ENHANCING TENTH-GRADE STUDENTS’ SKILL IN WRITING NARRATIVE TEXTS BY IMPLEMENTING PROCESS WRITING THROUGH STORYBIRD WEB 2.0

Zuhrufi Latifah
(zuhrufii@yahoo.com)

English Department, Universitas Negeri Malang

ABSTRACT

Learning English requires the learners to be able to master all the skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, of all those skills, many learners felt that writing was one of the most difficult skills to learn. A preliminary study done showed that tenth-grade students’ writing achievement related to narrative texts was mostly below the minimum passing grade set by the school. This study endeavored to find an appropriate strategy to overcome the students’ problems in writing narrative texts. The researcher used process writing strategy through Storybird web 2.0 as the medium to conduct the study. To get the data, the researchers used interview guides, questionnaires, writing task, observation checklist, and field notes. The subjects of the study were the tenth graders of Language Program at SMAN 7 Malang in the 2016/2017 academic year. The data was then analyzed using classroom action research design. The steps of the strategy done included planning, drafting, responding, revising, and editing. The better and higher achievement of the students’ writing was gained which was shown by the improvement of 18.75 points from that of in the preliminary study. Positive responses and active participation towards the implementation of the process writing strategy were shown based on the data gathered.

Keywords: writing, narrative texts, process writing, Storybird, CALL

1. INTRODUCTION

As the learning of English went more demanding nowadays, more people actively participated to learn in order to be able to master the language. The mastering of English itself was not limited to only one particular skill but all namely listening, speaking, reading and learning. However, many learners still believed that writing was one of the most difficult skills to master. In Indonesia, many teaching and learning activities related to writing were still done in a boring, monotonous way so that the learners were not interested in learning to write. Lamb (2007) states that although the students were motivated to learn at the beginning of the study, their motivation decreases as time went by because of some problems they faced at school.

A preliminary study done in SMAN 7 Malang specifically in grade 10 of Language Program in the 2016/2017 academic year revealed that the students’ writing achievement of narrative texts was problematic. As many as 67% of the total number of students in the class got score below the minimum passing grade set by the school which was 75. It was important to overcome the problem by implementing an appropriate strategy. From many theories available right now, a process writing strategy was chosen because it seemed suitable to enhance the students’ writing skill. Writing using
process approach was good for the learners because they would understand the experience of writing in a natural way as done by successful writers (Seow, 2002). Writing process was done in recursive way with some steps namely planning, drafting, responding, revising, and editing (Seow, 2002). This process would result in some drafts because the learners might come back to the previous steps whenever necessary (Nunan, 1991).

Along with the process strategy, a medium based on web 2.0 was implemented. The use of web 2.0 in the teaching and learning activity was essential at this era because the students belong to generation Z, or kids who were born between 1994-2004 (Ivanova & Smrikarov, 2009). These pupils cannot be separated from the use of gadgets and thus it was the teachers’ decision to catch up their style, either in daily life or in the learning process. In addition, Cahyono (2010) emphasizes the need to use some materials from the Internet then implementing them as the source in language learning. This reason was what led the researcher to use Storybird web 2.0 as the medium.

Storybird web 2.0 was one of web 2.0 basis allowing the users to write, read, share, or comment on others’ works. Menezes (2002) believes that Storybird web 2.0 with the use of artful picture as the source of idea would allow the students to develop deep reflection and higher-order thinking. Moreover, Ramirez (2013) who used Storybird web 2.0 in his study also comments that Storybird was one of encouraging sources to create stories. The possibility for the students’ work to be read by someone else other than their teacher would make the students to do the task more enthusiastically because the Internet provides optimal environment for the students to write, presenting the existence of authentic audience (Warschauer & Whittaker, 1997).

Those aforementioned reasons were what motivated the researcher to investigate how process writing strategy with the implementation of Storybird web 2.0 as the medium could enhance the tenth-grade students’ writing skill in narrative texts. The result of this study would be a description of a successful strategy in the form of steps that was implemented to improve the students’ participation and achievement in writing.

