The Effectiveness of CIRC Method and Comic-Strip Media to English Writing Ability

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Abstract - **All university students are expected to be able to write in English. One way to achieve this purpose is through comic-strip media. The aims of this study to determine the effectiveness of the comic-strip media in improving English writing ability of mechanical engineering students. This research focuses on writing procedure text. This research applied quasi-experimental "pre-test post-test design". It was conducted at the Muhammadiyah University of Metro in academic Year 2015/2016. The population involved in this study is mechanical engineering students that consisted of 60 students and were divided into 30 students in experimental class and 30 students in control class. The variables of this study were: (1) CIRC method with comic-strip media as independent variables, and (2) ability to write as the dependent variable. The instrument used in this study was a writing test. To analyze the data, researcher used t_{test} formula. The results showed the value of $t_{test}T_{Table}$ 3.57 and 2.00 (criterion 1) and 2.66 (criterion 2). From these results, it can be concluded that the CIRC method through comic strips can improve writing ability of mechanical engineering students.**

Keywords: *CIRC, comic strip, writing.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing may be considered as the difficult and complicated skill among the four language skill. Hyland (2004) says that writing is at the very heart of Academic life. To solve the problems, comic strips introduced to be applied in teaching writing. The media was chosen because it was easy to apply. Based on previous studies, it was found that the media that use picture such as comic strips was effective to help students develop and organize ideas in writing composition. The objective of this study was to improve students' ability in writing procedure text.

In teaching English especially teaching writing, the lecturer should use a lot of media which encourages the students to be more active in English class. In terms of written English, the writing ability of students is very low due to many aspects such as grammar, punctuation and the spelling. This problem is related to another fundamental problem in terms of students' interest in learning writing as they do not have enough basic knowledge and interest in writing. Therefore the lecturer have to determine the effective method to improve their interest and ability in writing. Furthermore, the main problem that leads to the low interest of students in writing is the lack of media that can give them a big picture of the story they want to write.

The use of interesting media also contributes to the better learning process, both for improving students' participation and their interest in classroom activity which might lead them to have better ability in writing. Students' low interest and lack of ability in writing their ideas with correct grammar, vocabulary and punctuation are some indicators showing their lack of writing practice and media utilization in teaching writing. The first indicator is the students' low interest in writing compared to their interest in speaking. They prefer expressing their ideas orally to expressing them in the written forms.

In this research the researcher found some problems. One of the main problems is the involvement of the students in every activity in the learning process which remains low. The first problem begins with the media. In the teaching and learning of writing the lecturer sometimes uses only one visual aid or medium to teach the students. The second problem is the monotonous class activities which were held by the lecturer in the classroom. The students' ideas cannot be captured and revealed while the monotonous classroom exists, and when they were given writing assignments which they completed by copying written information from the internet. The third problem is the monotonous learning sources that made students seem uninterested in studying.

Another problem is the availability of the media which could not be found in the classroom or even in the library. The students dealt with the same medium and that was a kind of boring thing as they did not know things that may be interesting for them, and it made them could not develop their knowledge and ability to learn English.

The last problem is the English practice of the students especially in writing that is very low due to the low awareness of the importance of English and the little portion of writing tasks. The teacher gave the students more tests in writing skills than the task to learn. Therefore the students got bored with the regular activity provided by the teacher and it had some impacts on their interest and ability in writing. One of the factors why students of Engineering Student of UM Metro get low scores in English subject was their lack of practice. Therefore, the research is mainly focused on the efforts made to improve students' learning process in terms of enthusiasm, practice and participation in the process of learning English by using the comic strips, due to the weaknesses which were stated before. Based on the previous explanation, the study on the learning process of

writing by using the comic strips was expected to improve students' interest and their involvement in the learning process of writing, due to the content of the comic strips which is very interesting and has some creative ideas based on the story of the comic.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The Nature of Writing

Writing is a kind of skill that expects the students to produce a text by using English. They have to write about what they think in their mind and state it by using the correct procedure. There are several definitions of writing that can be studied. Hyland (2004) states that writing is a way of getting things done. To get things done such as, describing something, telling a story, requesting an 8 overdraft, drafting an essay, and so on, one must follow certain social conventions for organizing messages, so that these conventions can be described and taught. Nunan (2003) also defines that writing is the process of thinking to invent ideas, thinking about how to express into good writing, and arranging the ideas into statement and paragraph clearly.

