

THE USE OF PEER ASSISTED LEARNING TO INCREASE STUDENTS' WRITING ABILITY

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Abstract: *The purpose of this research was to investigate whether Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) was effective to increase students' writing ability in the context of teaching writing for the second year students at SMAN 1 Sungai Pakning. The research was carried out for three months. Students were selected by using cluster sampling. Dealing with the research instrument of collecting the data, some steps were made by using the action research of single cycle; plan, act, observe and reflect. Firstly, to identify the students' ability in writing narrative text by using PAL, the written test was used consisting of pretest, treatment and posttest. Secondly, observation sheet was prepared which was used to observe directly the students in writing and the influence of PAL (independent variable) toward the students' ability in writing narrative text (dependent variable). In this case, students who got poor score in pre-test became the writer and students who were good would be the helper. The average score of pretest was 58.21 and the post-test was 78.7. The difference was 20.49. The score of Standard Deviation was 6.84 and the match of t-test was 17.36. The progress of this research showed that the students' ability improved by using PAL for 20.49 or 60.27%.*

Keywords: *Peer Assisted Learning, Writing, and Narrative.*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a complicated process and an essential skill for students to master. Writing is one of the most complex human activities. Writing is one of the four language skills besides reading, speaking and listening. Compared to other language skills writing can be directly and easily known or measured. It means that when someone is writing, the readers will understand the writer's competence in the

mastery of English easily, because writing needs several components such as: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and fluency. If a student has the ability in writing, English as one of the school subjects will also be easily transferred or taught by English teachers. On the other hand, writing is the mental work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into statements and paragraphs that will be

clear to a reader (Nunan: 1992). Anderson in Hughes (2003) divides five aspects that students should pay more attention in writing. They are grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, fluency (coherence), and organization.

Besides, writing is actually two activities wrapped up into one. The first activities involves coming up with the ideas you plan to write about. The second involves writing those ideas down in ways that are interesting and understandable to your readers (Peha: 2003).

Based on researcher's observation, as long as she taught English there, most of students at SMAN 1 Sungai Pakning, Bengkalis regency, especially in the second year students faced significant problems in the writing activity. The English teacher also said that the students were not interested in English writing. They usually lack of ideas to write when their teacher asks them to write about a topic. Based on the writer and the teacher's analysis, the students could not develop their ideas to write a text well. They did not know where to put the generic structure a text well. The students did many mistakes in using past-tense and choosing vocabulary.

Based on the phenomena, it is essential for the teachers to use an appropriate method that can help students to generate ideas about a topic that has to be developed.

Objectives and research questions

The main objective of the research is to examine the use of Peer Assisted Learning to increase writing ability of the second year students at SMA Negeri 1 Sungai Pakning after conducting a classroom action research with a single cycle for two months at SMAN 1 Sungai Pakning in Bengkalis Regency, Riau Province, Indonesia.

The objectives are:

1. To find out the students' ability in the teaching procedures such as giving ideas, making draft, reading, editing and making final copy by using Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) can increase students' writing ability at SMAN 1 Sungai Pakning.
2. To find out if there is difference between the ability of the students before and after being taught by using PAL can increase students' writing ability at SMAN 1 Sungai Pakning.

Action Hypothesis

The use of PAL will increase students' writing ability of the second year Students at SMA Negeri 1 Sungai Pakning.

Peer Assisted Learning

Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) is the practice of using suitably trained and motivated students to help other students. Variations on this basic idea have been used on many different scales in a variety of educational settings ranging from elementary schools to institutions of higher learning throughout the world. Most often, the motivation to adopt PAL techniques is to provide students with vital resources that the primary instructors cannot give. (Teaching Teams Program: 2008).

Respected teachers and writing theorists have fostered peer groups in high school and college classrooms as a way to encourage students to write and revise (Teo in Laurie: 2008).

In addition to, Teo in Laurie (2008) talked about new procedure in writing by using PAL. The procedure is called as a Peer Assisted Writing Activity in order to promote students' writing skills.

Peer Assisted Writing Activity is a process in teaching writing in order to promote students' writing skills by activating the students in class (Teo : 2001). They are expected to read and edit each other writing based on their ability and opinion without the teacher's intervention. In order to get effectiveness in this method, the procedures how to practice or implement Peer Assisted Writing Activity are constructing the ideas, making draft, reading aloud and editing the work.

