THE USE OF LOG BOOK AS A MEANS OF IMPROVING STUDENTS’ ABILITY IN WRITING RECOUNT TEXT

Tuti Purwati
English Education Department, Faculty of Humanities,
Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, Purwokerto

Abstract

This paper is aimed at finding out the use of log book as a means of improving students’ ability of in writing recount text. It is a qualitative research with students of second semester of English Education Program who take Pre-Intermediate Integrated Practicum as the object of the research. All students in the course are strongly urged to write log books every day for a week previously before they get the material of recount text. There are around 20 students in the class and it is purposively taken 5 students as the sample of the research. Based on the result of the research, it is found out that the abilities of the students in writing recount text are improved after they are intensively obliged to write log books in a week. They are able to write well in writing recount text since in writing log books they are supervised to write their daily activity and their experiences systematically in accordance with the schematic structure of recount text.

Key words: log book, writing ability, recount text

INTRODUCTION

Writing belongs to one of the main four English skills which is said to be the most difficult by some students. There are speaking, reading and also listening for the other skills. Writing is a productive skill as well as speaking while listening and reading are receptive ones. It is regarded as a difficult skill since the learners need to construct an idea into a good and grammatically correct paragraph. According to Pincas (1982:5) writing is one of the subjects of learning about grammar, vocabulary and paragraph. Therefore, making a good writing requires mastering of good grammar, vocabulary and paragraph.

The difficulty in creating a good writing can be identified from the three factors. Firstly, lack of grammar makes the learners get problem in writing good and meaningful construction of sentences. They will make limited strings of words and it results in a poor paragraph construction. The next is a shallow mastery of vocabulary. This can also prevents learners to create a text since they are afraid of making written expression. The last is lack of idea. Some learners always wonder what to write. They do not know what to do when they are told to write a paragraph and the topic they aren’t familiar with.

Writing subject for English Education students at university level performs techniques how to write English writing or essay well. The students are expected to know and to be able to write many types of texts as well such as descriptive, narrative, expository, procedure and recount. The level of writing skills will be higher as the semester of the students raise up. Knowing basic skills in writing and creating good sentences will be in the first semester. It will be continued with the paragraph writing in the 2nd semester that requires students’ mastery of creating good paragraph in the form of several text types. One of the text types students need to construct is recount text.

Recount text is a text which has a function to record events for the purpose of informing (Hammond et.al., 1992:88). It usually has a schematic structure of orientation, records of events, reorientation and sometimes coda which is aimed at commenting on the events. This type of text has significant grammatical pattern such as it usually focuses on specific participants, uses past tense, contains verb of action, uses temporal connectives to indicate sequence of events and has circumstances of time and place. Recount text is usually used to tell past activities or previous experience.
There are many techniques to improve students’ writing. One of them is using log. Parish (2004:153) states that log is a means which can be used by students to record and observe about the teaching and learning processes that occur in a lesson. Students use log book to write the result of their learning of a certain lesson. Log can be used as a practice of students’ writing. It can help students to overcome some difficulties in writing such as limited vocabulary, lack of grammar and lack of ideas. As mentioned by Chan (2009:1) log can develop students’ competence in writing.

Based on some explanations above, I am interested in conducting a research exploring the use of log book as a means of improving students’ ability in writing recount text. I formulate the problem statement as follows: How is the use of log book as a means of improving students’ ability in writing recount text? Therefore, the objective of the research is to find out how the use of log book can help the students to improve their writing ability in recount text.

