

APPLYING AUTONOMOUS LEARNING TO DEVELOP STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL

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Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengembangkan keterampilan menulis mahasiswa khususnya dalam mengorganisasi ide dengan menerapkan belajar mandiri. Subjek penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa tahun ke-dua Jurusan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Madako yang terdiri dari 23 mahasiswa. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian tindakan kelas. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan dalam dua siklus. Setiap siklus terdiri dari, perencanaan, penerapan, observasi, dan refleksi. Kriteria keberhasilan adalah $\geq 80\%$ jumlah mahasiswa harus mencapai ≥ 65 . Siklus pertama menunjukkan bahwa kurang dari 80% mahasiswa yang mencapai kriteria; oleh karena itu perbaikan perencanaan untuk siklus ke 2 dilakukan. Hasil siklus ke 2 menunjukkan bahwa lebih dari 80% mahasiswa memperoleh skor ≥ 65 dan oleh sebab itu siklus di hentikan karena kriteria ketuntasan telah dicapai dan itu berarti bahwa penerapan belajar mandiri efektif untuk mengembangkan keterampilan menulis mahasiswa.

Kata kunci: Penerapan, Belajar Mandiri, dan Keterampilan Menulis

One of the language skills in language teaching important to be discussed is writing skill. The discussion may deal with the instructional strategy, instructional material, language teacher, language learner or even the writing components. The instructional strategy hold a crucial role to activate and maintain the students' motivation in the learning process, instructional materials play important role to contextualize the language usage and to meet the language learners' needs, instructional media drive the teaching into real life situation, the teacher facilitate and ease learning process, the learners manifest and produce meaningful and appropriate expression as an indicator of the instructional success, and the writing components relates to which components of writing to be emphasized in writing class activities. The university students who learn English as a Foreign Language (EFL) are expected to be able to express their idea both in non-academic and academic writing such as writing an essay, an article and a *Skripsi* as their final project. Therefore, teaching writing become important because it assumed to be the

most essential skill in order to be successful in the university.

To be successful in writing, some skills need to be mastered such as skill in organizing idea, choosing appropriate words and mechanical skills. Skill in organizing idea refers to the ability to present the idea systematically, skill in choosing appropriate words refers to the ability to employ the right vocabulary on the topic being discussed, and the mechanical skill refers to the ability to employ appropriate grammar and punctuation on the right place (Hogue, 2008). This is in line with Heaton's (1990) viewpoint that in producing a good writing there are four components that should be taken into consideration; they are organization, content, vocabulary and mechanics. It implies that writing is the ability to employ messages into a systematic writing form.

However, helping students to be able to have a good writing skill is not easy and it needs some effective efforts. It is due to the fact that writing is a complex subject. Heaton (1990) highlights that writing is complex and

difficult to teach and also to learn, it requires the mastery not only of grammatical and rhetorical devices but also of conceptual and judgmental elements. Therefore, the teacher plays an important role to ease the teaching and learning process by providing contextual material or applying an appropriate teaching strategies. Strategy in teaching writing hold important role to develop students skill in writing. Thus, the strategy applied must open up wide opportunities for learners to practice. (Manurung, 2005). One of the strategies that can be applied is autonomous learning. Autonomous learning leads the students to be actively involved in deciding their learning including what is learned, when, where, and how it is learned (Little, 2007; Dam, 2010; and Dickinson, 1995). It means that the students are encouraged to be active learners than passive ones.

To apply autonomous learning in teaching writing, Kweldju (2000) proposed five steps to be followed; finding topic, conducting library research, writing draft, revising and scoring essay. This supports what has been believed that in teaching writing there are four basic stages that have to be followed; planning, drafting, revising and editing (Richard and Renandya, 2002; Oshima and Hogue, 2006). This has been the main concern of this research where autonomous learning is used to develop the students writing skill.

Concerning the importance of writing, Madako University in Tolitoli provides a writing course which basically aims at improving the students' skill writing sentences, paragraphs and essays. It's reflected by the objective of the writing course provided in the first and the second year. In the first year writing course is called writing I in which the main objective of the course is the students are expected to be able to have knowledge about writing cover types of sentences, sentence connectors and punctuation. In the second year writing course is called writing II. The main objective of this course is the students are expected to be able to write good paragraphs

and various type of essay such as description, exposition and argumentation. The students are considered successful in writing course if they get or equal to the minimum score established. The minimum score of the writing course is 65. The scores are indicated by numbers then converted into letter. 85-100= A (excellent), 75-84= B (very good), 65-74= C (good), 55-64= D (low) and less than 55= E (very low).

