

WRITING SKILL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE ASSIGNMENT OF RETELLING IMPORTANT EVENTS

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ABSTRACT: This study was aimed at improving the writing skill through the assignment of retelling recorded important events on the 5th grade of SDN (Sekolah Dasar Negeri or Elementary School) 2 Pabuwaran in Banyumas, Central Java, Indonesia. As a classroom action research, it was done in three cycles. Each cycle consisted of three meetings. Each cycle consisted of (1) planning, (2) action, (3) observation and evaluation, and (4) reflection. The plan of each phase was based on the changes, which were known in accordance with the observed factors, namely students, teacher, and learning activity. Subjects of this study were 27 students. The analysis and test result showed that (1) there was a raising level of students activity i.e. the progressive increase of students' participation on writing subject; (2) there was students' sensitivity increase upon their surrounding either at school or home; (3) there was an increase on teacher activity during the learning process; and (4) as a consequence, the students' writing skill through retelling the important event also increased. The cycle-test results showed that the mean of writing skill were as follows: 58.9 in cycle I, 67.5 in cycle II, and 79 in cycle III.

KEY WORDS: writing, retelling important events, practice, three cycles, and classroom action research.

INTRODUCTION

Writing gives a big hope for the writer to work (Sukristanto, 2001). Therefore, students should ideally be able to make a good writing since they are in elementary school. However, that is not the case. An interview with the 5th grade teacher of SDN (Sekolah Dasar Negeri or State Elementary School) 2 Pabuwaran, North Purwokerto Subdistrict, Banyumas Regency in Central Java, Indonesia, disclosed students' poor writing skill. If it was graded (with the score ranging from 1 up to 10)

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the mean of their writing skill was 5.2. This means that the students were not able yet to make a good writing.

Whereas, in a book entitled *Panduan Penyusunan KTSP* (BSNP, 2006), it is stated that the ideal criteria of completeness for each indicator is 75%. Thereby, the writing skill of the 5th grade students of SDN 2 Pabuwaran had not reflected the completeness of study. This implied that writing is difficult. Regarding the fact that a good writing ability can give a free and independent job in the future, an improvement in writing learning activity for the 5th grade students of SDN 2 Pabuwaran needs to be attempted.

Observation and discussion with the 5th grade teacher of SDN 2 Pabuwaran revealed that students' difficulty in writing happened because they were not trained to write and retell orally of what have been recorded in their memories (based on their experience). Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a learning innovation development in order to improve the writing skill of the 5th grade students of SDN 2 Pabuwaran through the assignment of retelling important events.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing is one of four aspects of language skill. According to Yus Rusyana, writing is a skill using language patterns in a written form to tell an idea or to deliver a message (Rusyana, 1998:191). Writing is also a process of picturing a language so that the readers can comprehend the message the writer wants to deliver (Tarigan, 1989:21).

As a part of language activity, writing is closely related with the activity of thinking. Both activities complete each other. Writing and thinking are two activities which are done simultaneously and repeatedly. Writing is a place and result, at the same time, of ideas. Through writing activity, a writer can communicate his/her thought. In addition, through thinking activity, a writer can improve his/her writing skill.

According to Erizal Gani, a writer should master five writing components, namely the content, organization, rules of written language, style, and mechanics (Gani, 2003). Failure in one of the components may lead to other restraints in putting the idea into a writing text.

Writing is a creative process which involves divergent way of thinking instead of convergent one (Tarigan, 1989). Writing and painting are somewhat alike. Before painting an object, one copies or observes the object of his/her painting. In writing process, students see or experience the object of their writing before writing it down (Sukristanto, 2001). In this case, the object of writing is students' experiences which have been in their memories during a week.

First, students retell orally the important events they had experienced during a week and then write them down into a text. This is a visible and applicable solution for Elementary School students because students definitely will remember their own important events. Teacher may give students an assignment of retelling an important event they experienced during a week. A student can write his story after telling it orally and getting some inputs from the teacher and other friends.

METHOD

This learning innovation development was specially designed for *Bahasa Indonesia* class, with Standard of Competence (SK or *Standar Kompetensi*): Writing (putting an idea, feeling, information, and experience into a writing text). Basic Competence (KD or *Kompetensi Dasar*): writing a text based on experience with the consideration of diction and grammatical aspects.

The subject of this study were the 5th grade students of SDN (*Sekolah Dasar Negeri* or State Elementary School) 2 Pabuwaran, North Purwokerto Subdistrict, Banyumas Regency. There are 27 students consisting of 11 boys and 16 girls.

