The Effectiveness of Task-Based Instructional Materials on Students' Writing Skills for Academic Purposes

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Abstract:

English writing ability is a must for college students. It functions to support their academic competencies. This study is intended to determine the effectiveness of the task-based instructional materials on students' writing ability for academic purposes. It involving first-semester students of non-English education study programs at STKIP Kusuma Negara, Jakarta, Indonesia*. The materials are developed based on students' needs analysis through distributed questionnaire and interview. The data were collected through writing test, using t-test analysis statistically. The research finding shows that model of task based English writing material for academic purposes is effective. From the critical table of t, the while score of $t_{observed}$ for df. 29 is -27.061 by p-value = 0.000 < 0.05. It means H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted. Therefore, based on the criterion above the hypothesis is accepted. It can be interpreted that task-based instructional materials of writing skills for academic purposes give significant influence on improving the students' writing ability. In shorts, task-based instructional materials of English writing for academic purposes can help students to overcome their difficulty in generating, developing and organizing ideas into a paragraph text form.*

Key Words: writing skills for academic purposes, task-based instructional materials

Introduction

Writing is principally communicating ideas or feelings indirectly through written communication. Writing is also a process of thinking which is put on paper. But different from process of thinking which can jump from a point or one idea to another, writing should be done one word by one word in correct order. Therefore, writing demands more exercises, patience and perseverance.

Writing skills for academic purposes can be seen as a form of disclosure in language skills that aims to convey messages, ideas or feelings and can be understood by readers. Writing is a process that can be assumed as a cycle and can be seen not only as a means of conveying a message, but also has a purpose, either for expression or influence. The effective writers will starting by constructing their writing with a view in order to achieve that purpose.

Students' mastery of writing skills for academic purposes is required by students in the university level. It can be seen as a strategy or ability related with language proficiency for study purposes. As the heart of the academic performance, writing for academic purposes often seen as the most difficult language skills, it is more than note-taking. Most of the students in university-level having difficulties in delivering the message systematically and logically. In writing skills for academic purposes, on the average the majority of students face some problems in grammar; logical organization, cohesion, and coherence of a paragraph; rhetorical differences; generating and expressing ideas; including writing a thesis (Srikrai et al, 2016). Students also have writing problems in expressing themselves systematically and logically (Rico, 2016).

Non-English study programs students of STKIP Kusuma Negara, Jakarta facing some difficulties in writing skills for academic purposes.The writing test result showed that students' writing score was still low and hasn't reached minimum standard score. The students' writing performance confirmed by the observation result. Most of the students had low motivation in writing. They had limited knowledge and experience of text types. They didn't know how to express their ideas in writing. In the majority, STKIP Kusuma Negara students go through the academic learning process without acquiring much knowledge in performing their writing performance.

To make the students have passion for ideas of writing, the lecturer should help them through proper materials that has tasks technique and media. Using task-based writing materials students can follow tasks guidance visually. It is because for them, growing, developing and organizing ideas to write a composition often becomes problem to overcome. Task-based instructional materials give the comprehensive materials on students' writing ability for academic purposes. They are the things that students can observe or manipulate.

The purpose of this study is to know the effectiveness of using task-based instructional materials on students' writing skills for academic purposes at non-English education study programs at STKIP Kusuma Negara, Jakarta.

Review of Literature

Writing is a social act (Cabral, 2003). The writing products will show both the capability to solve the problem and the communication goals' awareness (Seyedi and Farahani, 2014). Writing is a physical and mental activity. At the basic level, it is an activity to convey words or ideas into a medium, on the other hand, it is a mental activity to create ideas and then expressed and portrayed in sentences and paragraphs that are easily understood by the readers. The aims of writing are to express and to impress, so it has different complexities based on the purpose.Writing is also a process and a product. The students will start the writing process by imagining, then composing, making concepts, improving and must apply repeated reading. The writing process is an irregular cycle and will have a final product. It can be an essay, letter, story or research report (Magie Sokolik in Nunan, 2003, p. 88). Writing is not a simple activity, many things are related to it, not just composing words into sentences and paragraphs, but the most important thing is conveying an acceptable message. Writing involves cognitive ability so that sufficient knowledge is required to produce quality writing. Writing skills require knowledge related to the message to be conveyed.