Skripsi supervisors of Madako University reported that it is hard to check the students' *Skripsi*. They also found that the students' skills in writing are not adequate to write a *skripsi* in terms of, organization of ideas, sentence formation, and the language use. In addition, the problems are identified by interviewing students directly and analyzing their writing assignments. It can be concluded that the students' problems are (1) organizing idea, (2) limitation of time to revise their paper, (3) lack of grammar knowledge and vocabulary, and (4) low motivation to write.

Concerning the first problem, it is hard for the students to develop their ideas into a systematic writing and to find sufficient additional information to support their topic. The cause of these problems is the instructor does not lead and show the students how to develop and support their ideas by using relevant information so that their argumentative essay can be scientifically accepted. The students are not given enough time to explore the available sources. It means that there is no reading time for collecting relevant information.

The second problem is the students don't have enough chance to make the draft at home and conduct some revision on their paper. This situation caused by the limited time and the instructor does not give a special time to share with the students. It means that the students just write on paper for each topic for the whole semester without any chances to make it better. The third problem is the lack of grammar knowledge and vocabulary. Actually these problem are caused by a long process

started from the grammar and vocabulary courses. It became worse when they wrote their paper without enough guidance from both teacher and their peers. The last but not least, those three mentioned problems influence the students' motivation to write. They were frustrated because of the teacher's way of teaching who did not help them to be an intelligible academic paper and the classroom atmosphere did not encourage them to be a good writer.

Based on the common problems in writing found above, the second year students of English Education Study Program of Madako University academic year 2014-2015 particularly class C tends to the first problem. They find it difficult to organize idea particularly in starting, developing and concluding their writing. In addition based on the result of their writing products in first half of the second year there were 64% of them get lower score than the minimum score have been established. This research intended to solve the students' problem in writing by answering the research question *How can the application of autonomous learning improve students' writing skill?*. The findings of this research will contribute to improvement of the teaching strategy in the writing course and the development of the students writing skill.

METHOD

This research employed Classroom Action Research (CAR). The steps of the CAR; planning, implementation, observation, and reflection were implemented. The research was conducted into cycles. First cycle consisted five meetings and second cycle consisted of two meetings. The setting of the research was at English Education Study Program at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of Madako University. The

subject were 23 students who enrolled in the Writing course 2014/2015 academic year. The data were collected by scoring the students individual writing product in each cycle. Field notes and observation were based on the classroom interaction and observation was based on the researcher's performance in each meeting.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings of Cycle 1

Cycle 1 consisted of five meetings. In the planning phase the instruction was prepared based on the syllabus and previous identified problem. The identified problem was the students were difficult to start, develop and conclude their essay in other words they were difficult to organize their ideas into a systematic writing. Before asking students to apply autonomous learning to develop their skill in writing particularly in writing argumentative essay, the researcher introduced and explained the steps of autonomous learning; finding topic, conducting library research, making draft, writing essay, revising and scoring or self-evaluation.

Having introduced the steps autonomous learning the researcher asked the students to apply it in writing argumentative essay. During the application of autonomous learning the students' activities were monitored. Finding topic stage monitored by checking the topic they chose, library research activities monitored by asking them to report the result of their library research each meeting, making draft was monitored by checking their draft, writing, revising and scoring essay was monitored during the writing process in the classroom. The achievement of the set criterion of in cycle 1 was presented in the table below:

Table 1. The Students Achievement in Cycle 1

No	Initial name	Scores				Achievement Score	Grade	Category	Qualification
		Component of Argumentative Essay							
		Intro	Body	Concl	Mechanics				
	Max. score	4	4	4	4				
1	SRW	3	3	3	2	68	C	Fair	Successful
2	NHY	4	3	3	1	68	C	Fair	Successful
3	NRH	3	3	3	2	68	C	Fair	Successful
4	KPO	4	3	4	3	87	A	Excellent	Successful
5	FTR	3	3	3	2	68	C	Fair	Successful
6	MFA	3	4	2	2	68	C	Fair	Successful
7	STY	3	4	3	2	68	C	Fair	Successful
8	HRN	3	2	3	2	62	D	Poor	Failed
9	RNI	3	3	3	2	68	C	Fair	Successful
10	IKR	4	2	2	2	62	D	Poor	Failed
11	YLT	3	3	3	2	68	C	Fair	Successful
12	DFN	4	3	3	2	68	C	Fair	Successful
13	WRD	2	2	3	2	56	D	Poor	Failed
14	STI	3	3	3	2	68	C	Fair	Successful
15	RHD	3	2	2	2	56	D	Poor	Failed
16	RFI	3	3	3	2	68	C	Fair	Successful
17	KSL	3	2	2	2	56	D	Poor	Failed
18	SSD	4	3	2	2	68	C	Fair	Successful
19	MSM	3	3	3	2	68	C	Fair	Successful
20	KSM	4	3	3	2	75	B	Good	Successful
21	PTW	3	2	3	2	62	D	Poor	Failed
22	MFR	3	2	3	2	62	D	Poor	Failed
23	SAY	3	3	3	2	68	C	Fair	Successful
Average Score						66,5			
Successful Students						70%			
Failed Students						30%			

