reading, work group, and group discussion. Those steps are essential to make the students understand about how to write appropriately. The researcher had limited time allotment from the faculty. Thus, it made the researcher being very careful in doing her research. The lecturer divided the allocated time based on the guided writing stages.
- c. Since the time to do the research was limited, it is rather difficult for the researcher to teach directly the topic stated in the curriculum by guided

writing. She cannot encourage the students to write freely whatever they wanted to write that could accustom theirself to use guided writing. In short, the use of guided writing as a means of improving students' writing skill should be preceded by non-threatening writing activities that can help students get the essence of it. Once they found the overall writing process, they will be eager to begin writing.

By considering the improvements above, the researcher concluded that guided writing could improve the students' writing skill, especially on the aspect of sentence construction which deals with structure and vocabulary. Besides, the students showed more positive attitudes towards writing although they seemed to be reluctant to write for the first time they were asked to. Therefore, the researcher decided to stop the cycle.

# 2. Discussion

In learning English, there are some difficulties faced by students. For the students of English Diploma III of Language and Culture Faculty of 17 Agustus 1945 Semarang University, writing is considered as the most difficult skill. The students are not interested in English writing class. They think writing is a difficult skill. Some students can not write well and they are not confident on their own writing. Besides, the students do not get more opportunity to write in the class or outside the class so that they are lack of time to practice in writing. Some students do not do the exercise well in writing class. They often copy from others or from books or even do not write anything. Based on the pre-research observation, it is found that students' writing skill related to vocabulary mastery, sentence structure knowledge, and self-confidence is still low.

Based on the explanations above, the lecturer should use appropriate technique to improve students' writing skill. A technique which makes the university students for beginner level learn writing better is by using guided writing. Guided writing can be defined as a writing process guided by the lecturer limited in structuring sentences, direct answers to questions, and language-based exercises which concentrated on

vocabulary building, reading comprehension, grammar, and even oral skills that culminate in a piece of writing to build students' writing skill.

Guided writing helps the students write any kind of text preceded with the modeled paragraph given. In guided writing, students' vocabulary mastery is improved by exercises guided by the lecturer. Furthermore, the knowledge about sentence structure as the linguistics aspects in writing is involved so that students have a better preparation to do writing activity. It is in line with Cross in Reid who states that ESL writing classes, particularly at the lower levels of language proficiency, successfully use guided writing techniques to build vocabulary and sentence structure knowledge (Reid, 1993: 26). In addition, students' creative thinking is not fully limited in sentence pattern. Guided writing allows the students to be more flexible in sharing their ideas and thoughts and eventually to deliver their message through their writing. It is in line with Huebener who states that more practice in guided writing the students will be able to express their selves freely and independently (Huebener, 1965: 82).

Guided writing involves oral preparation practice which makes the class more interesting. It happens because it can be done in different ways according to the students' interests and ability. Furthermore, during guided writing activities, the students receive feedback and advice from the lecturer. Problems that arise during the activity of writing can be overcome by the lecturer.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that guided writing can improve the students' writing skill. The improvement of the students' writing score from the mean score of pre-test and post-test in cycle one and cycle two can be seen below:

No	The Writing Composition	Pre-test	Post-test one	Post-test two
1.	Language use (Grammar)	1.556	2.741	3.714
2.	Content	3.889	4.296	4.929
3.	Organization (Coherence)	4.926	4.808	5.00

Table 1. The Mean Scores of Writing Composition in 1st Cycle and 2nd Cycle

Table one tells us that there is improvement from the result of each component. There are three components used in this research, namely: language use, content, and organization. In language use, the improvement is from 1.556 to 2.741 to 3.714. There is improvement in content that is from 3.889 to 4.296 to 4.929, in organization, the improvement is from 4.926 to 4.808 to 5.00.

Sub-cycle	Cycle 1		Cycle 2
Kinds of test	Pre-test	Post-test 1	Post- test 2
Mean of the students' score	63.3	71	76.1
Increase of the students' mean score	7.7		5.1

Table 2. The Improvement of Students' Score in Cycle One and Cycle Two

Based on table two, it can be summarized that the students' writing skill improved, from pre-test to post-test one to post-test two. In cycle one, we can see the result of the pre-test is 63.3 increased to 71 in post-test one. And in cycle two, the result of post-test increased to be 76.1.

