

**PROMOTING GRADED EXERCISES TO DEVELOP THE
STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL: A CLASSROOM ACTION
RESEARCH IN SMP 1 BOYOLALI STUDENTS GRADE VIII
SEMESTER 2 ACADEMIC YEAR 2010/2011**

By

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ABSTRACT

NGATIYEM. Promoting Graded Exercises to develop the students' writing skill : A classroom Action Research in SMP Negeri 1 Boyolali 2010/2011. Thesis. Surakarta. English Department of post Graduate Program, Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, 2011.

Writing is one of the skills which must be developed in English teaching learning. In fact, the result of the students' writing is poor. It is caused by the lack of vocabulary, lack of grammar especially past tense in using verb 2 and making a coherence text. Therefore, the objective of this research is to develop the students' writing skill using graded exercises technique. The research is carried out to maximize the students' writing skill.

The type of research is an action research. It consists of two cycles. There are four steps in each cycle, namely planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The subject of the research is the 8F students of SMP Negeri 1 Boyolali.

The data were collected through several techniques. Qualitative data were collected through observation in the classroom. The data were supported with informal interviews after teaching learning process. It is carried out in order to know the students' problems in writing. Quantitative data were obtained through the results of pre test and post test.

The findings show that 1) graded exercises give positive effect on the improvement of the students' writing skill from cycle to cycle. Based on the score, it can be seen that the lowest score in pre test is 47, after given the treatment in two cycles; it became 68 so the improvement is 21 points. The highest score improve 10, 4 points, from 75 became 85, 4. While the average improve 18, 6 points, from 59, 5 became 78, 1. The numbers of graduation improve 70, 8%, from 20, 8% became 91, 6%. 2) Graded exercises are very effective to develop the students' writing skill.

The research findings imply that graded exercises can be an alternative technique to develop the students' writing skill. Therefore, it is recommended that English teachers apply it. It is also recommended that the institution socialize it since it is useful not only for English lesson but also for other subjects. The last is for the other researcher to develop the aspects of writing skill which has not been developed in the research.

Key words: Graded Exercises, Writing Skill.

I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching writing for students of SMP Negeri 1 Boyolali in the second semester of second year is aimed at making the students able to write functional text and short essay in the form of narrative and recount. The teacher may expect his students' success in writing recount and narrative text. The success is referred to the minimal passing score (KKM). The KKM of English in the second semester of second grade of 2010/2011 academic year is 70.0.

However, the researcher found out that the students of class 8 F of SMP Negeri 1 Boyolali, are still poor at writing recount and narrative text. This is seen from the observation during the writing class and the students' work. Their average score on the pretest is only 59.5. The score is a bit far from the minimum criterion. Some possible factors causing this problem are: lack of practice, unsuitable teaching technique, lack of teaching media, students' low motivation, and lack of students' learning resources or stimulus.

To solve the problem, the teacher should give many exercises to the students regularly. By regular exercises the students will be able to master writing well. In this research, the researcher promotes the graded exercises as one of the techniques to develop the writing skill.

Based on the background of the research above, the problem statements are as follow: 1) how far can graded exercises be used to develop the students' writing skill of SMP I Boyolali students grade VIII semester 2 academic years 2010/2011?, 2) how is the effectiveness of graded exercises in order to develop the Students' writing skill of SMP I Boyolali students VIII Grade semester 2 academic years 2010/2011?

By carrying out the research, the writer wants to achieve some objectives. They are to examine how far the graded exercises can be used to develop the students' writing skill and to describe whether graded exercises is effective to develop the students' Writing skill or not.

The benefits that can be taken from these results of this research are as follow: As theoretical Benefit, this research can be used as reference and comparison for the future research. It can also give contribution in mastering and developing the four language skills in English teaching learning process.

This research also has practical benefit both for the teacher and for the students. For the Teacher, this research can enrich the teacher's technique in teaching learning process; motivate the teacher to make the writing materials that can be used by the other teachers, and minimize the problem faced by the teacher in teaching writing. For the Students, this research can motivate the students in order to have self confidence, brave to express their written idea, minimize the problems faced by the students in mastering writing skill, and motivate the students in order to produce most masterpieces.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

This part consists of the three main sections including (1) theoretical description, (2) rationale, and (3) action hypothesis.