The first thing that needs to be done before conducting this study using classroom action research is observing and identifying the classroom problems. To gain the answer, the researcher conducted a preliminary study which was interviewing the teacher, giving an instruction to the students to write a narrative text, and distributing a questionnaire to the students. By using an interview guide, the researcher noted the English teacher’s perceptions towards the problems that appeared in the classroom. From the result of the interview, the English teacher stated that the common problems faced by the students in writing was the language features used in certain text types. In addition, the researcher also collected data from the students by giving an instruction to write a narrative text and then examining their writing to see their problems. The result of the writing showed that there were still many students who misused the language features in a narrative text. The language features, the use of adjective, word forms, the ways they composed paragraphs, and mechanics also became the problems since the average score of each aspect assessed based on the scoring rubric resulted in low total score and below the minimum standard score. In addition, based on the score given by two raters, there were only five students who scored above 75, or in other words, there were no more than 70% of the total students who got the score above the minimum standard score.

The researcher gave a preliminary questionnaire, too, to know their perceptions towards writing activity before the implementation of the strategy. Based on the result of the writing task given, as many as 67% of the total number of students’ compositions were still under the minimum passing grade. Related to the media that was going to be used, all of the students stated that they were good in digital literacy. All of them could operate some kinds of gadgets and they all had gadgets i.e. laptops and smartphones. Further, they were willing to bring the gadgets as long as those helped them to
improve their learning. Related to the Internet connection in the classroom, most of the students said that the connection was good enough.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The design of the study was classroom action research (CAR). This design was an effective way to improve both the English teachers’ performance and the students’ achievement in learning English in the classrooms (Latief, 2015). In other words, this design was appropriate to overcome the problems happened in the classroom. In the implementation of the study with CAR, there were some steps done in a cycle, consisting of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Because this study was successfully done within one cycle, no more cycle was needed.

The researcher in this study acted both as the teacher who implemented the strategy and the researcher who conducted the process of the research from the very first beginning until the end of the study. In addition, a collaborator of the English teacher to observe the students’ participation and the process of the teaching and learning was also present during the implementation of the strategy. To make sure that the score would be more objective, the presence of second rater coming from English Language Teaching major was suggested both in assessing the preliminary study works and final assignments.

The subjects of this study were the tenth-grade students of Language Program at SMAN 7 Malang who were in 2016/2017 academic year. The total number of student who became the subjects was eighteen. Based on the preliminary study, their writing achievement in terms of narrative texts was still low. Many of them were confused in using the correct language features especially grammars. Moreover, the organization, content, vocabulary, and mechanics aspect scores resulted in low total score because 67% of the total students in the class scored below the minimum passing grade set by the school which was 75.

This study was conducted in a classroom equipped by a good Internet connection from the school in the form of Wi-Fi. The connection of the school’s Wi-Fi was good enough when being used inside the class. To help the study run well, the students were required to bring their gadgets to the school. The school allowed the students to bring their gadgets to school so it was easier for the researcher to conduct the study. The gadget used might be either in the form of laptop or smartphone.

There were five instruments used in this study. The first instrument developed was the interview guide. The second instrument was writing task. There were two writing task used in the preliminary study and the implementation of the study. The writing prompt used in the preliminary study instructed the students to write a narrative text limited to fable or legend in 30 minutes. The second writing assignment was posted online on the Storybird website asking the students to write a narrative text based on the picture selected by the researcher. The next instrument was observation checklist. The English teacher as the collaborator was responsible to fill it in each meeting. Along with the observation checklist, field notes were also developed. The field notes were filled in by the collaborator, too, to give additional information of what happened during the teaching and learning process. Lastly, a questionnaire for preliminary study was distributed to the students. In the end of the study, another questionnaire was given to see the students’ perceptions towards the strategy that had been implemented.

In conducting the study, the researcher used classroom action research (CAR) design. The steps of CAR were done in a cyclical process covering planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

The first step was planning. Developing a detailed instructional strategy in the form of teaching scenario was done in this stage, so before implementing the strategy the researcher had already
known what she would do in acting. In addition, the researcher also needed to determine the instructional media that she was going to use. After that, to assess the students’ performance, assessment instruments in the form of observation checklists and field notes were also developed. Criteria of success to determine whether the strategy was helpful or not was very essential, so in this stage the researcher had to create the list of criteria. The instruments to collect data such as interview guide, preliminary and post-activity questionnaire were also prepared in this planning stage.

The instructional material used was a sample narrative text adopted by the teacher from Developing English Competencies 1: for Senior High School (SMA/MA) Grade X book entitled The Fortune Teller. From this text, the students were asked to analyze the purpose, generic structure, and language features of a narrative text. Other medium was the Storybird web 2.0 itself. It was a website designed especially for writing and reading. Finally, to make sure that the procedures ran well, good Internet connection and laptop or smartphone were required in the teaching and learning process as the other instructional media.