The table above indicated that there were still 7 or 30,4% of the subjects who had not passed the set criteria and there were 16 or 69,6% of the subject who passed the set criteria. One student in excellent category, one student in a good category, fourteen students in fair category and seven students in poor category. The result of reflection indicated that the success criteria in the first cycle was not achieved yet because less than 80% of the students passed the set criteria and also concluded that there were two factors affected the failure in the cycle 1. First factor came from the researcher and second factor came from the students' itself. Concerning to the first factor, the researcher did not explain in detail the procedure of autonomous learning to the students. Consequently some students did not understand how to apply autonomous learning in writing essay. As for the second factor, some of the students were not serious in doing the assignment given particularly in the library research activities and making drafts. As a matter of fact, they did not have any

preparation in writing essay and found it difficult to develop their topic. In line with the unsuccessful of in the first cycle, the research had to be continued to cycle 2 and that the revised plan have to be prepared.

Finding in Cycle 2

Cycle 2 consisted of two meetings, it was done based on the revised plan. The researcher explained in detail the procedure of autonomous learning particularly the way to conduct a library research as the part of writing process. On the other hand the researcher also encouraged the students to do the assignments given because the assignments were really important for the improvement of their writings. After explaining and encouraging the students in the first meeting of cycle 2 the researcher asked them again to apply autonomous learning to write an argumentative essay. They were asked to find any topic they were interest in, conducting library research dealt with the topic they choose, made draft and writing essay directly

in the classroom. The result of their writing product presented in the table below:

Table 2. The Students Achievement in Cycle 2

No	Initial name	Scores				Achievement Score	Grade	Classification	Category
		Component of Argumentative Essay							
		Intro.	Body of Phar.	Concl.	Mechanics				
	Max. score	4	4	4	4				
1	SRW	3	3	3	3	75	B	Good	Successful
2	NHY	4	3	3	3	81	B	Good	Successful
3	NRH	4	3	3	3	81	B	Good	Successful
4	KPO	4	4	4	3	93	A	Excellent	Successful
5	FTR	4	3	3	3	81	B	Good	Successful
6	MFA	4	3	3	2	75	B	Good	Successful
7	STY	4	3	3	3	81	B	Good	Successful
8	HRN	3	3	3	3	75	B	Good	Successful
9	RNI	4	3	3	3	81	B	Good	Successful
10	IKR	4	3	3	2	75	B	Good	Successful
11	YLT	4	3	3	3	75	B	Good	Successful
12	DFN	4	3	3	3	75	B	Good	Successful
13	WRD	3	2	3	2	62	D	Poor	Failed
14	STI	4	3	3	3	75	B	Good	Successful
15	RHD	3	3	2	2	62	D	Poor	Failed
16	RFI	4	3	3	3	68	C	Fair	Successful
17	KSL	3	2	3	2	62	D	Poor	Failed
18	SSD	4	3	3	2	75	B	Good	Successful
19	MSM	4	4	3	2	81	B	Good	Successful
20	KSM	4	3	4	2	75	B	Good	Successful
21	PTW	4	3	3	2	75	B	Good	Successful
22	MFR	3	2	3	2	62	D	Poor	Failed
23	SAY	4	3	3	2	75	B	Good	Successful
Average Score						75,1			
Successful Students						82%			
Failed Students						18%			

The table above indicated that 19 out of 23 or 82% of the subjects had achieved the success criteria and only 4 out of 23 or 18% of subjects who had not passed the success criteria. 1 students in excellent classification, 16 students in good classification, 1 students in fair classification and only 4 students in poor classification. It can be concluded that the success criteria had been achieved and therefore the cycle was stopped.

In the reflection of cycle 2, it was noted that the students' achievement increase from cycle 1 to cycle 2. The development of students' writing skill in each cycle was graphed in the following figure.

