

## **DEVELOPING WRITING SKILL OF EFL LEARNERS AT THE ACCOUNTING DEPARTMENT STIE PANCA BHAKTI PALU THROUGH PROCESS-BASED WRITING**

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### **Abstract**

This research was designed as a collaborative action research. The subject of this research was 24 EFL students of Accounting Department (AK1) at the first semester of 2015/2016 academic year. The action research was conducted in two cycles where each cycle consisted of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. Each cycle consists of three meetings. Data was collected through observation sheets and field-notes, marking scheme and students' writing performance during the implementation of action. The findings of the research show that Process-based writing strategy was effective to improve students' writing skills in descriptive paragraphs. The effect of this strategy was supported by the classical percentage of students' from 13 students (52%) who got scores equal or greater than 70 in cycle 1 to become 21 students (84%) who got scores equal or greater than 70 in cycle 2. In addition, Process-based process as a teaching strategy in teaching writing skills was effective to improve students' writing skills.

*Keywords: Developing, Process-based writing*

### **Background**

Teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL) covers four language skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Language learner learns English to communicate with other people; to understand them, talk to them, read what they have written and write to them.

Writing is furthermore an activity to communicate with other people by using a written language. A writer or an author actually performs a communication with a person who reads what he/she has written down. Therefore, ideas must be organized in such a way in order they can be understood by the readers. Ideas organization in writing refers to main idea and supporting details that are organized in unity and coherence. The readers will search

this ideas organization first before coming to a conclusion what actually a reading text talk about.

To teach writing, therefore is to teach students how to communicate by using a written language. In other words, the students learn to communicate through writing by sharing their ideas, thoughts, experiences, information, or feelings by themselves and others.

Teaching writing skills, in addition is to train students to communicate their ideas and thoughts about a certain topic by manipulating words in grammatically correct sentences and combining those sentences to form a piece of continues writing. So, writing is not indeed a writing lesson when a teacher only assigns students to write sentences by following a certain grammatical rule.

In line with the concept of writing above, the Competence-Based Curriculum for university and college especially in English course (GBPP) mandates that the objectives of teaching writing for EFL students are to enable them 1) to complete a short paragraph related to the theme, and 2) to write a short paragraph about certain topic related to the theme. This mandate enables lecturer of English to recognize what to do when teaching writing to their students. That is to guide students how to complete an uncompleted paragraph and to compose a paragraph on their own.

In relation to the curriculum expectation above, to start writing is something difficult for some students to do. According to the researcher the difficulty occurs because the teacher does not train his/her students the steps how to organize ideas in a paragraph. The teacher sometimes has assumed that he/she has taught writing indeed by only teaching students to construct sentences by employing certain grammatical rules.

Realizing the importance of English has put it as significant subject in almost all study programs at universities. In the curriculum of the STIE Panca Bhakti Palu, English is considered as an MKU (*Mata Kuliah Umum*) which cover the subjects of English 1 and English 2. They are classified as a compulsory subject for every students. The subjects are taught in

all two study program at the college, they are: accounting and management and are offered in the first and second semester. Each subject has 2 SKS with 100 minutes of duration for each meeting.

Based on researcher's observation and her experience in teaching EFL students at STIE Panca Bhakti Palu for almost two years, she found that most students felt difficult to compose descriptive paragraphs. They are not able yet to describe a certain object or thing by using a written language. In addition, they are not skillful to gather and develop ideas to become a descriptive paragraph. Even those students were not skillful enough to arrange jumbled-sentences into a good paragraph.

According to the researcher's observation, the difficulties occurred because of several factors. Firstly, the students always write their sentences ungrammatically correct. They write just like when they are speaking without caring and give much attention to the sentence structure and grammar. Secondly, the lecturers taught writing using media like pictures and focusing writing product, the lecturers do not gave much attention on the process of writing, therefore most of the students could not compose their writing successfully. The last, the students were not enthusiastic in writing because they did not know how to begin.

As a matter of fact, teaching strategy gives a great contribution to students' ability to write as shown above. Teaching and learning writing have some difficulties and complicated rules for students who usually have ideas in their mind but they do not know how to express them in writing. It is scary that we have to sit down facing a white paper with no idea, and do not know how to start, how to gather and develop ideas, etc.

Based on students' difficulties that have been stated above, the researcher is interested to help students to overcome their difficulty in writing skill by employing Process-based writing. This strategy employs five steps namely prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing. The students are guided to gather ideas as much as possible and develop them into a paragraph. During the earlier meetings the researcher trains students to employ those five steps. The students are gradually expected to be

able to organize ideas to build paragraph content by using an appropriate vocabulary and grammatical structure.

