

Applying Cinquain Poems in Teaching Writing

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APPLYING CINQUAIN POEMS IN TEACHING WRITING

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Abstract: Writing is a productive skill that involves many aspects and takes a longer time than speaking since it needs several processes starting from pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing and publishing. It shows the importance of writing process besides the judgment of writing product. Most of first semester students at a college in Jombang found that writing is a hard process not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating these ideas into readable text. This research tried to solve the problem by implementing *Cinquain* poems in writing descriptive text since this kind of poem is simple and can help the student in acquiring idea to describe something. The poem can be an alternative strategy in bringing literature in English Language Teaching which can create different learning atmosphere. Classroom Action Research design was used in this research with test and questionnaire as the research instruments. The result of data analysis showed *Cinquain* poems enable the students to compose descriptive text as words picture. It also showed the improvement of students' writing score in which more than 75% of students got ≥ 70 which obtained the criteria of success. Furthermore, positive respond also revealed through the result of questionnaire.

Key words: Cinquain, descriptive, writing

INTRODUCTION

Learning English as foreign language at university level requires students' competencies both in spoken and written form. These competencies become major language skills which consist of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Among those skills, writing is considered as the most challenging one since the students need to possess background knowledge of the foreign language in the term of language rhetoric and language use (Tangpermpoon, 2008). As productive skill, there are several approaches in teaching writing; one of them is process based approach which does not only focus on the writing product. The concept is teacher or lecturer should not see writing as grammar exercise only (O' Brien, 2004); students should experience writing stages start from pre-writing, drafting,

revising, editing and publishing (optional). Through this process, students can find meaning and develop idea better.

Writing at university level requires students to use standard English, formal written English, and the language of education which seems to be tough for freshman (Creme, 2003). Furthermore, different type of writing assignment needs various writing strategy to obtain the communicative purpose of each type. Gebhard (2000) states that writing involves not only writing goal and audience consideration but also some language components for instance dictions, syntax, grammar, mechanism and generating of ideas. Many view that writing is more difficult than speaking because it is more complex from several aspects. The complexities appear on the usage of the degree of formality and standard language (Nunan, 1991) which needs to be considered by foreign language learners. In addition, the writer also has to pay attention both higher level involving planning and organizing and lower level skills such as spelling, punctuation and words choice (Richards, 2002).

In teaching and learning process of Integrated Course writing class, the researcher discovered that most students in the first semester of 2017-A faced problem in writing paragraph, especially in getting the idea to start writing. Through questionnaire in preliminary study, it was gotten that most students found obstacle in brain storming in pre-writing stage which often waste their time ineffectively. This phenomenon in line with Creme (2003) that a basic reason to find writing difficult is lack of confidence and feeling that the writer (students) do not have anything to say. The students' problem was also shown from writing activities in the classroom in which students often could not finish their writing task on-time. The result of students' interview indicates that most of them have never done writing process because their purpose is the writing product that fulfills the criteria of the writing task or assignment. Moreover, the outcome of writing test in preliminary study shows that only 40% students got writing score ≥ 70 . Many factors can be the cause of these problems for instance the teaching technique used by the lecturer is monotonous and did not promote students' active learning and students' limitation knowledge about how to start their writing and lack of self-awareness to improve their writing skill.

Considering the problems above, the researcher attempts to search the appropriate strategy to improve the students' skill and their participation in writing process. The strategy can be in the form of instructional media, teaching technique or material development. In developing the material, teacher or lecturer is suggested to produce their own teaching material because of "the context" reason (Block, 1991). For many practitioners, planning and adjusting their teaching material make them to consider their specific learning environment and to solve the shortage of "fit" of the course book. There are some guidelines to design effective English Teaching material; firstly, as suggested by Nunan (1988) that the materials should be contextualized to the curriculum. In addition, it also should be adjusted with the students' experience, realities and first language (Jolly, 1998). It can be inferred that in choosing the teaching materials, both curriculum and students' background should be considered. Secondly, Hall (1995) mentioned English teaching materials ought to encourage students to

develop learning skill and strategy. Thirdly, the materials should be attractive (Harmer, 1998). Attractive here means the materials ought to be good at look, user-friendly, can be used more than once and reproduced.