Based on point 3.10 in basic competence of 2013 Curriculum “analyzing the social function, text structure, and language features of simple narrative texts in the form of legend, according to the context use” and point 4.15 “interpreting oral and written narrative texts in the form of simple short story”, the researcher designed a learning strategy related to the writing of narrative texts which was one of the competencies required to master by the tenth graders of senior high school. The strategy employed was process writing strategy. This strategy was considered helpful since the learners would be able to develop their writing abilities through some processes that the actual writers usually do, covering planning, drafting, responding, revising, and editing.

The second stage was acting, which was implementing the strategy that had been designed. In this stage, the research tried out the instructional strategy to see whether the strategy could help to solve the classroom problem. Based on the teaching scenario developed, there were three meetings in acting out the strategy. Planning and drafting stage were done in the second meeting while responding from the teacher was done outside the class after the second meeting. In the third meeting, revising and editing stage were done.

After acting out the strategy, the third step was observing. The observation was done inside and outside the class by the teacher. In this stage, the teacher gathered the data collected using some instruments aforementioned.

The next step was reflecting which was conducted to evaluate whether the result met the target or not. In this stage, the data were analyzed by comparing the data collected with the criteria of success. The data analyzed would be the students’ scores and the students’ perceptions and participation that were gathered from the questionnaire, observation checklist, and field notes.

The criteria of success defined consisted of two targets. Firstly, 75% of the total students got score above the minimum passing grade (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal), which was 75. Secondly, the study succeeded if the students enjoyed and actively participated in the learning and teaching activity.

If the results show that the problems are solved, the cycle is terminated at this stage. Otherwise, if the data analyzed shows that the strategy implemented does not achieve the criteria of success, the researcher has to go back to the first step and do another cycle by revising the strategy. Since the results of the first cycle met the criteria of success, the cycle was stopped in this cycle.
3. RESULTS

3.1 Improvement of Students Writing Achievement

After the study related to the narrative texts using process writing through Storybird web 2.0 was employed, the researcher analyzed the final compositions of the students. It was known that there was a better and higher achievement than that of students’ initial writing done in the preliminary study. The improvement of the students’ achievement covered all aspects determined previously in the criteria of success, namely content, organization, language features, vocabulary, and mechanics.

Based on the analysis of each aspect, the total score between the preliminary study and after the implementation of the strategy should also be compared. The total number of students whose scores below the minimum standard score established by the school in the preliminary study was two-third of the total number of students in the class. Thus, there were only six students (33.33%) whose narrative text compositions could be categorized as good. As the strategy implemented, the number of students whose score above the minimum standard score accounted for almost twice than the previous study. As many as 16 students (88.89%) achieved the desired score and it surpassed the criteria of success stated before as there was a surge of more than 75% who got final score above 75. The picture below shows the graph of the average score of each aspect in the preliminary study and after the implementation of the strategy.

3.2 How the Strategy was Implemented

In order to execute the classroom action research study, a well-designed strategy had to be defined earlier so that the study successfully developed to improve the students’ skill in writing narrative texts. The strategy used in this study was process writing collaborated with the use of Storybird web 2.0 as the medium.

The first step in implementing the process writing strategy is planning. In this stage, the activity that was done was planning the story that was going to write, including deciding the story, title, characters, and plots. To focus on the theme, the teacher had already posted an assignment asking the students to write a narrative text based on the picture posted in the Storybird web 2.0. The picture selected portrayed a mousedeer and from this picture it was expected that the assignment of writing narrative texts about mousedeer was not really difficult. The students could develop a story either by their own original idea or the existed story they already knew but with their own words. To guide them doing the planning session, a writing guide was developed by the teacher. As students were also
expected to interact with their peers, they were asked to share their ideas with their friend. Moreover, their friend might give a suggestion towards their friend’s ideas.

The second step was drafting. Students started writing their story in the website either through their laptop or smartphone. Being a tutor, the teacher had to make sure that the students did not get any troubles while writing their draft on the Storybird website so while the students did the work, the teacher went round the class. Teacher also guided them to save their work online.

In between the drafting and the following stage which was revising, a responding might intervene (Seow, 2002:317). In this step, the teacher responded to the students’ work outside the class. The response of the teacher was in the written form posted privately in each students’ writing. In addition to getting comments from the teacher, the students also received comments from their friends. Each student was required to write a comment at least to one of their friends’ story. A peer commenting guide was developed to help the students give comments to their friends’ work.