A. Theoretical Description.

This section will discuss about the Nature of English Language Teaching, Writing Skill, Text, Genre, And Graded exercises.

1. The Nature of English Language Teaching (ELT).

a. The Nature of Language.

Language is very crucial in our life. It can not be separated from our daily life. It is a means of communication. People use it as means of transaction or even just interaction. In fact, there are many functions of language, such as a mean of communication, the tool of national unity, the tool to express someone, the tool to integrate and adapt the social in certain environment or situation, and the tool of social control. There are also many definitions of the language depending on what view discusses it.

b. The Nature of Language Learning and Teaching.

Brown (2000:7) states that "Learning is acquisition or getting. Learning is retention of information or skill. Retention implies storage systems, memory, and

cognitive organization. Learning involves active, conscious focus on and acting upon events outside or inside the organism. Learning involves some form of practice. Learning is a change in behavior". These concepts describe that learning is a complex process. It needs many variables. It involves acquisition process, memory, learning style and strategies, theories of forgetting, reinforcement and change of behavior.

Harmer (2005: 1) stated that Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) refers to teaching English to students whose first language is not English. It means that the teachers need not only guiding and facilitating the learner but also understanding the setting, new culture and new thinking.

c. The Role of Learner and Teacher in Language Learning.

1) The Role of Learner in Language Learning

Freeman (2000: 129), stated that students are communicators. They are actively engaged in negotiating meaning- in trying to make them understand each others- even when their knowledge of the target language is incomplete.

2) The Role of Teacher in Language Learning

Brown (2001: 160) stated that there are many roles of the teacher in language learning namely the teacher as controller, the teacher as director, the teacher as manager, the teacher as facilitator, and the teacher as resource.

d. Language Teaching Methodology.

Anthony (1963: 12) gave a definition that concept of 'method' was the second of three hierarchical elements, namely approach, method and technique. An approach is a set of assumptions dealing with the native of language, learning and teaching. Method is described as an overall plan for systematic presentation of language based upon a selected approach. Techniques are the specific activities manifested in the classroom that are consistent with a method and therefore are in harmony with an approach as well. Whatever methodology or activity the students are involved in language teaching learning, the most important thing is that it must really promote language use. The students have a desire to communicate. If the

students do not actively involve in activity, the communication will not occur. Therefore communication will not be effective.

2. Writing Skill.

a. Notion of writing.

Writing is forming graphic symbols to produce a sequence of sentences arranged in a particular order and linked together in certain ways, encoding a message for a reader. Richard and Webber (1985: 165) who stated that writing is one of the language skills that must be trained to the students. It is as one of the language skill called active/ productive skill. According to Bram (1995: 7) writing means trying to produce or reproduce written message.

b. The Reasons of Teaching Writing.

There are at least three important reasons as Raimes (1983: 76) stated that writing helps students learn. First, writing reinforces the grammatical structure, idioms, vocabulary that the teacher has been teaching. Second, when students write, they also have a chance to be adventurous with the language, to go beyond what they have just learned. Third, when they write, they necessarily become very involved with the new language; the effort to express ideas and the constant use of eye, hand, and the brain in a unique way to reinforce learning.

3. Text.

There are some definitions of a text. First, a text is defined as a language unit expressing meaning contextually. Derewianka (1995:17) also defines a text as any meaningful stretch of language-oral or written or in other words a text is a unit of meaning which is coherent and appropriate for its context.

4. Genre.

Nunan (1993: 120) defines the 'Genre' as particular type of oral or written communication such as narrative, a causal conversation, a poem, a recipe, or a description. Different genres are typified by a particular structure and by grammatical forms that reflect the communication purpose of the genre in question.

5. Graded Exercise.

Graded exercise in this research is teaching learning process of writing where the difficulty of the exercise is graded – from simple to complex and from controlled to free. To develop the quality of teaching learning process and writing skill, graded exercise is given step by step, from simple to complex. The syntax of this model is preparing the students' worksheet, giving the explanation of the competence, making groups, distributing students' worksheet, doing discussion, and a presentation.