For those reasons, the researcher tries to apply *Cinquain* poems as materials development to solve the problem faced by students. The word "*Cinquain*" comes from the French and Spanish which means five; the pattern of this poem is always in five lines long. Recently, the use of literature for teaching basic language skills and language area in foreign language teaching is becoming well-known (Rai, 2012). There have been many teachers or practitioners used drama, poetry and short story in teaching translation. Furthermore, Collie (1990) mentioned four reasons for teachers or lecturers using literature in classroom practice namely it can be valuable authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enrichment and personal involvement. Most literary works can act as complementary material for many authentic samples of language in reality such as advertisement, newspaper article, and so on. Moreover, literature can also give information about cultural understanding how communication takes place in different culture. Literature is able to be used as model and subject matter for writing (Rai, 2012). As model for writing, literature can be applied in the form of controlled writing, guided writing and reproducing the model. While as subject matter, literature is represented by writing "on or about literature" which includes the traditional assignment and writing "out of literature" that means using it as triggers to write the composition. In this research, the researcher used *Cinquain* poems as subject matter as writing "out of literature".

Based on the elaboration in the previous section, the objective of the research is to describe the improvement of students' writing skill which is taught using *Cinquain* poems in descriptive text.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This research applies a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design that involve one cycle which focused on the teaching and learning activities in IC Writing classroom. According to Bassey in Koshy (2005) Classroom Action Research is conducted to comprehend, to evaluate and then to adjust with the purpose of improving educational program. *Cinquain* poems in this research are applied as the strategy in pre-writing stage to overcome the problem by collaborating with another lecturer as observer. The researcher adopt the concept of Kemmis (2014) that is called as cyclical process; it involves four steps which starts from (1) planning the action, (2) implementing the action, (3) observing the action, and (4) reflecting.

Research Procedure

The researcher and the observer create a careful panning in the first step that focused on the implementation of action based on the result of preliminary study. In this stage, the researcher prepared teaching strategy, lesson plan and criteria of success. There are two criteria of success in this research; firstly, the

student can compose a descriptive text well which is indicated by 75% of students' writing score achieve ≥ 70 . Secondly, students' participation in teaching and learning process started from pre writing, drafting, revising, editing and publishing showed active involvement. It is considered to be successful if 60% of students obtain positive result from questionnaire.

In the second step called as implementation, the researcher applied the teaching strategy by using *Cinquain* poems. In this case, the researcher played the role as practitioner who taught IC writing in the classroom and the other lecturer acted as the observer. This step involved two cycles with three meetings in each cycle.

The next step is observing that was done during the implementation. The researcher did recording and collecting data related to any aspect or event that happened in implementation. The data were obtained through some resources, namely: (1) the students' final writing composition and (2) the result of questionnaire to get information of students' participation.

Lastly, reflecting is the step in which all relevant data from implementation were analyzed and evaluated by matching up the result of observing with criteria of success. The purpose of this step is to decide whether the action that has been implemented is successful or not.

Research Instrument

Two research instruments were used in this classroom action research, namely test and questionnaire. The test used is in the form of writing test; the students were asked to compose a descriptive text with free topic. The result of writing test then evaluated by using analytical scoring rubric adapted from H.D. Brown (2004). The questionnaire used in this research is closed questionnaire with the indicators refer to students' participation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Cinquain poems which were used in pre-writing stage during the implementation of Classroom Action Research are proven to be effective in improving the students' writing skill. It is reflected through the improvement of students' writing achievement from cycle 1 to cycle 2 and from students' participation.

Cycle 1

The result of students' writing test in cycle 1 showed that 18 out of 31 total students got score ≥ 70 in their writing test. It means that 58,06 % students achieved ≥ 70 . While from questionnaire result, it was gotten that 14 students (45,16%) out of 31 students can be categorized as actively involved in writing process during the implementation.

Reflection

The result in the first cycle indicates the number of students who achieved ≥ 70 had not reached the criteria of success that is more than 75% of students should get ≥ 70 . So, the researcher needed to apply *Cinquain* poems in the next

cycle to attain the criteria. In addition, the result of questionnaire was also below the criteria of success; there was only 45,16 % students involved actively.

Revision

The researcher needed to conduct the next cycle based on the reflection in the previous cycle so that the criteria of success can be achieved. To gain more effective result, the researcher made some revision in some aspects such as: modify the worksheet in pre-writing stage, manage the time for each writing process more efficiently, and inform students about the scoring of activity in implementation stage to motivate them in increasing the participation.

Cycle 2

Writing test result in cycle 2 revealed that 24 students out of 31 students got score ≥ 70 . In other word, 77, 41 % students gained score ≥ 70 . Furthermore, the result from questionnaire also indicated positive outcome, in which 20 students (64,51 %) out of 31 students was classified into students who are participated actively in writing process.