RESEARCH METHODS

This is a descriptive qualitative research in which I describe the use of log book as a means of improving students’ writing ability in constructing recount texts. As I am the teacher of pre-intermediate course practicum, a subject of 2nd semester of English Education Department, I have some materials in this subject. I am responsible for teaching and supervising students’ two skills speaking and writing. There are about 22 students in this class and in writing skill I have some text types to be delivered and mastered by the students until the end of the course. One of the text types is recount text. In preparing students to create recount text previously I ask the students to write a log book containing students’ story about what they have got in daily lessons for a week. Then, I do some reading and correction on students’ log book before finally I ask them to write a recount text about what subject experience they have got in a week. Purposive sampling is used as the sampling technique. I select 5 students’ writings as the data of my research. The data is further analyzed and described to get some conclusions. To complete the analysis, I also use a questionnaire to get students’ opinion on the use of log book for helping them to construct recount texts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

1. Results of Writing Logs

This research is conducted to the 2nd students of English Education Department in the subject of Pre-Intermediate Course Practicum. This subject mainly discusses 4 English skills and grammar. The English skills are speaking, reading, listening and writing. There are 2 lecturers in a class and each lecturer is responsible for handling two skills. The subject is delivered twice a week. I am responsible for teaching two skills, speaking and writing. Writing in 2nd semester emphasizes on the types of texts which need to be mastered by students. They are recount, description, report and procedure. Recount text is given in two meetings.

To start with, I ask the student to write a recount text after I have explained the materials including the social purpose, the schematic structure and some grammatical features of a recount. Afterward, I ask them to make a daily log book containing students’ writing of what subjects they have got every day. They need to tell the subject, the material and their opinion dealing with the subject they got. They usually had 2 or 3 classes a day therefore totally in a week they got around 10 subjects. Since there are about 22 students in a class, there are 22 log books of the students with 10 writings each.

I did evaluation on their first writing on recount text with the topic of my experience in “Basic Writing” semester 1. Then, I also carried out evaluation their writings in log book for a week later. There are 5 components in evaluating their works.
They are grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, fluency and form (Langan, 2001:101). Grammar focuses on some grammatical errors dealing with word order, vocabulary deals with some use of idioms, diction, expression of ideas as well, mechanics relates to punctuation and spelling, fluency has to do with choice of structures and appropriate vocabulary and form represents highly organized and clear progression of ideas.

For the first writing, among 22 students, there are only 3 writings which can be said as excellent in term of meeting the requirements. They deal with the good statement of main idea, clear structure of text and have good grammatical features of recount text. The finding is supported by the requirements of scoring in which most components get score 5 out of 6 as the highest. They meet the requirements well in the aspects of grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, fluency and form.

I further do evaluations on their log book in a week. I intensively read all their writings in the log book day by day. Since they are in the same semester and the same class, all the subjects are the same. What differentiates the content of their writings is their opinion about the subject they follow. In this step, I find out that some of the students’ writings get better. They try to have different words to express their same feeling and they explore to use idioms and diction. They develop their ideas in telling their subjects of the day.

Finally when they did the recount writing in their last meeting of recount text, they are asked to write the most favorite subject in the previous week they wrote in log book. They just choose one of the writings with some improvements. It turns out that their writing ability improves much. Most of them have followed the requirements of writing recount texts. In addition, they perform well in some scoring evaluation namely in grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, fluency and form. There are more than half students can do this well.

2. Result of Questionnaire and Interview

To support the finding, I give questionnaires and conduct interview to the students. Based on the result of questionnaires it can be concluded that log books help students to write easier since they just use the requirements of recount text tell their learning experience. They also respond that log books can be beneficial to develop their ideas in writing and to always get them interested in practicing their writing ability. Moreover, log book also gives advantages for the students to improve their vocabulary and to understand more about grammar as well as chronological order that are usually used in writing recount text. This log book makes students get accustomed to write their learning activities and they said that log book is suitable media for writing recount.

Related to the interview, the students said that they are enthusiastic in writing log books as they feel it like writing diaries. They don’t feel burdened to do the exercise as they just wrote what they have experienced throughout the day. They practiced to apply simple past tense in most sentences and they learned to implement chronological order in their writings. They also feel that by writing log books they are more focused on the subject they have learned. It required their revealing memory to write what they have got in the day. They also state that writing log books help them to improve their creativity in generating their ideas and enhancing the development of critical thinking when they are doing so.

Discussion

The following are the examples of log book and final version of recount text written by a student:
I learned Introduction of Linguistics subject today and the material was about Psycholinguistics.