B. Rationale

The students are difficult to express their ideas in written, more than anything else. They are beginning writers whose mother tongue is not English. One of the common problems might be lack of ability to construct grammatical sentences. To solve the problem, the researcher promotes graded exercises as the technique to develop the students' writing skill.

C. Action Hypothesis

Based on the rational that the researcher has described, she proposes action hypothesis as follows: 1) graded exercises can develop the students' writing skill, 2) graded exercises are very effective to develop the students' writing skill.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was carried out at SMP 1 Boyolali, Central Java. The school has 18 classes that is divided into three levels. It is located at Merapi Street no: 22. The research subjects are the students of class 8F, consisting of 24 students.

The type of the research is an action research. According to Kurt Lewin, action research is as a series of steps that form a spiral. In each step, there are four phases, they are planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

1) Planning

In this step the writer offered a new technique in improving the students' writing skill. It was graded exercises. The teacher had to prepare the media, the exercises, the worksheet, and the writing assessment, in order that the students' improvement in writing skill can be analyzed well.

2) Acting.

This step was the implementation of graded exercises. In this phase, there are four steps that should be done by the teacher. They are Building Knowledge of Field (BKOF), Modeling of Text (MOT), Joint Construction of text (JCOT), and Independent Construction of Text (ICOT).

3) Observing.

The teacher was actively involved in this step. The teacher had roles not only as the participant but also as the observer. The teacher observed the students participation in class, how they do in group or pair, how they participate in class discussion, how they do individual task etc.

4) Reflecting.

It was carried out in order to know the effect of graded exercises in developing the students' writing skill. By analyzing the strength and the weaknesses of graded exercises given as the treatment, it was to decide what the next action will be for continuing the improvement.

Data of the study are pre test results, post test results, and the information of teaching learning process. The data sources are the results of observation from the teacher and the students, and interview to the students.

This research used some techniques of data collection, namely content analysis, observation, interview, document, and test.

To analyze the quantitative data, the writer applied a descriptive statistic comprising the following dimensions: highest and lowest score, and

means. To analyze the qualitative data, the writer applied constant comparative method as suggested by Glasser (in Earl Babbie, 2001:372).

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research used the procedure as follows:

FR → GP I → AC I → OC I → RC I → RPC II → AC II → OC II → RC II

Explanation:

| | | |
|--------|---|--------------------------|
| FR | : | First Reflection |
| GP I | : | General Planning Cycle 1 |
| AC I | : | Action Cycle 1 |
| OC I | : | Observation Cycle 1 |
| RC I | : | Reflektion cycle 1 |
| RPC II | : | Revise Planning Cycle 2 |
| AC II | : | Action Cycle 2 |
| OC II | : | Observation Cycle 2 |
| RC II | : | Reflection Cycle 2 |

A. Research Findings

1. First Reflection

The students' writing competence is low. This can be proved by their low scores in the writing test. To make it clearer, the researcher gave the pre test to the students and the result was that the average writing score was 59.5. This condition encourages the writer to make improvement by doing the classroom action research. The treatment given in the first cycle is to apply graded exercises in teaching learning. The material is recount text.

2. General Planning Cycle 1

The teacher designed the teaching learning process to make the students write well, design the worksheet related to the material, and designed the test

3. Action Cycle 1

Action was the implementation of activities having been arranged in the general planning. It was conducted in three meetings.

1) The First Meeting

The first meeting was conducted on Monday 14th March 2011. The main activity in the first meeting included four steps for different activities namely: BKOF, MOT, JCOT, and ICOT. The followings are the descriptions of each step.

a. Building Knowledge of Field (BKOF).

The activity in this step can be described as follow: the teacher did opening activity. The teacher gave apperception and motivation to the students, after that the teacher gave stimulus about simple past tense. First, the teacher drilled the students in constructing the sentences in the past tense. The next activity, the students were divided into six groups. The students discussed and analyzed the past tense sentences based on the data got during the activity before. The teacher gave guiding questions to the students to analyze the data. After the discussion activity, the teacher continued to the presentation of the discussion result. After each group delivered their discussion results, the teacher gave reinforcement of the material.

b. Modeling of Text (MOT).