The researcher in this matter is also interested to help her students to overcome their difficulties in developing paragraph through this teaching strategy and formulated her study in a Classroom Action Research (CAR).

In line with the facts that have been mentioned in the previous background, the researcher formulated the problem of research as follows:

*“How effective is Process-based writing strategy to help EFL students to develop ideas into descriptive paragraphs?”*

### **Method of Research**

The design of this research was collaborative Classroom Action Research (CAR). It was employed by the researcher to improve her students' writing skills through Process-based writing strategy. This research was conducted collaboratively with one of lecturers of English who also teaches at Accounting Department STIE Panca Bhakti Palu. The collaborator was involved from the beginning up to the end process of the research. Nevertheless, the researcher and her collaborator have different positions in conducting this research. The researcher acted as the lecturer who implemented the action. Meanwhile, the collaborator acted as the observer who observed the researcher's and the students' activities during the teaching and learning process.

The setting of this research was at STIE Panca Bhakti Palu located on Jl. Suharso No.36 Palu City 94111. It has 3 parallel classes. Time allotment for English subject is 2 x 50 minutes/meeting. The subject of this research was EFL students of Accounting Department at the first semester of 2015/2016 academic year. There are three parallel classes of the first year students in this college. Therefore, the researcher took one of them for the research.

The criteria of success of this research will be emphasized on the teaching-learning writing process and the product of the students' writing. Those criteria are determined as follows.

- (1) The student's progress in gathering and developing ideas in descriptive paragraph measured by using scoring rubric: paragraph developed by Oshima and Hogue (2007) which cover format, punctuation and mechanics, content, organization, grammar and sentence structure.<sup>1</sup> The criterion of success of individual achievement is 70. The criteria of success followed the following criteria:

**Table 1 Final Mark Scale**

Score	Qualification	The Level of Success
90 - 100	Excellent	Successful
80 - 89	Very Good	Successful
70 - 79	Good	Successful
60 - 69	Fair	Failed
< 60	Poor	Failed

(Adapted from Marzuki, 2014)

- (2) After calculating students' individually achievement, researcher was also obtain the classical successfull percentage of the whole class using the following formula as proposed by Harahap (in Marzuki, 2014):

$$\text{Successful Percentage} = \frac{\text{Total successful students}}{\text{Total students joint the test}} \times 100\%$$

The classical successful percentage used in this research should reach at least 75%.<sup>2</sup>

In this research, the researcher acted as the lecturer who implemented the proposed strategy by referring to the lesson plan

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<sup>1</sup>Oshima, A. and Hogue, A., *Introduction to Academic Writing*, (New York: Pearson Education, Inc., 2007) p. 196

<sup>2</sup>Abdul Gafur Marzuki, 2014. *Pengaruh Strategi Guided Writing secara Kolaboratif terhadap Hasil Belajar Menulis bahasa Inggris Pada Mahasiswa yang Memiliki Self Regulated Learning Berbeda*. Jurnal Derap Pendidikan LPMP Sulteng Vol. 8 No.2, Agustus 2014.

designed before. Meanwhile, the collaborator acted as an observer of the activities do in class. The research was conducted in three meetings in which each meeting has different focus. The first meeting was focused on the prewriting and the drafting stage. The second meeting was focused on the revising stage. Meanwhile, editing and publishing stages was become the focus of the third meeting.

In data analysis, the researcher and her collaborator analyzed the data that have been collected during the implementation of planning. Data concerning with students' achievement in writing descriptive paragraphs were analyzed by employing marking scheme to see the paragraph content, ideas organization, language uses, and mechanics. The researcher then computed individual achievement and classical achievement.

The data concerning with the teaching and learning activities of writing skills obtained through observation sheets and interview were classified and analyzed qualitatively. In this case, the researcher provided the description about how the teaching and learning process was carried out, how the teacher and students' activities or participation was, and what students' feelings and response were toward the Process-based writing strategy.

The researcher and her collaborator made a reflection after analyzing the data. In this reflection stage, they gave judgment and responses to the action. The researcher and her collaborator decided whether or not they continue the action through this reflection based on the data that had been collected. They had to provide the reasons why they decided to continue or to stop the action based on data obtained during the first cycle. If they decided to continue the action into cycle 2, they would have to revise the planning by making some improvement based on the data obtained during the implementation of plan in cycle 1. If the action decided to be stopped, the researcher and her collaborator had to elaborate the reason based on the data that had been collected during the implementation of plan in cycle 1.