This study, which was a classroom action research, was carried out three cycles (McNiff, 1992; Joni *et al.*, 1998; Mills, 2000; and Wardhani & Wihardit, 2007). Each cycle consisted of three meetings and each meeting consisted of two hour lessons (2 x 35 minutes). Each cycle consisted of four actions. They were: (1) planning, (2) action, (3) observation and evaluation, and (4) reflection (Madya, 2007). The plan of each phase was based on the changes which were made on the basis of observed factors, namely students, teacher, and learning activity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

A. CYCLE I

In the cycle I, there are four steps in conducting Classroom Action Research as follows:

First, Planning. The preparation of learning activity was done in this planning step. The preparation includes: (1) arranging lesson plan which was based on *keterampilan proses* or skill-process approach through assignment method; (2) determining learning material, the material was making a writing text based on the important events that students experienced during the last one week; (3) preparing a learning medium in the form of example of the important events; and (4) making an evaluation instrument to measure students' ability in individually making a writing text.

Second, Action. Using the lesson plan as the guide, the teacher taught writing through the assignment of retelling students' important events. In the first and second meetings, the students were asked to tell the important events they had experienced during the last one week. In the third meeting, the students were asked to write the important events they had told before.

Third, Observation and Evaluation. After observing the given action, there were three teacher's activities which required some attention. Firstly, the way the teacher stimulated students' interest was good enough. He/she gave the students an example of his/her environment sensitivity that could be used as a basic idea of making a writing text. However, there were some examples which did not suit the students' psychological maturity level. Secondly, the way the teacher guided and motivated the students was good enough. This was shown by his/her activeness in approaching the students and giving them feedbacks in order to improve their writing.

Thirdly, the way the teacher concluded the material was good enough. This was shown by the class review he/she made. However, this effort still needed to be increased by involving students' role in reviewing the material.

The observation upon students' activeness in the learning activity showed the following results. Firstly, students' participation in class discussion was quite good (39.5%). However, from the first meeting until the third, there was increase i.e. from 29.6% to 51.9%. Secondly, students' participation in giving opinion was good enough (approximately 40.7%). Thirdly, students' participation in opposing was low i.e. only 27.1%. Fourthly, students' participation in doing the assignment was good; meaning that all students participated actively i.e. 100%.

The result of writing ability test showed that the students' ability of making a writing text was in the medium level with the mean of 58.9. However, the clarity, completeness, and truth of the content still needed improving.

Fourth, Reflection. Based on the observation, teacher's ability in doing the writing-learning process was good. Nevertheless, he/she should have given more assistance to his/her students to find out important events. Thus, the teachers should have: (1) improved the style of teaching by using the standard form of language, which could be understood easily; (2) been more active in guiding or motivating the students; in this case, he/she should have moved around the class and given priority to students who faced difficulties; (3) encouraged the students to take more care upon the surroundings, so they could use it as the idea of their writing.

B. CYCLE II

In the cycle II, there are four steps in conducting Classroom Action Research as follows:

First, Planning. The preparations done in this planning step were as follows: (1) Suggesting the teacher a simple way to explain to the students so it would easily be understood; and (2) giving the teacher a training about how to recollect the important events that had been experienced during the last one week. This preparation was needed so that the students could be involved actively in the learning process.

Second, Action. In the first meeting, the students were asked to recall the important events in which they had experienced in the last one week, not the previous weeks before. They were guided to choose one event, which was different from the event they told in the previous meeting. In this case, the teacher started to guide the students to describe the important events occurring at school. Afterward, they were asked to tell orally the most important event and do it in turn. While a student was telling his/her story in front of the class, the other student who had had his/her turn was asked to write down everything he/she had told before. The teacher asked the students to interview each other and to comment on what their friends had told. If needed, the students could give suggestions to each other in a group discussion. Other students might also listen and give feedbacks related to the completeness of the content.

The second meeting began by the assignment of narrating important event for those who had not presented their story. After all students finished telling their stories, they were asked to write them down. The teacher stimulated the students by giving example of writing which was written by the other students of their age. They, then, discussed the strength and the weakness of this sample writing. After discussing, the students continued writing about their own chosen topic. Having finished writing, their assignment was submitted and returned in the next meeting returned to them for revision purpose.

In the third meeting, the teacher returned the students' writings to be revised. The revision was done with the teacher's guidance, especially for those who still faced difficulties. The students might ask some questions related to their writings for the sake of perfection. The revision result was submitted again to be graded (Elliott, 1993; Sugiyanto & Adji, 1998; and Wiriaatmadja, 2007).

Third, Observation and Evaluation. The observation toward teacher's ability in developing the learning activity showed that all aspects, included in the learning activity, were good. The teacher got more active in involving the students' participation.

The observation upon students' activeness in this learning activity showed that there was a significant increase of students' participation. The students progressively dared to ask questions, give opinion, and even oppose others' statements. Their participation in doing the assignment was high. There were only two pupils who did not do the assignment seriously.

The evaluation of the writing skill showed that the students' writing texts were good enough with the mean of 67.5. However, improvement had to be made in the completeness of the content still needed to be improved.