The Implementation of PAL

PAL is described by using Peer Assisted Writing Activity to achieve its optimal effectiveness. (Teo in Laurie: 2008) . The steps are:

1. Pair Up Students
2. Warm Up Activities
3. Steps in the activity

Teo in Laurie (2008) further describes that there are six steps of Peer Assisted Learning in writing activity. They are:

1. Ideas

To help ESL/EFL writers understand the important components in narrative writing such as character, setting, problem and solution, students are

provided with complete question that mostly begin with WH words to generate ideas. Students who are good in writing act as the helper and students who are weak in writing act as the writer. One helper can help more than one writer. To help writer stimulate ideas, the helper begins by asking the writer the list of questions; who did it?, what happened?, where did it happen?, when did it happen?, who are the main character in the story?, etc. Helper can think up his/her own question to get writer's response verbally. The writer also makes a note of keywords.

2. Draft

There are five different stages as shown below, varying from the simplest to the most challenging degrees of task difficulty:

Stage 1: helper writes it all, writer copies all.

Stage 2: helper writes hard words for writer.

Stage 3: helper writes hard words in rough, writer's copies in.

Stage 4: helper says how to spell hard words.

Stage 5: writer writes it all.

3. Read

The writer reads the writing aloud. If he/she reads a word incorrectly, the helper may provide support if he/she is capable of doing so.

4. Edit

The helper and writer look at the draft together, and the writer consider whether improvements are necessary. At the same time, the helper also considers if there are many improvements the writer might want to make. The problem words, phrases or sentences could be marked with a colored pen, pencil or highlighter. There are five edit levels in this step. They are meaning, order, style, spelling, punctuation. The writer and helper should inspect the draft more than once, checking on different criteria on each occasion. To provide scaffolding to the students, teacher should encourage the writer to ask himself/herself by some questions.

With the questions in mind, the helper marks any areas the writer has missed, and the writer can make any additional suggestions about changes based on his/her own reflection of their writing. The pair discusses the best correction to make, and when agreement is reached, the new version is inserted in the text (preferably by the writer). If the

pair has doubt about spelling, they may refer to the dictionary.

5. The final copy

The writer copies out a neat or best version of the corrected draft. The helper provides help when necessary, depending on the skill of the writer. The best copy is a joint product of the pair and is then turned in to the teacher.

6. The teacher evaluates

It is the final step. The students will have an opportunity to receive comments and instructive feedback directly from the teacher. When the writer and the helper turn in their best copy, the teacher will meet with them and provide them in explicit writing and grammatical instruction as well as corrective feedback. The teacher's comments focus on meaning/ideas, order, style, spelling and punctuation which are the five editing criteria stated in step 4. The writers are then expected to review the correction and feedback together as a pair.

Narrative

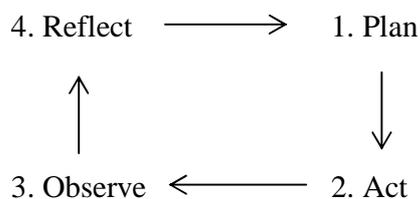
A narrative text is a text in which an agent relates a narrative. Landaa (1990) defines that "Narrative is a semiotic representation of a series events connected in a temporal and causal way. Films, play,

comic strips, newsreels, chronicles and treatises of geological history are all narratives in this widest sense. Narrative can be constructed using a wide a variety of semiotic media: written or spoken language, images, gestures and acting.

The basic purpose of narrative is to entertain, to gain and hold a reader's interest. A narrative is a story containing the setting, the characters, the problem and solutions. The language features of narrative text are focusing on specific and usually individualized participants, use of materials processes, behavior and verbal processes, use of relational processes and mental processes, use of temporal conjunctions and circumstances and use of past-tense.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is a *classroom action research with a single-cycle* (Haris:: 1974). The research can be drawn as follows:



1. Planning: all the members of the research team question "what are" the

realities of their particular practices, and begin to research for “what ought to be?”

2. Acting: the researchers implement the plan they have developed, addressing all or particular set of problems.

3. Observing: simultaneous with action is the collection of data. Observation is important for subsequent reflection and action.

4. Reflecting: the researchers reflect upon what is happening with their project, developing revised action plan based upon what they had learned from the process of planning, acting and observing.