The next step was revising. After giving comments to their friends’ work, the students were asked to read the comments and feedbacks both from the teacher and their friends. The students had to reflect on their work and based on the comments given, they started revising. While revising, the students were shown the criteria of evaluation projected through the LCD. Showing this in advance would be beneficial for the students since they knew how their composition would be assessed (Seow, 2002:319). Not only did the students read the comments, they might also reply or thank to their friend’s comments directed to them. It made the comment session be more alive.

Lastly, revising stage was employed. An editing checklist was given to each students to help them edit their work. It was done individually although they might ask for suggestions to their friends and teacher. After editing, the students finalized their work by publishing it. Outside the class, the teacher gave a public comment as another response.

In conclusion, the core activities in the strategy included (1) planning the story by sharing the ideas with their friends, (2) drafting the story online through the Iweb 2.0, (3) responding to the students’ works that was done both by the teacher and peers, (4) revising the story based on the feedbacks given, and (5) self-editing by the help of the checklist.

3.3 Responses of Students after the Implementation of the Strategy

The students’ responses that were assessed here were in terms of their participation during the teaching and learning activity and their perceptions towards the strategy that was implemented. To analyze the students’ participation, the observation checklist and field notes were used. While to see the students’ perceptions, the data was gained from the post-activity questionnaire.

Based on the observation checklist, there was an increase from the first to the last two meetings. In the first meeting, the total score given by the collaborator as the observer was 21 out of 24 or 87.5%. In the second and third meeting however, the percentage was great because the observer gave score 100% in the last two meetings.

From the questionnaire raised, the students gave positive responses towards the strategy and the media used. Majority of the students stated that they liked and were interested in the strategy and the medium. Most of them agreed that the strategy and medium helped them to improve their writing skill. The medium was also regarded as easy to use and user friendly. The features of the Storybird web 2.0 such as direct comments, private notes, and score were seen as helpful for the students. It was also stated that many students demanded the strategy and medium to be used for the following activities.
4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Improvement of the Students’ Writing Achievement

This study showed that there was improvement in the students’ writing skill as the students’ average writings increased 18.75 points from the preliminary study, becoming 85.14 of the average score. Moreover, the number of the students who passed the minimum passing grade was more than 75%, specifically 88% because there were 16 students who scored above 75. The results of this study was parallel to the previous research, such as the one mentioned by Prayogatama (2015) who used the process writing strategy in writing. There was an increase of 10 points on the final task compared to the preliminary study. Mujrikhah (2015) who conducted process approach but with different strategy also stated that there was improvement in her students’ achievement, showing an increase of up to 16.15 points compared to the preliminary study. Another research conducted by Sun & Feng (2009) who used experimental research in two different classes with the implementation process writing approach also indicated significant progress towards students’ writing skill.

Related to content aspect, the teacher’s responses to the students’ writing by giving personal notes in order to give them some clues on the things they could write better in terms of ideas played important role, so did the peer’s feedbacks. Keh (1990) points out that these two kinds of feedback from the teacher and peers helped the students to revise the higher order concerns such as the content.

In planning, the teacher gave the students a writing guideline so that they could organize their story easier. Harmer (2011) suggests that deciding ideas was part of planning, in which at that stage the writers understand how to present their ideas in orderly fashion and realize to whom they are writing. Therefore, the writing guide was aimed to help the students define the plot of the story and group the ideas.

The result of the students’ writings showed that the students’ writing products were not perfect in terms of language features. Badger & White (2000) explain that the process approach got less emphasizes on linguistic aspect such as grammar because it focuses more on the linguistic skills. Yet importantly, the students learned how to write because they improved. It should be highlighted that the focus of process writing is the writing process itself, not the writing product (Sun & Feng, 2009). Again, they also said that the process writing might not make their writings error-free and absolutely perfect, but the process that the students followed made their compositions get closer to perfect.

Another aspect, vocabulary, increased, too. Ramirez’s (2013) study in implementing Storybird also finds out that the students’ vocabulary greatly expanded in writing. As the teaching and learning process went on, the teacher might intervene the students’ work by giving responses in the form of private notes. In this responding stage, the teacher gave suggestions on some points either related to higher order concerns or lower order concerns.