Fourth, Reflection. From the reflection of the cycle II, some recommendations were made to improve the performance in the next cycle. They were: (1) the teacher had to make the important events clear for the students every week, starting from Monday until Sunday; and (2) the teacher had to encourage the students to participate more, either in questioning, giving opinion, opposing, or doing the assignment.

B. CYCLE III

In the cycle III, there are three steps in conducting Classroom Action Research as follows:

First, Planning. The preparations done in this planning step were as follows: (1) giving the teacher training of how to improve students' environment sensitivity, either at school or at home; and (2) giving the teacher training of how to invite students' participation in the learning process or how to create a conducive learning atmosphere. These preparations were needed to make students active in the learning process.

Second, Action. In the first meeting, the students were asked to recollect any events they experienced. This was done by observing the surrounding environment, either at school or at home. They were guided to choose one event, which was different from the event they told in the previous meeting. In this case, the teacher

started to guide them to describe the most impressive event occurring at school or their homes. Afterward, they were asked to tell the most impressive event in turn. While a student was telling his/her story in front of the class, other students who had had his/her turn was asked to write down everything he/she had told before. The teacher asked the students to questioning each other and opposing to what their friends had told. All students listened to the story and gave suggestion related to the completeness of the content.

The second meeting started with the assignment of narrating important events for those who had not presented their stories. After all students had finished telling their stories, they were asked to write them down. The teacher used the surrounding environmental problems as a way to motivate his/her students. The students continued their writings and then submitted them.

In the third meeting, the teacher returned the students' writing to be revised. The revision was done in a group discussion with the teacher's guidance. They were asked to revise their own writing for perfection. The revised versions were, then, submitted to be graded.

Third, Observation and Evaluation. The observation upon the teacher ability in developing the learning activity in cycle II showed that there was a betterment in the learning activity of cycle II compared to cycle I. Whereas, the observation of students' participation showed that students' participated more actively. This could be seen in the process of doing the assignment. All students did the assignment seriously. The evaluation of the writing skill showed that the students' ability in writing was good, with the mean of 79.

DISCUSSION

The teacher's effort in motivating the students appeared in cycle I. However, the quality of students' writing was low. Perhaps, this was due to the low atmosphere of study among the students. They did not participate in the learning activity.

The low motivation to study among the students may be caused by the low education level of their parents. They studied only for the parents or teachers. This condition had caused low self-confidence on them.

The students' courage to tell the important events in the last one week was low. Most of them were shy or even afraid to present their stories. This was caused by low self-confidence. Besides, they were not accustomed to performing in front of the class. However, the support from their teacher had encouraged them to do so.

Entering cycle II, there was a better atmosphere of study. The students were excited in identifying the important events they had experienced as the effect of their environmental awareness. Although the discussion was effective, the increase of the students' writing skill was still low.

The students' courage to ask questions, give opinion, and do the assignment increased in every meeting. Having finished narrating their important events, the students then directly wrote them down. However, the completeness and truth of the content of their writings were still weak. Some of them only estimated the

event; it was not what they had really experienced. Thus, the students still needed a guidance and reinforcement to improve their ability to perfect their writings.

Cycle III took place on Fasting month (*bulan Ramadhan*). This definitely disturbed the students' concentration in doing the assignment. They were tired at noon so the learning process became slower. However, due to the teacher's improved management of the learning process, the result was good. The students could tell and write the event well. This was shown in their writings. They were brief, clear and precise. In addition, the students' participation reached the value of 51.83%, in cycle II it reached 59.6%, and in cycle III it was 68.6%.

This showed that the good atmosphere of study had been achieved due to the teacher's consistency in carrying the learning process. Since the students' participation had increased, this certainly affected the quality of their writings. The mean value of writing skill in cycle I was only 58.9; it became 67.5 in cycle II, and in cycle III it reached the value of 79. This meant that they had passed the criteria of study completeness (*batas tuntas belajar*) which was 75. This result was considered as a good achievement regarding the school's rank and location, which was in the rural area.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the analysis of the given actions and result of writing-skill test, the following conclusions were made. *First*, there was a raising level of students' activity i.e. the progressive increase in students' participation, including asking questions, giving and opposing opinion and doing assignments. *Second*, there was students' sensitivity increase upon their surrounding either at school or home. *Third*, there was an increase on teacher activity during the learning process. *Finally*, as the consequences, the students' writing skill through retelling the recorded important event was also increased.

The cycle-test results showed that the mean of writing skill raised as follows: 58.9 in cycle I, 67.5 in cycle II, and 79 in cycle III. This achievement had passed the criteria of study completeness (*batas tuntas belajar*) i.e. 75.

With regards of the above conclusions, there are two suggestions that should be followed up:

First, the use of retelling the important events can be an alternative to improve students' writing skill.

Second, the result of this study only described the improvement of writing skill through the assignment of retelling the important events that the students had participated. It did not touch the area of, for example, writing a free topic (topic that students never have experienced before). Therefore, another research is still needed in order to improve students' ability in writing down the various problems that life may bring.

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