Writing skills mastery for academic purposes is among the most important skills that college students need to develop. It can be seen as a way to know students' knowledge, their schemata and also their creativity in presenting their ideas, thinking and opinion. In the academic area, writing is a means to extract the information, so it plays an important role in transforming knowledge and creating the new one. As the productive skills, writing for academic purposes can be seen as general and specific academic concepts/function. For the general, it can be an introduction, conclusion, summary, paraphrase, etc. But for specific academic concepts, it can be describing, exemplifying, classifying, assuming, hypothesizing, comparing, expressing caution, etc (Jordan, 2011, p. 9).

English Writing for academic purposes is an important skill for college-level students. The use of various English literature in the learning process at the college level requires students not only be able to understand the literature but also to be able to put it back in the form of a summary,

quotation or essay so that writing English for academic purposes is inseparable with reading comprehension skills. While reading may not necessarily be aided by writing practice, writing is certainly aided by extensive reading. Only if they have had exposure to their target-level texts, thus internalizing the model or target, will students have a proper idea of what they should write (Robinson, 1991, p. 104). It is understandable that students will be able to put their ideas in writing if they understand what messages they are reading. Students are required to be able to reconstruct the essence of the message to be conveyed in writing so it can be understood by the reader. This can be done if students are able to do a good mapping of the content, the reader as the audience and the purpose of writing. This is important in the process of writing English for academic purposes, both in planning, writing and revising.

In the area of EAP, the learning process of writing is directed at the needs of students to be able to write English in the academic realm with one of the aims is to gain new knowledge. At the university level, in particular, writing is not just a standardized system of communication but also an essential tool for learning (Weigle, 2002, p. 5). One of the main functions of English writing skills in the realm of a college education is to develop the knowledge of students, not limited to convey information only. English writing skills for academic purposes is one indication that students have the required cognitive abilities in the realm of higher education.

Instructional materials are the essential in the teaching and learning process. It can help and support the students' understanding. In the English Specific Purposes (ESP) context, the materials can be used, (1) as a source of language; (2) as a learning support; (3) for motivation and stimulation; and (4) for reference (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998, pp. 170-171). The instructional materials play the important role in teaching and explaining students to the language. It should present real language as students' requirement. As the required component in teaching and learning process, instructional materials should be reliable and it must involve students to study, to think and to use the language. It should stimulate and give motivation to the students through the new ideas, information and challenging activities given. The instructional material must be complete by giving the explanations, examples and many activities to be practiced.

Task-based strategy is an overall approach to language learning that views the "tasks" that learners do as central to the learning process. The learning process is seen as a set of communicative tasks that are directly linked to curricular goals (Oura). The task-based approach can be applied to the instructional material of writing for academic purposes. Pedagogically, it has strengthened the principles of, (1) a needs-based approach to content selection; (2) an emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language; (3) the introduction of authentic texts into the learning situation; (4) the provision of opportunities for students to focus not only on language but also on the learning process itself; (5) an enhancement of the students' own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning; (6) the linking of classroom language learning with language use outside the classroom (Nunan, 2004, p. 1). Task-based language teaching furnishes the basis for both instruction and assessment (Benevides and Valvona, 2008). Through the given tasks, both sequence lessons and the assessment of students' writing performance can be done by the lecturers.

The task-based instructional materials are structured on the basis of topics, structures, functions, and aspects of writing skills in a coherent order of complexity, purpose, and usefulness, so as to meet the needs of students to learn independently. The materials are presented with various examples and exercises along with explanations through instruction assignment of writing process stages ranging from exploring ideas, prewriting, organizing, writing the first draft, revising the draft, producing the final copy, editing, and proofreading including summary and paraphrase. The development of task-based teaching-learning instructional materials for academic purposes is oriented towards learner-centeredness through text reading or any input as a stimulus of ideas to facilitate students in writing.

Writing for academic purposes is required for the students to select relevant material, present a reasoned by evaluating the evidence and provide the appropriate conclusion by the end. Students having difficulties when they must redrafting, rewriting and present. The task-based instructional material is suitable the students' needs. It is an instructional material based on the student-centered approach to the selection of material content. Not only that, task-based instructional materials focus on communicative skills through interaction in the target language by using authentic text into learning situations. It will provide the provision to the students to focus not only on language skills but also on the learning process itself. The use of task-based teaching

materials will enhance the students' personal experience in the learning process by linking the content of instructional materials with the use of language outside the classroom.

Methodology

1. Research Site and Respondents

The first semester students of non-English education study programs at STKIP Kusuma Negara Jakarta are the respondents who will experience try out, validate and evaluate the instructional material design of writing for academic purposes.