Firstly, the teacher explained that our brain consists of several parts. She showed the picture of human brain and told the details of it. The most important thing is that human brain consists of two spheres namely right hemisphere and left hemisphere. Both spheres are joined with a bundle called corpus callosum. The explanation lasted for 20 minutes. The next was a discussion in which the teacher asked us to work in groups and learned some sub sections in the chapter. We did this for about 15 minutes. Afterwards, she invited us to explain what he had learned and shared the information in front of the class.

Overall, we had an enjoyable class today.

Here is the example of the recount text written by a student after writing a log book for the whole week.

My favorite subject for last week was Introduction to Linguistics. This subject was given last Wednesday on May 17, 2017. The topic for the subject was Psycholinguistics.

It was an interesting material since we discussed human brain. The first explanation dealt with the structure of human brain and its picture. I could see that there are so many nerves in our brain. The teacher explained that our body is governed by our brain. The left side of our body is directed by right hemisphere and the right side of the body is directed by the left hemisphere. Right hemisphere mostly deals with motoric activities and left hemisphere regulates sensoric activities. Furthermore, after the explanation, we had a group discussion. Here, we discussed some sections and my group is about dyslexia. It is a disease which is caused by a brain damage. We learnt what dyslexia is, the symptoms, and types of dyslexia. It took 20 minutes for us to learn the section and next, we delivered the material in front of the class. By doing so, we got more understanding of what dyslexia is. Other groups were doing the same thing. In the last 10 minutes, the teacher reinforced our understanding of the material and closed the meeting.

Indeed, this was a great knowledge for me. I enjoyed much this subject as this helped me know the composition of human brain and some problems happen if there are brain damages.

Based on the example, it can be seen that the ability of the student in creating recount text improves much. Using his log book, he can extend his idea and enrich his vocabulary to finally it becomes a good writing of recount.

Relating to the use of log books as a means of improving students’ ability in writing recount text, it can be said that their writing skills improve much. It is proven by the result of their last exercise on the writing of recount text with the topic of ‘what your most favorite subject in the previous week’. Previously before they are
told to write log book there are only 3 students who perform well in writing recount. Their ability in writing recount text improves much when they have had log books for a week. There are more than a half of the students who have got excellent scores since they follow well the requirements of recount text and they are good in the points of writing evaluation score namely grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, fluency and form. It happens because they choose one of the writing they have in log book and they do revision as well as improvement in their own writings.

The students are excited writing recount text after they are asked to produce log books in 5 respective days. They enjoy writing log as they feel they are writing diaries. They did what I instructed since they had positive reinforcement in the activities. Firstly, it seemed that they had some problems related to lack of ideas, limited grammar mastery and lack of vocabulary. This is resulted from their lack of exercise in writing. By intensively writing log books, they are challenged to write good paragraphs and explore more and more vocabulary as well as find various ideas. Practice makes perfect does work well in this case.

Delivering the material of writing recount text by the use of log obviously improves students’ understanding and ability in creating recount text. It is supported by the result of questionnaire and interview which show that they are enjoyable and creative in these activities. They are enthusiastic in learning recount text and at the end they understand it well. The use of log books has increased students’ understanding about the purpose, move structure and significant grammatical aspects of recount text.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Having conducted the whole steps of the research, it can be concluded that the use of log book is able to improve students’ ability in writing recount text. It is based on the fact that writing log books makes the students practice much on creating good recount text. Some problems of writing which are usually faced by students such as lack of ideas, limited mastery of grammar and limited vocabulary can be overcome by routine exercise and do some revisions and improvement.

It is suggested that the teacher of writing subject gives many exercises before finally ask the students to write a type of text. By doing so, students can understand well what type of text they need to write, some requirement to meet for writing the text and various ideas they may explore. It is recommended that the exercises are done in regular basis and monitored in order to get some points of improvement. It is in line with the function of teachers as the facilitator and the motivator.

REFERENCES


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