## Research Results

This part elaborates the discussion of the teaching and learning writing through Process-based writing strategy in each process writing stage, i.e. prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing and the improvement of the students' writing skill.

As presented in the previous sub chapters, particularly in prewriting stage, it was found that the students could choose and develop their topic based on their interest, knowledge, and experience. They also could arrange questions and answers which were used to develop the topic into their draft. Those activities were the starting point for the students to write their draft. Since the students chose their topic based on their interest, knowledge, and experience, it motivated students to pour their ideas freely and feel responsible for their own writing. Meanwhile, the lecturer's role was as a guide and facilitator. The lecturer helped the students to think and choose their topic or even gave suggestion on how to choose a topic.

The strategy developed in this stage was brainstorming and question and answer. As presented in research findings that the students were asked to brainstorm anything related to the topic in order to dig and activate their prior knowledge and ideas. It is in line with Smalley, et al. (2001) that brainstorming is a way to associate and stimulate thinking.<sup>3</sup> By brainstorming, students could develop their topic conform to their knowledge and experience.

After choosing a topic, it was important to motivate students to jot down their ideas, since students should have enough knowledge about their topic. Some ways could be used to dig students' understanding and knowledge about the topic. One of them was arranging question and answer.

In connection with research findings, in the first cycle, the lecturer only showed a picture then asked questions about the topic. He then asked the students to choose their topic without

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<sup>3</sup>Smalley, R, *Refining Composition Skill*, (USA: Thomson Learning Inc., 2001) p. 4

giving guidance and directed students to make question and answer related to their topic. In addition, she did not help the students to dig and activate students' prior knowledge about the chosen topic.

Meanwhile, in the second cycle, the lecturer asked the students to make a list of topics and guide them how to choose the topic. She also gave a chance to the students to brainstorm anything related to the topic.

After the students got their topic, the lecturer directed them to make questions and answers. This strategy was used to dig the students' understanding and knowledge about the topic in order to make it easier for them to develop their topics. As Moore (in Khalik, 1999) state that the process of arranging questions and answers before writing a draft gives a chance to the students to think what they should write.<sup>4</sup> However, the lecturer should give her guidance so that the students' questions and answers did not depart from their topic (it was done in the second cycle).

Referring to the previous part that by presenting the model of text, the students could understand the form of writing they were supposed to write. In this study, they should write a descriptive paragraph. The best way to encourage children to explore writing-both the act of writing and the writing that is produced- is to have plenty of models around them". It is supported by Brown (2001) by reading and studying a variety of relevant modes of text, students can gain important insights both about how they should write and about subject matter that may become the topic of their writing".<sup>5</sup> Therefore, presenting the model text become an effective strategy that could be given in the drafting stage in order to enable the students to pour their ideas in accordance with the writing form that supposed to write.

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<sup>4</sup>Abdul Khalik, *Pembelajaran Menulis dengan Strategi Aktivitas menulis Terbimbing bagi siswa Kelas 4 Sekolah Dasar*. Unpublished Thesis. IKIP Malang. 1999) p. 187

<sup>5</sup>Brown, H., *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*, (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., 2001) p. 347



In addition, presenting of model text should be followed by discussion. Through discussion, the students could comprehend the writing form, the development and the organization of ideas into writing. However, the lecturer should give her/his guidance by asking questions so that the students had an understanding on the model text.

Referring to the research findings, in the first cycle and the second cycle, the lecturer gave a model of text, and then asked the students to read and pay attention to the model. After that, the lecturer and the students had a discussion by asking and answering questions related to the model text. In the first cycle, some students tended to write the drafts by imitating the model. The students only changed some words from the model text which was sometimes not relevant to their topic.

That was caused by several factors. The first factor was that the lecturer did not give her guidance to the students in writing their draft. In addition, the lecturer did not give examples of how to arrange their questions and answers into their drafts. Furthermore, the time allotment for writing their drafts was not enough since the students had to think and find appropriate words. Therefore, the lecturer should give enough time to the students to expand their comprehension on the topic before they write.

In this stage, the students were given a chance to pour their ideas freely with guidance from the lecturer. Hence, the lecturer's role was as a facilitator in order to help the students to explore and pour their ideas into the rough draft.

The teaching and learning of writing in this stage applied mini-conference strategy. The mini-conference was done by the students in a small group discussion. After that, the conference was done between the lecturer and students one by one.

