THE EVALUATION OF WRITING EXERCISES OF *FLYING START* TEXTBOOK BASED ON SCHOOL LEVEL-BASED CURRICULUM

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ACCEPTANCE

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ABSTRACT

This research paper aims at finding out whether the writing exercises found in the English textbook entitled Flying Start is appropriate or not with the writing exercises demanded by school level-based curriculum and communicative exercise. In analyzing the textbook, the writer applies descriptive research and the data are writing exercises taken from Flying Start textbook. The writer collects the data by finding out the writing exercises provided in the textbook, giving code to the collected data, and classifying the exercises containing writing exercises. The data were analyzed by these steps: (1) comparing writing exercises develop in the textbook with the writing exercises demanded by the school level-based curriculum and communicative exercise, (2) counting and adding the total of writing exercises develop in the textbook, (3) giving the percentage to the total of the writing exercises develop in the textbook, (4) describing whether the writing exercises develop in the textbooks is compatible or not with the writing exercises suggested by the school level-based curriculum and communicative exercise. The results of this study show that the percentage for the writing exercises developed in the textbook based on the schema of quality classification as proposed by Suharsimi (1993) is 53,33%. It means that the textbook is fair or less appropriate with the writing exercises in the school level-based curriculum. In other word, it can be said that the textbook is less good to improve students' competency in writing. Meanwhile, the percentage gained in developing the communicative exercises is 60%. It means that in developing writing exercises which are communicative is good or appropriate.

Key words: *writing exercises, appropriateness, school level-based curriculum.*

A. Introduction

Background of the study: In studying English there are four language skills that have to be achieved by students. They are listening, speaking, reading and writing skill. According to Fauziati (2010:45) writing has always occupied a place in most English language course. It means that writing is one of the important aspects in learning English. In fact, there are many students who have difficulties in writing. As stated by Leki (1996:173) in Fauziati (2010:46) that the main purpose of the learners' writing activity is "to catch grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors." Therefore, the students need some exercises, especially on writing exercises to improve their understanding to the writing material.

There are many kinds of English textbooks that have been published by the publisher. One of them is *Flying Start* for junior high school published by Esis. The writer chooses *Flying Start* because the textbook asserts that it is based on the School Level-based Curriculum but it's questionable whether the textbook is compatible with the curriculum or not. It must be investigated more. This case encourages the writer to make an evaluation of English textbook based on school level-based curriculum because since 2006 the Indonesian government implements the school level-based curriculum. The evaluation of writing exercises based on school level-based curriculum can be seen in the following examples.

Now write a description of your classroom.
Begin with:
1) The size, then
2) The people, then
3) The big objects, then
4) The small objects.

From the datum above, it can be defined that the exercise develops students' competency in making a descriptive text. The instruction asks the students to write a descriptive text about the students' classroom. The instruction also gives some clues to help students in doing the exercise. The exercise is appropriate with the indicator

of school level-based curriculum: write the kinds of text in the form of descriptive. Besides evaluating the textbook based on the school level-based curriculum, the writer also evaluates the textbook with the communicative exercise. Based on the explanation above, the writer will evaluate the English textbook based on the School Level-based Curriculum and the communicative exercises. The writer only focuses on writing exercises. **Limitation of the study** of this research is to evaluate writing exercises of English textbook with the school level-based curriculum used in SMP IT Nur Hidayah Surakarta and communicative exercise. **Problem statements** of this research are: 1) are the writing exercises compatible with those required of school level-based curriculum in SMP IT Nur Hidayah Surakarta? and 2) are the writing exercises developed in the English textbook entitled *Flying Start* communicative?. **Objectives of the study** aim to answer the problem statements above, such as following: 1) to describe whether or not the writing exercises are compatible with those required of school level-based curriculum in SMP IT Nur Hidayah Surakarta and 2) to describe whether or not the writing exercises in the English textbook entitled *Flying Start* are communicative.

B. Underlying Theory

1. Writing Exercises

Hoel (1989:23) in Homstad and Thorson (1994:15) defines that writing exercises can be used to introduce students to a literary text, to motivate and help them create their own understanding of a text, and to articulate their own interpretation of a text. According to Fauziati (2010:47) writing exercise is primarily on grammar; students will get good marks if the texts are free from errors or have only just very few errors.

2. Communicative Approach

Tomlinson (1998:viii) explains that communicative approaches are approaches to language teaching which aim to help learners to develop

communicative competence (i.e. the ability to use the language effectively for communication). There are five theories of communicative exercise proposed by the experts. They are: 1) the information gap principle, 2) jigsaw principle, and 3) information transfer principle proposed by Brumfit and Johnson (1979:201), 4) problem solving principle proposed by Nunan (1989:119), and 5) games or relaxes principle proposed by Freeman (1989:12).