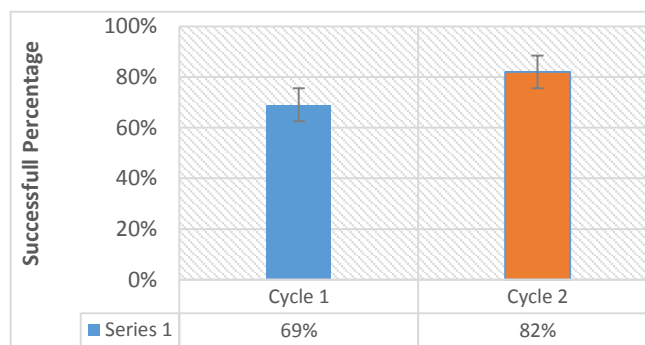


Figure 1. The Comparison of the achievement of cycle 1 and 2

The data in figure 1 indicated that the students who passed the criteria increase significantly from cycle 1 to cycle two. In addition, the student’s responses were also

revealed through the result of the questionnaire. The result of questionnaire presented in the table below

Table 3 Students Responses toward the Application of Autonomous Learning

No	Question	Answer	Respond	Answer	Respond
1	How much did you enjoy the instruction?	All of it	82%	Some of it	18%
2	How much do you think you learn?	A lot	65%	Some things	35%
3	How much did you understand?	Most of it	60%	Some of it	40%
4	Did the instructor help you to learn?	Yes, enough	82%	No, not enough	18%
5	How was the instruction?	Interesting	87%	Boring	13%
6	What do you think about the assignment?	Easy	70%	Hard	30%
7	Did you think your writing skill develop after following the course?	Yes, a lot	65%	Yes, partly	35%
8	Are you interested in writing argumentative essay?	Yes, of course	65%	Yes, a little	35%

The table above indicated that students enjoyed the argumentative writing course by using the autonomous learning. The table also indicated the students’ skill in writing get improvement. It is proved by the students’ response on the first question. There were 19 students out of 23 students said enjoy the lesson using autonomous learning. In the second question, there were 15 out of 23 students responded that they learnt a lot of the course. Then, in the third question, there were 14 out of 23 students responded that they understood most of the course. In the fourth question 19 out of 23 students responded that the instructor helped them to learn. Next, in the fifth question 20 out of 23 students responded that the learning procedure applied is interesting. Then, in the sixth question 16 out of 23 students responded that the assignment given (conducting library research) is easy. In the seventh question there were 15 out of 23 students responded that their writing get a lot improvement and 8 out of 23 students responded that their writing improved partly. In the eighth question, there were 15 out of 23 students responded that they were interested in writing argumentative essay using autonomous learning and there were 8 out of

23 students responded that they were little interested.

Discussion

The research question have been answered during the implementation of cycle 1 and cycle 2. The students’ writing skill got development through the application of autonomous learning. There were two potential factors have been applied during the cycle to overcome the students’ problem, the first was the library research activities during the process of writing and the second was making draft based on the draft form provided before writing argumentative essay in the classroom.

Library Research activities

Referring back to the previous identified problems in writing; difficult to start, difficult to develop and difficult to conclude the writing. It was noted that the library research activities hold important role in developing the student’s skill in writing argumentative essay. In this activity, there were at least two advantages can be got by the students to develop their skill in writing. First, through this activity the students can explore

as much as possible information related to the topic they were going to write. It meant that they had more opportunities to develop their idea. Secondly, in this activities the students can learn the way of writer to start, develop, and conclude his writing through the article or essay they read. It implied that the students can learn the organization of an essay independently.

Making Draft before Writing Essay

The second potential factors that had contributed to the development of the students writing skill was the preparation of draft before writing essay in classroom. The draft helped the students to solve the students' problem in writing in the following ways; firstly, before the student write an argumentative essay they were asked to prepare draft based on the topic they chose, secondly, after preparing the draft they were asked to write their argumentative essay in a systematic organization based on the draft prepared. It meant if the students have draft automatically they will easier to write their ideas smoothly. In short, the application of autonomous learning in this CAR proposes the introduction of TIRW (Teaching Integrated Reading and Writing). The steps can be briefly proposed as follows; 1) Find topic to write; 2) conduct library research through books or internet to explore relevant information with the topic; 3) make a draft and 4) compose the draft into a systematic writing.

CONCLUSION

The application of autonomous learning successfully develop students' writing skill in organizing ideas. It can be seen from the percentage achievement 69,56% in cycle 1 and 82,60% in cycle2. The developments are influenced by the activities carried out during the application of the research. The activities were conducting library research and writing draft before writing argumentative essay. Another improvement also occur on the students

attitudes in the writing course. It can be seen from the students' responses on the questionnaire given. The result of the questionnaires indicated that the students enjoy the writing course by using autonomous learning. The finding also imply that the teaching integrated reading writing (TIRW) potentially develop the students writing skill in EFL teaching at the university level.

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