This research is selected for this study because of the following factors:

1. The test was written test and it was used to know the students’ ability in writing narrative text by using PAL. In this test, the writer was assisted by three raters to find out the result in this research.

2. The researcher has a list of observational items to be observed in the class during teaching and learning process by using PAL.

3. The students’ score was tested by some components that should be considered in giving students’ score in writing, there are five aspects: grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, fluency (coherence), and

organization. The following marking scheme (6 point scales) (Hughes: 1989).

The population of this research is the second year students at SMA Negeri 1 Bukit Batu. They consist of two majors, which are Science Class and Social Class. To select participants, the researcher used Cluster Sampling because at the second year there are four classes; XI IPA (34 students), XI IPS 1 (32 students), XI IPS 2 (32 students), and XI IPS 3 (34 students). In this research, class XI IPA was chosen as sample. According to Gay (2000). Cluster sampling is a sampling in which group, not individuals, are randomly selected. All members of selected groups have similar characteristics.

RESULTS

The result of students’ writing ability is divided into two parts, they are pre-test and post-test. The researcher used three raters in pre-test. Having analyzed the data, it was found that there were 10 out of 34 students who were in the poor level. In the level of poor to average, there were also 10 students, in the level average to good there were 11 students and the level good to excellent only two students. The poorest score is 35.56. The highest

score is 83.33. The students who got the scores at the level of good to excellent acted as the helper.

In post-test, there were 21 of students at the average to good level; at the level good to excellent there are 13 students. The highest score is 94.4. It means that the students' score is increased.

To observe students' ability of each components of writing in pre-test and post-test, we can see in the following improvement table 1.

Based on the table above, we can conclude that the average score of pre-test and post-test are 58.21, 78.7 respectively. The difference is 20.49. The score of Standard deviation is 6.84. The standard error is 1.18.

The table 2 showed that the average score of pre-test is 58.21 and the average of post-test is 78.7. It means that there is an improvement of students' writing ability after they were taught by PAL. The progress above explain that the students' writing ability for 20.49 or 60.27%. It means that the students were successful in writing after being taught by using PAL.

Table 1. The Improvement Aspects in Writing

Test	Gramm ar	Voca bular y	Mecha nic	Organizatio n	Flue ncy
Pre-test	31.78	43.67	40.90	40.40	40.90
Post-test	76.2	90	79.56	72.40	79.56

Table 2. The Increasing of Students' Score

Test	N	Me an	Incre asing	d.f	t- test	t- critic al
Pre-test	34	58.21	20.49	33	17.36	2.03
Post-test	34	78.7				

Table 3. The Result of Observation

N O	Activities	Meetings					The Avera ge (%)
		1	2	3	4	5	
1.	1. Class Activeness 1.1. Giving ideas	4	6	8	7	-	36.76
2.	Making draft	-	22	22	20	-	94
3.	Read the draft	-	8	12	14	-	50
4.	Editing	-	8	12	14	-	50
5.	Final copy	-	34	34	34	-	100
The Average							66.18

Hypothesis testing

Based on the result of the research, the writer investigates that there is a

significant influence of using Peer Assisted Learning in increasing students' writing ability at the second year students of SMAN 1 Sungai Pakning.

DISCUSSION

After doing the action research, the writer found some strengths and weaknesses of using PAL toward writing narrative text of the second year students at SMA Negeri 1 Sungai Pakning.

The strengths of the strategy are in the following:

1. The students were encouraged to be active since there were some activities that they need to do.
2. The students were very interested when the teacher asked them to write about a topic by using the helper.
3. The atmosphere of the class was relaxed and joyful.
4. Because the students enjoyed and relaxed, the teaching learning processes were easy to understand.

However, the weaknesses of the strategy are in the following:

1. The writing process took a long time to do.
2. Some of students were noisy and some of them were confused when

they wanted to express their ideas in writing English.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the data analysis, the writer draws the conclusions as the influence of PAL and the developing materials in writing.

Regarding to the result of this research, it is suggested that teachers need to be creative and more careful in teaching learning process, so students will do writing well.

After doing this research, the writer recommends other researchers to investigate other problems in writing. The teacher can use this strategy to help them in teaching and learning process. It will help them in solving the problems of writing English.

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