The students discussed the material in groups of four. The students were introduced to a recount text model entitled “*Diving in Karimunjawa Island*” .The students paid attention to the model, identified each sentence and answered the questions of reading text given by the teacher orally.

c. Joint Construction of Text (JCOT).

The activity was done in group. The material was arranging the words into good sentences (Appendix 5). After that, the teacher asked one group to read aloud. The other groups paid attention and they were allowed to give other alternatives in arranging the words into sentences. After all of the groups had agreed, the teacher gave some questions based on the text orally.

d. Independent Construction of Text (ICOT).

In this step, the activity was done individually. The activity was arranging the words into good sentences and answering questions related to the text individually (Appendix 6). It was used to measure the students’ comprehension about recount text. The teacher gave homework to the students. The homework was about writing recount text. The theme was my father’s experience.

2) The Second Meeting

The second meeting was conducted on Wednesday 16th March 2011. The material focused on how to construct a good sentence of recount text. The followings are the descriptions of the main activity.

a) Building Knowledge of Field (BKOF)

The activity included memorizing the last material given by the teacher, discussing and giving reinforcement. This step is as an apperception. The teacher

distributed a piece of paper containing sentences to be identified by the students (Appendix 7). This activity was done individually. The next activity, the teacher and the students discussed the task together one by one.

b) Modeling of text (MOT)

The teacher distributed the text to the students. The text was incomplete. The students completed the text with the suitable words. The text had the title “At The beach” (Appendix 8). The students did the task in pairs. The next activity was class discussion. After that, the teacher asked the students to read the text loudly. The students should analyze the text in groups helped by the teacher’s guiding questions. The last activity in this step is presentation of the discussion result. One student was as the representative of his group. After the presentation, the teacher gave the reinforcement.

c) Joint Construction of Text (JCOT)

In this stage the teacher asked the students to discuss in pairs. The material was arranging sentences into a good paragraph. The title was *Camping*. After finishing the discussion, the students reported the result in front of the class. The last activity was answering the questions given by the teacher orally about the text that had been arranged.

d) Independent Construction of Text (ICOT)

In this stage, the task was applied as individual exercises. It is used to measure the students’ comprehension about recount text. The students should do the task individually (Appendix 10). As the homework, the teacher gave a task. It was answering the questions based on the text.

3) The Third Meeting

The third meeting was post test. It is used to measure the students' writing ability of recount text and the students' comprehension about recount text. The students should do the task individually (Appendix 11). The students had to do the task on the worksheet prepared by the teacher.

4. Observing Cycle 1

The stage of observation aimed at observing the effects of action in solving the problem in mastering the writing skill. The techniques which were used in this stage were: participants' observation and document analysis consisting of the pre- test result, post- test result and the process assessment. The results of the observation in carrying out the graded exercises showed: (1) the improvement of the students 'mastery of vocabulary, (2) the improvement of the students 'mastery of past tense, (3) the change of the students' attitude in teaching learning process, (4) the improvement of the students' motivation and interest.

5. Reflection Cycle 1

This stage aimed at examining the final result of the action in the first cycle accompanied with the analysis of its strengths and weaknesses. The result of the reflection then was used as the basis for arranging the general planning in the second cycle. The reflections are as follows:

1) The Result of the First Cycle of Graded Exercises.

In the first cycle of graded exercises, the researcher applied some activities in order that the students could arrange the words into a good sentence and arrange the sentences into a good paragraph. The theme was recount text. Based on the data analysis in the first cycle, the researcher concludes that there are three main expected results. They are (1) the improvement of the students 'mastery of vocabulary, (2) the change of the students' attitude in teaching

learning process, (3) the improvement of the students' motivation and interest.

2) The Strengths of Graded Exercises.

From the first cycle of graded exercises implementation, there are some strengths in carrying out the graded exercise to develop the students' writing skill. They included some points (1) the students can improve their vocabulary to arrange good sentences in order to construct good recount text, (2) the students have motivation and interest to write, (3) the students have positive attitude in joining the teaching learning process.

3) The Weaknesses of Graded Exercise.