Oshima and Hogue (1999, p. 3) state that writing is not easy for both native speakers and new learners of English. It takes study and practice to develop this skill. Writing is a process, not a product. It means that a composition is never complete, it is always possible to be reviewed and revised many times. Writing can also be defined as both physical and mental activity that is aimed to express and impress, according to Nunan (2003, p. 88). The activities of writing focus more on the act of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express and organize them into statements and paragraphs that enable a reader in understanding the ideas of the written work.

2.2 Micro- and Macro-skills of Writing

In writing, there are some aspects that have to be considered. Brown (2004, p. 221) has summarized all those aspects into two main skills, they are the micro- and macro-skills of writing. They are needed to develop the effective writing. Those skills are described as follows: (1) produce graphemes and orthographic patterns of English; (2) produce writing at an efficient rate of speed to suit the purpose; (3) produce an acceptable core of words and use appropriate word order patterns; (4) use acceptable grammatical systems (e.g., tense, agreement, and pluralization), patterns, and rules; (5) express a particular meaning in different grammatical forms; (6) use cohesive devices in written discourse. Whereas, the macro-skills of writing as follows: (1) use the rhetorical forms and conventions of written discourse; (2) appropriately accomplish the communicative functions of written texts according to form and purpose; (3) convey links and connections between events, and communicative such relations as main idea, supporting idea, new information, given information, generalization, and exemplification; (4) distinguish between literal and implied meanings of writing; (5) correctly convey culturally specific references in the context of the written text; (6) develop and use a battery of writing strategies, such as accurately assessing audience's interpretation, using prewriting devices, writing with fluency in the first drafts, using paraphrases and synonyms, soliciting peer and instructor feedback, and using feedback for revising and editing.

It is important for the teacher to understand how their students learn, because it will be a consideration how the teacher will teach them. There are many different theories of learning process. Slavin (2005) defines learning as a change in an individual caused by experience. Meanwhile Burns in Dunn (2002) conceives learning as a relatively permanent change in behavior including both observable activity and internal processes such as thinking, attitudes and emotions.

2.3 Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC)

CIRC is a comprehensive program for teaching and writing in which students are assigned team composed of pairs of students from two or more different level (Durukan, 2011). It consists of a variety of instructional practices which develop social, academic, and communication skill. The principal features of CIRC stem from an analysis of recent research on effective reading, writing, and language instruction in reading comprehension, treasure hunt activities and integrated language arts and writing. Treasure hunt are worksheets that include comprehension questions, prediction guidelines, new vocabulary to be learned, story retelling and story related writing suggestion. In all of these activities students work in heterogeneous learning teams (Eilks, 2005, p. 83). According to Slavin (2007), corporative learning can change the understanding of the students by increasing their capabilities in academic area. Corporative learning is also essential in contributing and influencing achievements and positive attitude among students.

Corporative learning method can be differentiated in groups of peer learning by considering the prerequisite to build a positive reliance among group members throughout the discussion (Thresia, 2013). Every group member is responsible for the learning of others and the obligation of every individual. Meanwhile, teacher is responsible in ensuring the effectiveness of corporative learning method by giving a proper guidance to the students during the activities for each lesson. And by this means teacher is a guider or facilitator and not as a contributor or main source of information for the students (Slavin, 2007). Corporative learning is different with group learning. During group learning, a teacher usually divided the class into three groups consisted of students with the same level of intelligence, namely, advance group, intermediate group and remedial group. Then, teacher will distribute a task sheet or an exercise to each student based on their capabilities. They are required to complete the work individually but free to discuss with one another. This method is not categorized as corporative learning because there's no positive reliance among students and the accountability of each individual during group activity (Ghaith, 2003). Corporative learning

needs the students to cooperate with one another in order to achieve success as a group and tokens will be given away to the winning group.

2.4 Approaches in Teaching Writing

There are various approaches to teach writing. Hyland (2004, p. 2) proposes some approaches to teach writing. Those are: (1) focus on language structures; (2) focus on text functions; (3) focus on creative expression; (4) focus on the writing processes; (5) focus on content; (6) focus on genre and contexts of writing.

There are four categories of writing performance by Brown (2004) that capture the range of written production. Each category resembles the categories defined for the other three skills, but these categories, as always, reflect the uniqueness of the skill area as follows: *Imitative, Intensive, Responsive and Extensive.*

The effective ways to improve the writing learning process must have some criteria as follows: (1) increasing students' motivation in writing; (2) providing many opportunities for students to write; (3) encouraging students to make beneficial efforts; (4) providing varied activities; (5) providing various materials; (6) providing process of writing.

