

## WRITING TASK ACTIVITIES IN DEVELOPING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL

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### ABSTRACT

*This article is concerned with the study of applying writing task activities to students' writing skill in developing good paragraphs at class II/A English Department in FKIP University of Pasir Pengaraian 2015/2016. The aspects explored in the study covered activities done by the lecturer in facilitating students' need of the writing knowledge and skill. The research employed the action research design and the instruments used in collecting the data were a set of tests, observation sheet, field-note and interview. The data analysis covered preparation and data implementation. The findings showed that the use of writing task activities could better improve students' writing skill in developing good paragraphs. The finding also found some factors that contributed to the better improvement, namely the selection of topics to be developed, the rule of peer and group discussion and the support of the writing lecturer in the instruction.*

Keywords: *Writing task activities, Writing skill*

### INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the important skills in language learning including English as a foreign language. Writing skill is becoming increasingly important in global community particularly in education either as a second or in a foreign language learning (Weigle, 2002; Foong, 1999; Sokolik, 2003). Having a good skill in writing helps students to share their ideas, to inform others about their thought, and to learn actively in particular in written form (Haitson, 1986; Angelo, 1989; Hyland, 2003; Tarigan, 2005).

The importance of writing in learning English has caused the government arranged the curriculum of the skill in various levels of education, from secondary schools to university (Solikah, 2015). In the Indonesian qualification framework-based curriculum, language learners are expected to be able to express their ideas in written form in various kinds of writing products. Most of the language learners learn writing skill in various levels,

started from the basic level up to the highest level such as academic writing concerned on the writing thesis activities.

Based on the researcher's experience as a lecturer of the first basic writing subject about writing paragraphs, he had trouble in facilitating the students to be able to write well. The earlier observation of the researcher concluded that the students lack of writing activities especially in developing the good paragraph. This article reports the result of a study on the use of writing task activities to develop students' writing skill of a good paragraph at English education department in University of Pasir Pengaraian.

Harmer (2008) points out two types of feedback in writing activities, namely oral feedback and written feedback. Writing task is the one use in writing feedback. Writing tasks are important to give all learners opportunities to perform their abilities. In addition, Harmer (2004) proposes that writing process has at least four steps: Pre-writing, Drafting, Revising and Editing, includes the stages

of pre-writing such as brainstorming and planning, writing the rough draft, editing, proof reading, and publishing the final draft (Ozagac, 2004).

The first is pre-writing. This step includes students' activities in thinking, taking note, talking to others, brainstorming, outlining, and gathering the information before they write the earliest draft document. The second is drafting. Writing the rough draft comes when learners get their ideas on paper by organizing them into sentences and paragraphs. The third is revising. This is the process of reviewing the paper on the ideal level. This process may involve changes such as clarification of the thesis, the reorganization of paragraph and the admission of extra information. The fourth is editing. After improving the quality in revising the stages, students need to check the mechanics including the correction of spelling, grammar, transition signals and the use of punctuations. The last is publishing. According to Gardner and Johnson (1997), the learners could publish their written pieces by reading out it loudly to the whole class or for their peers in-group of pairs. The advantages are that the students can receive the feedback on their completed work immediately.

Oshima and Hogue (2006) explain that a paragraph is the combination of thought in the forms of sentences which are formed to express any information by the writer to the readers. They list a paragraph contains at least a topic sentence, supporting sentences/ supporting details and a concluding sentence. In addition, a good paragraph has a unity and the coherence. A unity means that a paragraph should discuss on the single topic. The coherence refers to the smooth and sweet connection among the sentences written in the paragraph. The uses of transition signals are necessary to write the sentences, which have smooth connection, each other.

Practically and theoretically, this study was expected to be able not only to provide the contribution to the improvement of writing skill to develop a good paragraph for the six semester students, but also can be beneficial to the lecturers especially those who teach writing subjects, aiming at assigning the students to practice in order to have a better writing skill especially in developing a good paragraph.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The researcher used Classroom action research as the design of his study. The purpose of classroom action research is to help the teacher to improve the way of teaching in the classroom (Sugiyono, 2013). In addition, Emzir (2012) explains that classroom action research concerns on the development of educational research field which points out the identification of characteristic pragmatic's need from practical of education field to the reflective research into teaching in the class. Furthermore, this research design could be done only by the researchers who are involving or working at their research area such as teachers who are teaching at their own classroom. Classroom action research covers the phases such as plan, action, observation, and reflection (Arikunto, 2010). This research completely carried out in two cycles with the pre-test done precisely before the writing task applied.