The aspect of mechanics also increased although with a little difference in terms of points between the preliminary study and final task. One of the advantages of using digital media is the benefit for the writers to edit their works easily. Punctuation, capitalization, or other mechanical marks can easily be edited because the use of digital media saves more times than that of pen and paper. The easy and quick editing was what was introduced by computer in the writing process (Simic, 1996). This showed that the use of Storybird web 2.0 medium in the process writing strategy helped the students in editing.

The next criteria of success was if the students actively participated and were interested in the process writing strategy using Storybird web 2.0 as the medium. The data from the questionnaire resulted in positive participation and perceptions. The use of web 2.0 in learning activity was aimed to make the teaching and learning process fun. Additionally, this kind of activity was what the nowadays
teachers have to do in order to be able to catch up the students’ style either in daily life or learning (Ivanova & Smrikarov, 2004).

4.2 The Implementation of the Strategy

In the step of planning, The students were given chances to decide their story and then discuss their ideas with their friends because the teacher only gave guidance and had no right to interrupt their ideas (Sun & Feng, 2009). The next step, drafting, required the students to write their story online in the Storybird web 2.0 account. Sun & Feng (2009) suggest to use word processor in writing the draft because it made the students easier to revise later on. Before doing revision, some responses were given both by the teacher and peers. Some researchers planned the steps without any interruption of responding, so the process of drafting was followed directly by revising (Harmer, 2011; Sun & Feng, 2009). However, Seow (2002) believes that responding should better intervene between drafting and revising so that the students know what to revise. The last two steps, revising and editing, were done based on Seow’s suggestion in which he proposed the researcher to give the students a guide for peer comment and self-editing checklist (2002).

Based on those main steps, it could be stated that there were five core activities in implementing the process writing strategy using Storybird web 2.0. The first step was planning the story that was going to write by discussing the ideas to their friends. Next, the students started drafting the story by writing online on the Storybird web 2.0 account. The next step was responding which was done both by the teacher and the students. The teacher gave private notes for the students while the peers commented on each other’s work. Based on the feedbacks from the teacher and peers, the next step which was revising was done. Lastly, to finalize the compositions, self-editing was conducted by the help of the checklist given.

4.3 Responses of Students after Implementation

Along with the use of the process writing strategy, the Storybird web 2.0 as the medium was employed and made the teaching and learning activity become more interesting and successful. Menezes (2012:300) says that the use of Storybird web 2.0 made the students more engaged in the activities and enhanced their creativity. Moreover, the students taught belong to those generation in which we called them as generation Z. Their communication, as they were born in digital era, was mostly done through web (Ivanova & Smrikarov, 2009), thus the use of web 2.0 in the teaching and learning activity suited them best. Ramirez (2013:177) also states that after implementing the study on narrative texts using Storybird web 2.0, the students writing ability improved in some aspects and they became autonomous learners.

The comments and feedbacks given supported the responding stage, as Seow (1996:80-81) argues “responding benefits the writer in that it helps him to clarify his purposes and ideas and improve his writing.” Keh (1990:296) states that the peer feedbacks the students received raised their awareness that they wrote for wider readers, not just their teacher.

5. CONCLUSION

The study of the implementation of process writing strategy using Storybird web 2.0 to enhance the students’ writing skill in narrative texts was successful. This could be seen from the data of the students’ writing that improved 18.75 points from the preliminary study with the average of the students’ achievement became 85.14, surpassing the minimum passing grade established by the school which was 75. In addition, the data from the questionnaire and observation checklist also showed that the students enjoyed the strategy implemented and actively participated in the teaching and learning process. These data indicated that the criteria of success set initially met the target.
Related to the strategy, it could be inferred that there were five main steps in order to implement the process writing strategy. The steps include planning, drafting, responding, revising, and editing, which could be done in a recursive way. Specifically, the core activities implemented in this study could be narrated as follows: (1) planning the story by sharing and discussing the ideas between pairs; (2) writing the first draft of the story on the given story framework followed by writing the draft online in the Storybird web 2.0; (3) responding to the friends’ work by giving comments and then reflecting to the students’ own work based on the feedbacks given from both the teacher and friends; (4) revising the story based on the feedbacks and reflection; (5) editing the students’ own work by the help of self-editing checklist.

In terms of the implementation of the strategy and media, the students gave positive responses. Majority of the students were fond of the process writing strategy and they felt that the strategy helped them to improve their writing skill. The students also stated that they liked the medium used because it was user friendly and easy to use. In addition, they believed that the use of the medium along with the implementation of the strategy were helpful in improving their writing skill.

REFERENCES