The students formed a small group discussion then worked together with friends by reading and discussing their draft. Each of them could give suggestions, comments to revise the draft. Students meet in writing groups to share their composition with small groups of classmates where feedback is crucial. Concerning this stage, Mohr (in Tompkins and Hoskisson, 1991) state that

there are four functions of writing groups: 1) to offer the writer choices, 2) to give responses, feelings, and thoughts to the writer, 3) to show different probability in revising, and 4) to speed up revising.<sup>6</sup>

In terms of conference between the lecturer and the students, Brown (2001) writes that “through conferences, a lecturer can assume the role of a facilitator and guide, rather than a master controller and deliverer of final grades. Students can feel that the lecturer is a partner who is encouraging self-reflection.”<sup>7</sup>

The findings of this research showed that mini-conference gave positive results on the students’ drafts. At first, some students were reluctant to show their drafts to their friends and tried to revise their own drafts. They were also still concerned with mechanical aspects instead of looking at the content and organization of the draft. This happened in the first cycle. However, in the second cycle, all students could work cooperatively by giving suggestions, comments, or questions even in simple way. The students tried to add or rearrange their friends’ draft.

In connection with lecturer and students conference in both cycles, the lecturer asked the students one by one to come to his/her and discuss their friends’ suggestions, comments, or questions. The lecturer also suggested the students to change, add, or delete words or phrase to clarify the unclear ideas. Nevertheless, most students still found difficulties in using appropriate words. To cope this problem, the lecturer guided and helped them by pointing the appropriate words.

The findings also showed that group forming by asking the students to choose their own group members was not effective. It

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<sup>6</sup>Tompkins, Gail. E., & Hoskisson, Kenneth, *Language Arts: Content and Teaching Strategies*, (USA: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1991) p. 238

<sup>7</sup>Brown, H., *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*(2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., 2001) p. 418

was found that in the first cycle, the students who had low achievement or disruptive behavior sat in one group. As a consequence, they could not work together in giving suggestions or comments to their friends' drafts. Therefore, in the second cycle, the lecturer grouped the students in such a way so that the students who had low achievement and disruptive behavior sat in different groups.

As it was presented in the previous sub chapters that the strategy used this stage was peer editing. Brown (2001) states that peer editing is a true sharing process. Not only you get feedback from your classmates, but you also give feedback to them".<sup>8</sup> Since the focus of this stage was mechanical aspects, the students were asked to exchange their drafts with their partner and asked to edit their friends' draft or even their draft in terms of punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and grammar. Nevertheless, the lecturer should explain, give examples of what and how to edit, and even guide the students in editing.

Through peer editing strategy, students were motivated to learn the mechanical aspects in a good way. By having an understanding about it, the students could find or show the mechanical errors on their friend's draft or even their draft. Moreover, by holding peer editing in order to edit the draft, the students could have a positive attitude. They could work together and tolerate each other when they have different opinions. They also have more self-confidence.

The findings of this research show the important of explanation and example in editing stage. If the lecturer only asks the students to edit without guiding them by giving explanation and example of what and how to edit, they cannot do anything with their friends' drafts. This happened in the first cycle. The lecturer only gave explanation on what to edit without giving model of how to edit their friends' drafts. As a consequence, some of the students' writing still contained some mechanical errors.

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<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

Therefore, in the second cycle, the lecturer added her/his activities by giving explanation and some examples on the way of doing editing. Those activities could minimize the mechanical errors in the students' writing. Besides giving explanation and modeling of what and how to edit, the findings also showed that the lecturer monitored and guided the students in editing. She went around the students' table, checked the students' work whether what they edit was correct or not. She also gave her suggestions.

The last stage was publishing. The strategy used was sharing writing. The students could share their writing by reading it aloud in class or displaying it in the cardboard. The findings of this research showed that the lecturer asked the students to read aloud their writing in front of the class while the other students listened and gave comments to their friends' writing. The lecturer also gave his/her comment. Tompkins (1998) state "through this sharing, students communicate with genuine audiences who respond to their writing in meaningful ways."<sup>9</sup>

The improvement of students' writing skill was affected by the successful of the teaching and learning process of writing. This can be seen from the results of this research. Before the strategy was implemented, the students had faced many difficulties in writing, which influenced the result of their writing. When they produced a piece of writing, it could not be understood. It also contained a lot of errors in grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation.