The sample students' score can be seen from the table below, it can be seen that there was improvement between pre-test to post-test one to post-test two. The three students' sample indicated that the students' comprehension toward writing score improves.

Students' Initial Name	JK	MAW	ASC
Pre-test	50	70	90
Post-test one	50	75	85
Post-test two	65	85	95
Mean score	40	76.7	90

Table 3. The Sample of Students' Writing Score

Note:

JK : Jordhan Ksatria

MAW: Muhammad Ardhi Wisudawan

ASC : Anet Shofilda C

Table above is the sample of three students who are categorized as high competence, medium competence, and low competence. From the table, it can be seen that there is improvement of the score between the pre-test, post-test one and post-test two. The three samples of student's writing score show that the students' writing score improves.

From the result of questionnaire, it can be seen that actually the students like writing, but they still have difficulty. The method which was used by the researcher, guided writing is effective. Moreover, the researcher also used the appropriate media; movie and pictures that can motivate and interest them in writing activity. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that guided writing can solve the students' weakness in writing.

## **CONCLUSION**

Referring to the data analysis which covers research finding and discussion, the researcher drew three conclusions. The first conclusion is guided writing can improve students' writing skills. In this case, the students could correctly construct sentences based on the grammar explained by the researcher. They also used appropriate vocabularies dealing with the topic in their writing. In general, students are encouraged to practice writing as much as possible. Since writing is a skill gained by practicing, it makes sense to say that the more they practice writing, the better they will write.

The second point to be concluded is that the implementation of guided writing has improved the students' motivation in learning writing. It could be seen from their positive attitudes towards writing indicated by their active participation in the writing lesson conducted by the researcher. They enthusiastically wrote what the researcher asked to write. In the teaching and learning processes, the researcher gave individual feedback to the students. This kind of feedback helped the students understand better about the material presented since they became aware about their mistakes, especially for the students who were reluctant to ask the things they did not understand. Besides, it gave opportunities to the researcher to get closer to the students. It has relation to the third conclusion; it has created a good interaction between the lecturer and students. As we know that interaction is the key to the teaching language as a communication tool.

The conclusion above implies that in teaching writing, the lecturer should make the students accustom to writing. The right decisions of the lecturer in teaching writing are important. The lecturer must be wise to select effective method and the material itself. Guided writing has been proven to be an effective way in improving students' writing skill. The rate of improvement is increasing if guided writing was supported by suitable approach and interest material to work out. Communicative and process approach is effective in raising the students' motivation towards material. Being humorous lecturer makes the students relax to give their opinion without doubt. To support those approaches, selecting unusual material is attracting students' attention. Film and picture are effective media to help the students being focus on the lesson. By combining those two, the lecturer conducted a joyful and effective lesson.

Based on the research, the researcher in this opportunity would like to give some suggestions to improve students writing skills. Hopefully, the suggestions will be useful for those who are willing to improve the skill in writing including teachers or lecturers, students, other researchers, and institutions.

The researcher suggests the English teachers or lecturers to use guided writing as a teaching technique in teaching English especially in writing skill. This is because it can help students to focus their attention to the lesson which is being explained. In addition, it can stimulate the students to learn how to write well. For the students, to improve their writing skill, all the students have to do is practicing writing as much as possible, since, once more to say, writing is a skill gained by practicing. Practicing writing does not mean that they have to write something scientific. They can write freely anything they want without worrying about the correctness of every kind. They should understand that the main function of writing is conveying meaning or communicating.

This study discusses the implementation of guided writing as a means of improving students' writing skill in a University. It is expected that the result of the study can be used as an additional reference for further researches, especially researches dealing with the teaching of writing. The researcher also hopes that other researchers can apply this technique in other levels of students. Besides, other researchers can use this technique to improve students' writing skill focus on other aspects of writing skill,

such as handwriting, punctuation, or spelling. They can also conduct any other researches, experimental research for example or comparing this technique with other techniques in teaching writing.

The last, the researcher suggests the institution to add more time in writing class, because two semesters are not enough to conduct a well writing class activity. If the time allotment is sufficient, the teaching and learning process will run effectively. Students have more chance to explore their ideas freely so that they will be active to write in the class. Besides, the institution should encourage and support the lecturers to improve the quality of their teaching. The institution should hold regular meeting with the lecturers in order to discuss about the problems they face in teaching and to find out the best solutions.

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