The data analysis also shows the weaknesses that can hinder the success of improving the students' writing skill. The weaknesses that can be summarized are (1) there are some students who have no dictionary so they just wait for the answers of other students, (2) longer time is needed to plant concept to the students, (3) the students who dislike reading or passive student will be passive and will not express their ideas in groups nor individually.

4) Suggestions.

Based on the findings, weaknesses, and strengths, it is very important to continue the second cycle since the students' problems have not been solved well. Therefore, the writer prepared the next cycle by introducing the students to a new material to fulfill the need of how to write well.

6. Revised Planning Cycle 2

The reflections of the first cycle lead the researcher to continue the treatment in the second cycle. The writer prepared the second cycle by introducing the students a new material to fulfill the need how to write well. The material was narrative text. The researcher should design the teaching learning process to make the students write well, designed the worksheet and the test.

7. Action Cycle 2

Action was the implementation of activities which have been arranged in the revised planning. It was conducted in three meetings.

1) The First Meeting

The first meeting of the second cycle was conducted on Monday 21st March 2011. The followings are the descriptions of each step:

a) Building Knowledge of Field (BKOF).

In this step, the teacher built the students' knowledge to enter the teaching learning process of writing of narrative text. After opening activity, the teacher gave apperception and motivation to the students, after that the teacher gave some questions to the students orally (Appendix 16). The students answered the teacher's questions orally too.

b) Modeling of Text (MOT)

The teacher divided the students into groups of four. After that, the teacher distributed the text entitled "Mission Fishing" (Appendix 17). The students discussed the text in groups. They identified the sentences in the text, answered the questions based on the text and analyzed the generic structure of the text. After finishing the discussion, the students should present the results in front of the class. At last the teacher gave the reinforcement.

c) Joint Construction of Text (JCOT).

The activity was done in group. The material in this activity was arranging the words into good sentences. Firstly the teacher distributed the paper containing the words that had to be arranged by the students (Appendix 18). After

finishing the discussion, the students presented the results. After all of the students agreed with the results of the class discussion, they need to answer the questions based on the text (Appendix 18). To check the answers, the teacher gave chance to the students in turn and discussed the answers together. The last activity, the teacher gave reinforcement.

d) Independent Construction of Text (ICOT).

It is the last step of the first meeting in the second cycle. The activity was done individually. The material was arranging the words into good sentences. The students analyzed the text and answered the questions related to the text at home (Appendix 19). It was used to measure the students' comprehension about narrative text.

2) The Second Meeting

The second meeting of the second cycle was conducted on Wednesday 23rd March 2011. The material was focused on how to construct a good paragraph of narrative text by arranging the sentences. The followings are the descriptions of each step.

a) Building Knowledge of Field (BKOF)

In this stage, the teacher built the students' knowledge to enter the teaching learning process of writing narrative texts. This step was as an apperception. The activity was to discuss the homework given by the teacher in the previous meeting.

b) Modeling of Text (MOT) and Joint Construction of Text (JCOT)

The two stages are joined because the students have mastered the concept of narrative text in the first meeting. Firstly, the teacher divided the students into groups of four, distributed the paper contained some sentences to be arranged by

the students (Appendix 20). The students discussed in groups, presented the discussion result in front of the class, and answered the question based on the text. The last activity is presenting the story in front of the class.

c) Independent Construction of Text (ICOT).

It is the last step of the second meeting in the second cycle. In this step, the activity was done individually. It was arranging the sentences into a good paragraph, answering the questions, and discussion (Appendix 21). These activities were used to measure the students' comprehension about narrative text.

3) The Third Meeting

The third meeting was conducted on Thursday 24th March 2011. The main activity was post test. It is used to measure the students' writing ability of narrative text and the students' comprehension about narrative text in the second cycle. The students had to do the task individually (Appendix 22). The teacher distributed a piece of paper containing the task that must be done by the students. The students had to do the task on the worksheet prepared by the teacher.

8. Observation.

The stage of observation in the second cycle was done and aimed at observing the effects of action in solving problem of mastering the writing skill by giving the treatment, which is graded exercises. The technique used in this stage is the document analysis consisting of the result of the post test in the first cycle as pre-test and post test result in the second cycle. The result of observation in carrying out the graded exercises of the second cycle showed (1) the improvement of the students' ability to construct the simple text, (2) the improvement of the students' ability to express their idea, (3) the improvement of the students' attitude in teaching learning process, (4) the increasing of the students' awareness to write.