2. Research Design

This research is designed using one-group design. It was held pretest and posttest design in order to evaluate the usefulness, feasibility, appropriateness and the effectiveness of writing for academic purposes instructional materials.

3. Instruments and Procedure of Data Collection

A writing test implemented as a research instrument which was served for both pretest and posttest. It was purposed to determine the impact of designed instructional material implementation. The instructional material design was validated its' content and evaluated its' feasibility by the lecturers and students. The result of evaluation, validation, comments, and suggestions will be as a basis to improve the material design.

The procedure in collecting the data started from the given writing test as the pretest in order to measure students' early ability in writing competency for academic purposes. Then the task-based instructional materials of writing skills for academic purposes was given to the students to be studied by them. By the end, a posttest was given to measure the impact of the instructional material on students' writing skill after the designed instructional material was tried out to them.

4. Data Treatment

The data were counted through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) program. The result described the effectiveness of the task-based instructional material on students' writing skills for academic purposes at non-English Education study programs at STKIP Kusuma Negara, Jakarta.

Findings

These below tables describe the score of students' pretest and posttest of writing skill for academic purposes. Statistical analysis showed that the posttest result is significantly higher than pretest result. It indicates the positive effect of task-based instructional materials of writing skill for academic purposes.

Table: 1

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Before	55,8000	30	17,98160	3,28298
	After	74,7333	30	16,35792	2,98653

In the Paired Samples Statistics table above, it can be seen that the mean of the pretest writing test result before the assigned instructional materials of writing for academic purposes is 55.8 with the standard deviation of 17.98 and the standard error mean of 3.28. While the average score of posttest writing result after being given the instructional materials of writing for academic purposes is 74.73 with the standard deviation of 16.35 and the mean of the standard errorof 2.98. The data obtained can be interpreted descriptively that there is a difference in the average score of the students' writing test for academic purposes before and after being given the task-based instructional materials of writing for academic purposes.

Table: 2

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Before&After	30	,980	,000

In the Paired Samples Correlations table, the correlation coefficient of the writing test result between before and after is given task-based instructional materials for academic purposes of 0.980 with significant number (sig) or p-value = 0,000 ≤0,05 or not significant.

Table: 3

Paired Samples Test

			Pair 1
			Before & After
Paired Differences (Before & After)	Mean		-18,93333
	Std. Deviation		3,83211
	Std. *error* Mean		,69964
	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	Lower	-20,36427
		Upper	-17,50240
T			-27,061
Df			29
Sig. (2-tailed)			,000

In the Paired Samples Test table which is the difference score between the writing test results before and after being given the task-based instructional materials of writing for academic purposes, the average difference (mean) is -18.93. The difference in standard deviation score is 3.83 with the difference of standard error score of 0.69. The most important result of the table is the statistical price of t - 27,061, with degrees of freedom of 29 and the conclusion of significance level (sig.) or p-value is 0,000 <0.05 or H_0 is rejected H_1 is accepted.

Based on the results, it can be concluded that there are significant differences of students' writing test score between before and after given the task-based instructional materials of writing for academic purposes, so it can be understood that the use of task-based instructional materials of writing for academic purposes effective on improving students' writing skill for academic purposes. The results of the effectiveness test obtained to confirm the formative evaluation results that have been done before. The task-based instructional materials of writing for academic purposes can be used to improve non-English education study programs students' writing skills for academic purposes.

Conclusion

The finding of this study shows that task-based instructional materials are the effective learning source in enhancing students' writing skill for academic purposes. It can be proved through the different mean score of students' writing performance between pretest and posttest. The mean score of the prestest is 55,80, while the mean score of the posttest is 74,73. The statistical price of t - 27,061, with degrees of freedom of 29 and the conclusion of significance level (sig.) or p-

value is 0,000 <0.05 or H_0 which says, "the use of task-based instructional material is not effective to improve students' writing skill for academic purposes" is rejected. H_1 is accepted. It means the use of task-based instructional material is effective to improve students' writing skills for academic purposes.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Based on the research finding and conclusion of the study, the following are some given suggestions and recommendations, (1) In order to develop students' writing skills for academic purposes, the lecturers must know the students' needs. The needs can be students' lacks, students' wants and students' necessities. The students' needs are the basis to design the suitable instructional materials; (2) Task-based instructional materials of writing skills for academic purposes can be used and developed by the lecturers based on the requirements; (3) Through task-based instructional materials of writing skills for academic purposes, students can get the opportunities to focus in developing their writing skills for academic purposes.

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