2.5 Procedures in Teaching Writing of Procedure Text using Comic Strip

Procedure text is one of the texts in genre based approach. In this research, procedure text is a piece of writing that tells us information of making or doing something through several steps or directions. The example of procedure texts includes cooking recipes, direction to find a place, game rules, manual instructions of a tool, science experiment. However, the procedural texts which are used in this research are cooking recipes and manual steps of doing something. In addition, there are two important parts that students have to consider. They are the generic structure and the language features of procedure text. Goal or purpose in procedural text describes what someone wants to do. It usually states in the title of the text.

Ravelo (2013) explains that there are four stages in teaching learning cycle using the genre approach which are listed as follows.

- **Building the context.** In this stage, the lecturer tries to develop students' prior knowledge of procedure text by doing brainstorming. Here, lecturer asks some questions based on the topic which related to the procedure text. Furthermore, lecturer gives series of picture in term of comical view and asks some questions based on it.
- **Modeling of the text.** In this stage, lecturer tries to develop students' understanding of procedure text from its feature and purpose. Here, lecturer gives the text based on the give series of pictures. Then, the students are asked to read and explore a comical picture. Finally, lecturer and students try to analyze the structural pattern and language features of the

model text. They will also try to compare the model text with other examples of the text-type.

- **Joint construction of the text.** In this third stage, teacher tries to develop students' writing skill to make procedure text. Students here start to have group discussion related to the text. Doing some activities such as matching the sentences to the suitable pictures, arranging the jumble sentences into a correct order and combining them into a good writing based on a series of pictures. Then, having discussion to find the right answer.
- **Independent construction of the text.** The fourth stage lead students to have independent activities. They will construct (write) a text that is being studied independently. Here, teacher tries to develop students' writing skill to produce procedure text individually.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This research was experimental research. According to Creswell (2005), the essential feature of experimental research is that investigators deliberately control and manipulate the conditions which determine the events in which they are interested. At its simplest, the experiment involves making a change in the value of one variable–independent variable, and observing the effect that change on another variable–dependent variable. Independent variable is the label given to the variable that the experimenter expects to influence the other. The dependent variable is the variable upon which the independent variable is acting. Here, experimental research was referred to the activity of collecting data from the subject of the research. This experimental research was conducted by means of *posttest-only control design,* because the objective of the research is to find out the influence of treatment.

This research deals with two classes. Each of classes received pre-test, treatment and post-test in order to find the progress of students' writing ability at making a procedure text using comic strip. The treatment was conducted for about three times. Furthermore, the control class did not get the treatment and the experimental class got the treatment used comic strip.

The sample of this research was all students in Engineering Faculty at the second semester of Muhammadiyah University of Metro. There were 60 students. The researcher divided the class into 2 class which consisted of 30 students in every class. The first class as control class and the second class as the experimental class which received treatment using comic strip to help students improve their writing ability at making a procedure text.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this research is to apply CIRC method using comic-strip media to improve English writing ability of the engineering students of Muhammadiyah University of Metro. The research had been done from February until May 2016. The second semester students of Engineers involved in this

study were 60 students which were included into 2 classes that are experimental and control class. Tryout test applied at February 2016 in order to result in the valid and reliable data. The validity used for the instrument are content and construct validity. The reliability used on this research is Pearson product moment with 0.99 score which is categorized at very high level.

Table 1. The Data of Hypothesis Post Test

Variable	X	S^2	S	t-ratio	t-table (0,05)	t-table (0,01)	Conclusion
X_1	68,6818	34,0368	5,0757	3,57	2,00	2,66	SIGNIFICANT
X_2	63,6818	17,4892					

Based on the data from the table above, t_{ratio} is higher than t_{table} with 2.00 of 0.05 significance level. So, it can be concluded that Ho is rejected and Ha is accepted. It means that there is an effective value on the application of CIRC method by means of *comic-strip* media to increase English writing ability of Mechanical Engineer students of Muhammadiyah University of Metro. This result is suitable with Ghaits's research.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the result of analysis data, the researcher concludes that the score of engineer students' of UM Metro in the writing test with the application of comic strip showed the maximum score. This supported by the data which show that the highest score of students in pre-test is 64, and 80 in post-test. Whereas, the student with the conventional method at the instructional process of vocabulary showed a good score. This is supported by the data which showed the highest score; 62 for pre-test and 72 for post-test.

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