9. Reflection.

This stage aimed at examining the final result of action in the second cycle accompanied with the analysis of the strengths and the weaknesses. The reflection is as follows:

1) The Result of the Second Cycle of Graded Exercise.

In the second cycle of graded exercise, the researcher applied some activities in order to motivate the students in writing a narrative text. Based on the data analysis in the second cycle, the researcher concludes that there are two main expected results. They are (1) the improvement of the students' ability to construct the simple text, and (2) the rising of the students' awareness to write.

2) The Strength of Graded Exercise.

From the second cycle of graded exercises implementation, there are some strengths in carrying out graded exercises to develop the students' writing skill of narrative text. They included some points (1) the improvement of the students' ability to construct the simple text, (2) the improvement of the students' ability to express their idea, (3) the improvement of the students' attitude in teaching learning process, and (4) the rising of the students' awareness to write.

3) Suggestions

Graded exercises can develop the students' writing skill. It makes the students able to express their ideas both orally and written, write the simple sentence easily, write a good paragraph based on the generic structure of certain text. Graded exercises encourage the students to write.

B. Discussion

Based on the research finding in the first and the second cycle above, there are two important points as the result of the applying of graded exercises.

They are (1) the developing of students' writing skill and (2) the effectiveness of graded exercises to develop the students' writing skill.

1. The Developing of the Students' Writing Skill

Based on the research findings in the first and the second cycles, it is proved that graded exercises can develop the students' writing skill significantly. There is improvement of the students' writing skill from cycle to cycle. From the lowest score, it can be seen that in pretest the lowest score is 47, after giving the treatment in two cycles there is 21 points increasing. The highest score increased 10, 4 points, from 75 to 85,4. While the average increased 18, 6 point, from 59, 5 to 78, 1. The number of the graduation increased 68 %. It means that graded exercises are successful. Besides the data above, the developing of students' writing skill is shown by the rising of the students' awareness to write. The number of the students' writing results that are placed on the school wall magazine proves it.

2. The effectiveness of graded exercises to develop the students' writing skill.

Based on the research findings in the first and the second cycles, it is proved that graded exercises are very effective to develop the students' writing skill. It is not only in cognitive domain but also in affective domain and psychomotor domain.

In cognitive domain, as stated in the explanation before that the students' scores improved from cycle to cycle. The improvement was very significant. In affective domain, the development was shown by the changing of the students' attitude in teaching learning process. In psychomotor domain, the development was shown by the bravery of the students to express their idea both in discussion and presentation, to present the result of the discussion, to tell the story in front of the class. Although it is just few percents, actually graded exercises can improve not only writing skill but also speaking, listening and reading skill.

V. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATION.

A. Conclusion.

The writer presents two conclusions of this research. Firstly, graded exercises can develop the students' writing skill. It was proved by the improvement of the students' score in writing test.

Secondly, graded exercises are very affective to develop the students' writing skill. Besides the improvement of the students' writing skill that is shown by the improvement of the students' score in writing test, graded exercises also changed the students' attitude in teaching learning process, gave motivation and interest, and raised the students' awareness to write. It was proved by the enthusiastic of the students in joining the teaching learning process and the number of the students' writing results which were placed on the school wall magazine.

B. Implication and Recommendation.

The research finding implies that graded exercises can be an alternative technique to improve the students' writing skill in class since the fact shows that it gives some positive effects not only on the students' ability but also on the students' attitude and motivation. Therefore, the writer makes some recommendations for the English teacher, institution, and other researcher.

English teacher should facilitate the teaching learning process in order that the students' writing skill can improve well. The teacher's creativity is a must. Graded exercises can be an alternative technique to do that.

The recommendation is addressed to the institution considering the fact that graded exercises can give many positive effects not only for the students and the English teacher but also for other subjects. Therefore, the writer hopes that the institution can do socialization. Last but not least the recommendation is addressed for other researcher. It suggests continuing the research by developing the aspect which has not been developed in this research. By developing all aspects of writing, the students will not only write well but also accurately.