Reflection

Based on the data analysis in cycle 2, it can be assumed that the implementation of *Cinquain* poems in pre-writing stage could improve students' writing skill, especially in writing descriptive text. The score result in cycle 2 showed better achievement than cycle 1 and it has achieved the criteria of success. So, the researcher could stop the cycle.

Discussion

Findings of the research showed that *Cinquain* poems are one of pre-writing strategy that is suitable to teach descriptive text. It helps the students in gathering idea and contributes to improve students' writing skill. Since this research adapt the writing process approach, the steps in teaching writing follows the concept of Hedge (2005) which involves generating idea, drafting, revising and editing. There are several activities that can be implemented in applying *Cinquain* poems.

In generating idea (pre-writing) stage, the students should experience organic and experiential approach which let the students to apply what was taught or discussed in the class with authentic or semi-authentic assignment (Alves, 2008). In this context, students are motivated to write by choosing a subject to be described through *Cinquain* poems. The purpose of this brainstorming activity is to stimulate the students' imagination to create an idea and activate the students' background knowledge. The activity could be very beneficial for those who find problems in recalling world knowledge and link ideas together. According to White (1991) brainstorming should not be restricted and critical to encourage productivity and and creativity; a simple way in composing a *Cinquain* poem is very appropriate with this statement. Students just need to write five lines of poem in which each line has its own rule. There are some ways in writing *Cinquain* poem; in this research, the researcher used the pattern as follow: line 1, one word (noun and topic of the poem); line 2, two words

(adjectives describing the topic); line 3, three words (verbs associated with the topic); line 4, four words (a sentence or phrase giving the author's opinion of the topic); and line 5, one word (an alternative noun for the topic, often a metaphor).

After brainstorming activity in pre-writing stage, students were led to collect their idea and write the first draft. Fast writing was used in this process as suggested by Hedge (2005) that fast-writing (free writing) is the suitable as follow-up of brainstorming stage. It aimed at helping students to focus more on the content rather than the form because most students in this class tend to concentrate more on grammar and neglect how to gather the idea and develop it into a text. It is in line with Smalley (2001) who states that in drafting step, the writer should not concern too much on grammatical form but keep concentrating in putting the idea together.

The next step is revising, in the revising process students were brought to peer-feedback activity. Each student should give their first draft to be reviewed by another students, the review could be in the form of corrections, opinions, suggestions, or ideas. As suggested by Brookhart (2008) that there are numerous studies have investigated the cognitive advantage of using feedback as part of learning and effective feedback increase both feedback giver and receiver knowledge development. Regarding the finding of the research in the first cycle, some students found difficulty in giving the feedback since they were lack of confidence. Fortunately, in the second cycle the researcher motivated the students by empowering them that every student has the ability to be an expert. This support Sackstein (2017) who states that traditionally, teacher has been considered to be the only expert in the classroom who can give feedback for students; but if people change the mindset, actually there are many experts in the class that are able to help peer learning. This is one of the most essential and beneficial stage in the writing process because the most valuable learning is happened here. The lecturer played as facilitator to give guidance in this process, which is in line with H. D. Brown (2001) and became the opportunity to analyze specific problem area.

The last step is editing process in which each student has to work individually in checking the grammar error, spelling, punctuation, etc. The students' awareness is absolutely needed in this activity due to apply the language use which they already familiar with.

The result of the study indicates that the students' writing skill has improved that could be inferred from the score of students' final writing. From preliminary study, only 40% students got writing score ≥ 70 ; at the first cycle 58, 06 % students achieved ≥ 70 and it has increased into 77, 41 % students gained score ≥ 70 in the second cycle.

The students' participation in writing process also improved, especially in brainstorming (pre-writing) stage. Based on the result of the questionnaire, it can be concluded that most students feel much easier in getting idea to start writing descriptive text and use their time more effectively and efficiently by using *Cinquain* poems. It confirms the statement of Çetinavcı (2012) who states that there are several

positive statement by scholars who deliberate poetry as effective media for multi-skill progress in language learning.

CONCLUSION

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Considering the findings gained in the implementation of *Cinquain* poems to teach IC writing, especially descriptive text, it can be inferred that this strategy is effective to improve students' skill in writing descriptive text. This is proven by the improvement of students' writing score from cycle 1 to cycle 2 and also the percentage of students' participation. *Cinquain* poems provide some strength in teaching writing such as: promote a creative thinking and stimulation in brainstorming stage, gives more motivation to produce writing without being afraid to make mistake, increases students' awareness of language use more than language form, and offers time efficiency in gathering idea.

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