The participants of this research were the researcher, a collaborator and the semester II/A students of English education Department totalling 24 students in the academic year 2015/2016. The instruments of this research were writing task and test, an observation sheet, field note, and interview. To analyze the quantitative data, the researcher evaluated and analyzed the students' writing skill scores and to analyze the qualitative data, the researcher analyzed the interview gained.

**RESEARCH FINDING**

This classroom action research collected and analyzed the data quantitatively and qualitatively. There were two questions became the concerns of the study: (1) To what extent can writing task activities contribute to students writing skill in developing good paragraphs at the semester II/A students of English education Department? (2) What Factors contribute to student's writing skill in developing good paragraphs at semester II/A students of English education Department?

**1. Writing task activities and students' writing skill improvement**

In the following description and analysis, the improvement of students' writing skill in each indicator in every test could be presented as in the table 1.

**Table 1: The Increasing of Students' Writing Skill in developing a good paragraph Between the cycle 1 and 2**

No	Kind of Test	Content	Organization	Vocabulary and Mechanic	Grammar
1	Pre-Test	60	56,1	54,7	38,9
2	Cycle 1	75,6	71,3	61,5	65,6
3	Cycle 2	77,4	84,6	77,2	74,6

From table 1, it can be described how writing task activities contribute to the improvement of students' writing skill especially in developing good paragraph. By writing task assigned, the students' achievement in each indicator improved practically.

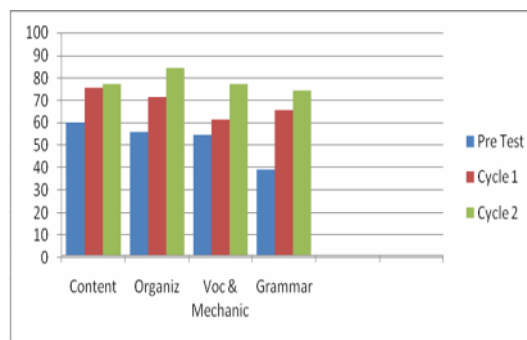
The first indicator (content) in the pretest, they got average score 60. After learning by supporting the writing task activities, they could achieve the average score 75.6 (posttest 1) and 77.4 (post-test 2).

The second indicator (organization), in pre-test they got average score 56. After the research action, they could get average score 71.3 (posttest 1) and 84.6 (post-test 2).

The third indicator (vocabularies and mechanic), the students got 54.7 in pre-test, After learning by supporting the writing task activities, they could get average score 61.5 (post-test 1) and 77.2 (post-test 2).

Finally, the fourth indicator (grammar) in the last shows that the students got average score 38,9 in pre-test. After applying the writing task activities in the action, they could get average score 65,6 (posttest 1) and 75.6 (post-test 2).

In the other presentation, the diagram (1) presents the comparison of students' writing skill before and after the writing task activities applied.



**Diagram 1: the comparison of Students' Writing Skill in developing paragraphs before and after the action**

In conclusion, it can be concluded that quantitatively the use of writing task activities in overcoming the students' writing skill especially in developing good paragraphs, could improve the students' achievement.

**2. Factors Contributing to Students' Improvement**

Since this study was classroom action research, the presentation and analysis of quantitative data in point 1 above need the supports of the presentation and the analysis of qualitative data. In summary, this study found some factors contributing to the improvement of students' writing skill.

a. The selection of the topic

Based on the observation and interview done by the researcher, there were some difference happened in the classroom at the beginning of the writing subject offered. Most of the students got difficulties to develop some topics offered by the lecturer at the early of three meetings. After getting reflection on the issue, it was decided that the topics assigned were based on the based on the students' interest in.

b. Peer and group discussion

Having discussion on the problems faced by the students in developing the paragraphs became the effective ways to overcome the difficulties experienced by the students. By discussing, students might have questions and answers. In addition, it seemed that peer and group have contributed much to the classroom interaction.

c. The lecturer's Support

Teacher's support in solving the students' difficulties in developing the good paragraphs were also considered by the students as the factor contributed to their writing skill improvement.

### CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, some conclusions can be drawn as in the following. The use of writing task activities can be applied in the classroom

where the writing class is being taught and learned. This study shows that students' writing skill in developing good paragraphs can be better after the students are taught by using the writing task activities. Furthermore, the selection of topics to be developed, the contribution of friends in peer and group discussion and the lecturer's support in the writing class have positive contribution to the improvement of students' writing skill.

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