3. Textbook Evaluation

Ellies (2000:220) in Fauziati (2010:210) proposes four points to think over for evaluating textbook, as follows:

1) input (i.e. the information that the learners are supplied with);
2) procedures (i.e. the activities that the learners are to perform in order to accomplish the task);
3) language activity (i.e. whether the learner engage in receptive language activity, listening or reading, or productive language activity, speaking or writing, or both);
4) outcomes (i.e. what it is that the learners will have done on completion of the task).

4. School Level-based Curriculum Developed by SMP IT Nur Hidayah

SMP IT Nur Hidayah is as one of Islamic schools in Surakarta that implements and develops the School Level-based Curriculum. The School Level-based Curriculum is done by the integration of religion into the school curriculum, negating the boundaries between them through the delivery of elements of religion into all subjects and educational activities called spiritualization education.

5. Syllabus

There are fifteen kinds of indicators suggested by School Level based Curriculum of English in writing skill (http://bsnp-indonesia.org/id/). Here the students are expected to be able to:

1. complete gap of short functional text.
2. arrange the jumble words into good sentences.

3. write the short functional text.
4. write the short functional text by using rhetorical step correctly.
5. write the short functional text in the form of instruction.
6. write the short functional text in the form of shopping list.
7. write the short functional text in the form of announcement.
8. write the short functional text in the form of greeting card.
9. write a simple sentence.
10. complete gap essay in the form of descriptive.
11. complete gap essay in the form of procedure.
12. arrange the jumble sentences in the form of descriptive.
13. arrange the jumble sentences in the form of procedure.
14. write the kinds of text in the form of descriptive.
15. write the kinds of text in the form of procedure.

C. Research Method

In conducting this study, the researcher applies descriptive research. There is no statistical is employed in this research. The object of this research is the appropriateness of writing exercises found in *Flying Start* textbook with the writing exercises demanded in school level-based curriculum and communicative exercise. The researcher uses documentation as the method of collecting the data in this study, the steps are: finding out the writing exercises provided in the textbook, giving code to the collected data, and classifying the exercises containing writing exercises. After collecting the data, the writer analyzed the textbook by conducting these steps: (1) comparing writing exercises develop in the textbook with the writing exercises demanded by the school level-based curriculum and communicative exercise, (2) counting and adding the total of writing exercises develop in the textbook, (3) giving the percentage to the total of the writing exercises develop in the textbook, (4) describing whether the writing exercises develop in the textbooks is compatible or not with the writing exercises suggested by the school level-based curriculum and communicative exercise.

D. Research Finding and Discussion

1. Research Finding

a. The Appropriateness of Writing Exercises with Those Required by School Level-based Curriculum of SMP IT Nur Hidayah Surakarta are as follows:

U3/FS1A/P58

Fill in the blanks in this description of Margaret's room.

Margaret's bedroom is very large. There _____ four _____ in Margaret's bedroom, two _____ and _____ bed. There's a sofa _____ the window and a coffee table in _____ of the sofa. There's a _____ next _____ the bed and there is a _____ under _____ sink. There's a bookcase next to the _____ and lots of books. She has a _____ in her bedroom on the bookcase and a computer on the desk. It's a great room!

In the writing exercise above, it can be understood that the exercise increases students' ability in completing gap essay in the form of descriptive text. The instruction gives the picture of Margaret's bedroom to guide the students in doing the exercise. Then, they are asked to fill the gaps based on the description of Margaret's bedroom. After doing the exercise, hopefully the students will have the ability in writing the descriptive text by looking the picture. Concisely, the exercise is appropriate with the indicator in school level-based curriculum: complete gap essay in the form of descriptive text.

Table 4.1 The Research Result of Writing Exercises Compared to Those in School Level-based Curriculum

No	Writing Exercises found in *Flying Start* textbook	Writing Exercises in School Level-based Curriculum	Compatible	Not Compatible
1.	U5/FS1B/P2	complete gap of short functional text.	✓	

2.	U3/FS1A/P68, U5/FS1B/P20, U5/FS1B/P52.	arrange the jumble words into good sentences.	✓	
3.	U1/FS1A/P14, U5/FS1B/P5, U3/FS1A/61, U5/FS1B/P22.	write the short functional text.	✓	
4.	-	write the short functional text by using rhetorical step correctly.		✓
5.	U2/FS1A/P34	write the short functional text in the form of instruction.	✓	
6.	U7/FS1B/P81	write the short functional text in the form of shopping list.	✓	
7.	-	write the short functional text in the form of announcement		✓
8.	-	write the short functional text in the form of greeting card.		✓
9.	U3/FS1A/P70	write a simple sentence.	✓	
10.	U3/FS1A/P58, U2/FS1A/P31	complete gap essay in the form of descriptive.	✓	