The evidence that the students' writing skill had an improvement can be seen from the score of each cycle. In the first cycle, the students who got score greater than or equal to 70 were 13 students from 25 students in the classroom. The classical successful percentage was 52%. Meanwhile, in the second cycle, the m classical successful percentage was 84%. There were 21

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<sup>9</sup>Tompkins, G.E., *Teaching: Balancing Process and Product*, (New York: McMillan College Publishing Company, 1998) p.28

students from 25 students in the classroom who could reach the criteria of success.

Although the criteria of success had been achieved in the cycle 2, the students' writing still contained many mistakes. To cope with these problems, the lecturer gave his/her guidance to the students in writing their draft and reminded the students that they were not allowed to imitate the model. The lecturer also gave examples of how to arrange their questions and answers into their drafts. Moreover, the lecturer gave enough time to the students to expand their comprehension on the topic before they write.

Referring to the findings of this research, the form of procedures developed to teach writing through Process-based writing are (1) engaging students to express their ideas in brainstorming activities before they choose their topic, (2) guiding students to make question and answer in developing their topics, (3) providing and discussing a model of text before writing rough draft, (4) doing mini-conference to give suggestion and comment focusing on the content, organization, and diction in order to revise the draft, (5) conducting peer editing in which students exchange their drafts in order to edit the mechanical aspects, and (6) sharing the final writing by reading it aloud in front of the class.

The results of this research also showed that Process-based writing improved students' writing skill. It can be seen from the score of each cycle. In the first cycle, the students who got score greater than or equal to 70 were 13 students from 25 students in the classroom. The classical successful percentage was 52%. Meanwhile, in the second cycle, the m classical successful percentage was 84%. There were 21 students from 25 students in the classroom who could reach the criteria of success.

### **Conclusions**

Referring to the findings and discussion of this research, some conclusions are presented.

1. Writing skill is one of difficult skills for students of Accounting Department (AK1) STIE Panca Bhakti Palu. These students find it difficult to compose descriptive paragraphs. They can gather and develop ideas in paragraphs. It is caused by the low

recognition of vocabulary and grammar the students have. The difficulty could be improved by implementing Process-based process as a teaching strategy in teaching writing skills for those students. It was effective to improve students' writing skills. The students' difficulties in gathering and developing ideas were gradually minimized. The evidences can be seen from the score of each cycle. In the first cycle, the students who got score greater than or equal to 70 were 13 students from 25 students in the classroom. The classical successful percentage was 52%. Meanwhile, in the second cycle, the classical successful percentage was 84%. There were 21 students from 25 students in the classroom who could reach the criteria of success.

2. The students and the lecturer/researcher are actively involved in the writing activities. In addition, the students were happy and motivated to study with the strategy. Finally, Process-based writing strategy enables lecturer to help students as well as to build a close relationship, so that the feel free learning atmosphere could be created in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, this strategy is beneficial to be employed as a teaching writing strategy.
3. Based on the findings during the implementation of Process-based writing strategy in teaching writing skills, it can be also concluded that Process-based writing strategy is effective to gather information and develop the information into descriptive paragraphs.
4. Process-based writing strategy is very helpful to help students to start writing. It guides students to develop ideas in paragraphs step by step i.e pre-writing, drafting, editing, revising and publishing their works. If students have been fluently work based on the steps above, they can develop paragraphs properly.
5. The lecturer can detect students' mistakes in writing activities and show the correction immediately.

## **Suggestions**

Based on the research findings and discussion, the researcher draws the suggestions as the following.

As this Research proved that Process-based writing strategy can improve the students' writing skill, it is suggested that the English lecturers whose students have the same characteristics and in the same/similar situation to apply this model as one of the alternatives that can be used in teaching writing skill. In addition, it is also suggested that lecturers socialize this writing strategy by discussing it in the lecturer's forum, workshop, and seminar or write an article about it in a journal or a newspaper.

However, in conducting this strategy, some consideration should be followed:

1. The lecturers should provide the students with a list of vocabulary and dictionary since the students still do not have sufficient vocabulary.
2. The lecturers should clarify their instruction and explanation in Bahasa Indonesia because it is still a hard work for the lower level students to understand the instruction in English.
3. The lecturers should arrange the students' group in such a way in order to make them work cooperatively. Finally, the lecturer should be more patient since in this strategy, the students need more guidance and time to perform each of the process writing stages, namely prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.
4. For other researchers, it is suggested that they conduct action research on the use of Process-based writing strategy in the teaching and learning writing for other writing modes, such as narration and argumentation and in other level of students in order to see whether or not this strategy is also effective and applicable to be implemented to achieved different goals of teaching writing, since the scope and limitation of this research are improving students' writing skill only in writing descriptive paragraph.

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