11.	-	complete gap essay in the form of procedure.		✓
12.	-	arrange the jumble sentences in the form of descriptive.		✓
13.	-	arrange the jumble sentences in the form of procedure.		✓
14.	U1/FS1A/P22, U2/FS1A/P32, U3/FS1A/P57.	write the kinds of text in the form of descriptive.	✓	
15.	-	write the kinds of text in the form of procedure.		✓
	Total		8	7

c. Communicative Exercise

The Information Gap Principle
U2/FS1A/P37

Write the missing words. Use words from the box below.

Turn	on	help	open	get	go	here

1) Ms. Dini : Open your workbook, Dio!
   Dio : This one, Ms. Dini?
   Ms. Dini : No, Dio. That's a notebook.
   _____ the other one!
   Dio : Oh, this one! What page?
   Ms. Dini : _____ to page 22.
2) Ivan : Would you _____ me that book, Eka?
   Eka : Which book?
   Ivan : The English book. On the third shelf.
   Eka : Sure, _____ you are.

3) Oscar   : Can you _____ me with my computer, Lynn?
   Lynn   : Pardon?
   Oscar   : Can you _____ _____ the computer for me, please?
   Lynn   : Oh sure. That's easy.

The dialogue above shows that the exercise belongs to the information gap principle. In the exercise, the students are asked to complete the conversation with the suitable word. The students can pick the suitable word in the box. So, it can enable the students in doing the exercise. Here, the students are expected to develop their writing skill. The analysis shows that it is compatible with the information gap principle.

After calculating indicators develop in the textbook, the writer finds the total number for writing indicators which are developed in the *Flying Start* textbook is eight (8) indicators out of fifteen (15) indicators. Moreover, the total number of communicative exercises which are developed in the *Flying Start* textbook is three (3) indicators out of five (5) indicators. The percentage of the appropriateness of writing exercises with the writing skill indicators in the school level-based curriculum of SMP IT Nur Hidayah Surakarta can be seen as follows.

$$\frac{8}{15} \text{ X } 100\% = 53,33\%$$

Based on the Schema of Quality Classification as proposed by Suharsimi (1993:201), the score of writing exercises found in the *Flying Start* textbook is fair because the score is 53,33%.The percentage of the appropriateness of writing exercises with the communicative exercises can be shown below.

$$P = \frac{3}{5} \text{ x } 100\%$$

$$= 60\%$$

In summary, the score of communicative exercises developed in the *Flying Start* textbook is good because the score is 60%.

2. Discussion

a. The Appropriateness of writing skill developed in the textbook

After analyzing the data of writing exercise found in *Flying Start* textbook with the those required in the school level-based curriculum, the writer finds that the textbook consist of eight indicators out of fifteen indicators. The result percentage of these indicators is 53,33%. It means that in developing writing skill material is fair or less appropriate with the school level-based curriculum. In other word, it can be said that the textbook is less good to improve students' competency in writing.

b. Communicative Exercise

In analyzing writing exercises based on the communicative exercise, the writer finds that the textbook contains three indicators out of five indicators. The result percentage of these indicators is 60%. It means that in developing writing exercises which are communicative is good or compatible. Thus, the *Flying Start* textbook is fit to develop students to be communicative.

E. Conclusion and Suggestion

1. Conclusion

The writer finds that the writing exercises of the *Flying Start* textbook are fair or less appropriate with the indicator of writing skill demanded by school level-based curriculum of SMP IT Nur Hidayah Surakarta and the writing exercises with the indicator of communicative exercise are good or appropriate

B. Suggestion

At the end of this chapter, the writer wants to propose some suggestions. First, for the English teacher of junior high school. The English teacher must be selective in choosing the English book which is used in the teaching and learning process. Next, for the English book author. The English book author should write the English textbook by referring not only to the current curriculum that is school level-based curriculum and also the communicative principle. Third, for the next researchers. The next researchers who are interested in evaluating an English book used in the school, this result study can be used as the reference. This study limits on the evaluation of writing exercises based on school level-based curriculum and the communicative principle. The next researcher can research from other aspects not only on writing skill but also listening, speaking and reading skill based on grammar, contextual learning, criteria of good textbook, and so on.

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