IMPROVING STUDENTS’ WRITING SKILLS IN PERSONAL LETTER BY MASTERING STRUCTURE OF THE TEXT

*Mariani1), Tien Kurniati2), Mashuri3)

1,2) Madrasah Aliyah Alkhairaat Biromaru, Indonesia
3) English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education Tadulako University, Indonesia

*marianimarianiriang@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate the effectiveness of mastering the structure of the text to improve students’ writing skills in personal letters by mastering the structure of the text at second-year students of MA. Alkhairaat Biromaru. This is classroom action research. The object of this research is the second-year students of MA Alkhairaat Biromaru consisting 21 students. This research was conducted in two cycles. The researchers used tests, observation for teachers and students, and LKS (project paper activity) to collect the data. The test research results show that the students’ writing skills in personal letters by mastering the structure of the text can be improved from the first cycle to the second one. The students’ test results can prove it in the first cycle, the classical competence percentage is 47,61%, and the classical absorption presentation is 60,95% can be improved to 85,71% for classical competence presentation and 83,33% for classical absorption presentation in cycle II. It means that the students’ writing skills in personal letters can be improved by mastering the structure of the text.

Keywords: Writing skills, structure, new normal
INTRODUCTION

English as a means of international communication plays a very important role worldwide. One cannot deny that more and more people are motivated to learn English to catch up with the latest information.

Along with the increasing roles of English as an international language, mastery of written and spoken language is a determinant factor. Writing is one of the four language skills taught to students from senior high school to university students. Writing is expressing ideas, feelings, and thoughts using letters, words, or sentences in written language. Pay attention to the rules of correct writing (using proper punctuation and capitalization, meaningful and grammatically correct).

Most students still feel challenging to produce good writing, especially in writing personal letters. This might be because, in written language, people are expected to use the language as correctly as possible. Subyakto (1993:181) states, “When using a language in writing, the writer is expected to use the language as correctly as possible because the correct language in writing reflects the level of the writer’s education.”

In writing personal letters, they must first know about the text's social function, structure, and language features. Furthermore, they must know what to write, to whom the letter is addressed, and how to write. They may make a draft of their writing because drafting may help the writer writes easily.

The researchers expected that the students could improve their writing skills by mastering the text structure of personal letters. So, in this research, the writer first explains all the items involved in the structure of the text in a personal letter. After mastering everything, the students may start writing in groups guided by the teacher. In writing, the students may make a draft because drafting may help them to write efficiently.

METHOD

Classroom action research has specific rules and steps that the researcher must follow. Classroom action research is action research that is done in the classroom. Carr & Kemmis (Mc Niff, 1991: 2) state that: “Action research is a form of self-reflection inquiry undertaken by participants (teacher, students or principals, for example) in social (including educational) situations to improve the rationality and justice of (1) their own social or educational practices, (2) their understanding of these practices, and (3) the situations and institutions in which the practices are carried out.” This classroom action research used qualitative descriptive data from observation and quantitative data of students' test scores.

This classroom action research used a model proposed by Kemmis and Mc Taggart (Depdiknas, 2005: 17), where each cycle act: 1) planning, 2) doing action, 3) observation, and 4) reflection.
kinds of data collected from this classroom action research are qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data is collected by observing students’ and teachers’ activity, and quantitative data is collected from the result of students’ tests.

This classroom action research was conducted at MA. Alkhairaat Biromaru. The object of the study is the second-year students’ academy year 2019/2020 semester two, with the sum of students being 21 students, which consists of 14 women and seven men.

Analyzing qualitative data was done after collecting data. The steps/procedures of analyzing qualitative data include data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion or verification.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

On Wednesday, 15 January 2020, the researcher did the pre-test for 21 students. Based on the students’ scores on the pre-test, it is obtained that their ability to write personal letters should be improved. The result of the pre-test can be shown in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Grade</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Highest score</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Lowest score</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Students achieved competence</td>
<td>3 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Students not achieved competence</td>
<td>18 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Classical competence presentation</td>
<td>14.28 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Classical absorption presentation</td>
<td>35.71 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The pre-test analysis shows that the students’ test result is still low and has not achieved the target of the classical competence presentation as stated in the curriculum and the KKM of English learning in the second year of MA. Alkhairaat Biromaru, as stated in the English teacher’s lesson plan. Based on the test result, a teaching technique is needed to improve students’ skills in writing, especially in writing personal letters, by mastering the structure of the text.

The action of cycle one was conducted four times, covering three meetings for the teaching-learning process in the class and one meeting for the post-action test. The action which was done in cycle 1 is as follows

a. Making lesson plan for cycle 1
b. Completing worksheet (LKS) for meeting 1, 2, and 3
c. Making observation sheet of teacher’s activities
d. Making observation sheets of students’ activities
e. Preparing test of cycle 1

The implementation of the action of cycle one was done in four meetings, meeting one on 22 January 2020, meeting two on 29 January 2020, meeting three on 5 February 2020, and the test for the action of cycle one on 12 February 2020. The action of cycle 1 implementing the technique proposed by the researcher in this classroom action research is by mastering the text structure to improve students’ skill in writing personal letters by following the instructions stated in the lesson plan. The instrument used is the observation sheet of the teacher’s and student’s activities in the teaching-learning process and the evaluation of the student’s learning result by using the post-action test at the end of the action of cycle 1.

Two points become the researchers’ focus in doing this observation. Those are the teacher’s and the student’s activities while the teaching-learning process occurs in the classroom.

The observation of the student’s activities while the teaching and learning process was taking place in the classroom was done by filling up the observation sheet students prepared. Based on the observation result mentioned above, there are 16 scores from 32 maximum scores, so it obtained 50.00% with insufficient criteria at the first meeting. At the second meeting, the sum of the score was 20 from the 32 maximum scores, so it obtained 62.50% with enough criteria. At the third meeting, the score sum is 24 from the 32 maximum scores, 75.00%, with suitable criteria. It is concluded that the result of the observation of students’ activities must be continued to the second cycle (cycle II) to improve the observation result because some students are still not active in preparing themselves for the learning activity, not pay good attention to the objective of learning and learning materials conveyed by the teacher, not active in reflection activity and making conclusion, so those problems have to be solved in cycle II.

A teacher’s observation sheet is used to observe whether the teacher has taught the learning materials based on the lesson plan prepared or not. Based on the observation result mentioned above, there are 24 scores from 44 maximum scores, so it is obtained 54.54% with insufficient criteria at the first meeting. At the second meeting, the sum of the score was 28 from the 44 maximum scores, so it obtained 63.63% with enough criteria at the second meeting. At the third meeting, the score was 33 from the 44 maximum scores, which got 75.00% with good criteria. It is concluded that the result of the observation of students’ activities must be continued to the second cycle (cycle II) to improve the observation result because some students are still not active in preparing themselves for the learning activity, not pay good attention to the objective of learning and learning materials conveyed by the teacher, not active in reflection activity and making conclusion, so those problems have to be solved in cycle II.

After the teaching-learning process in cycle one, the next activity was to give the students test by mastering the text structure to improve students’ writing skills and personal letters. The test was writing a personal letter by mastering the structure of the
text. The aspects the researcher evaluated included the content of their writing, which covers: the appropriate topic they chose, the suitability between the topic/title with the content, writing in chronological order, correct punctuation, spelling, punctuation and capitalization, and paying attention to the text structure and language features of personal letter. The following table will give us a description of the result of the cycle test I.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Evaluation Grade</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Highest score</td>
<td>85.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Lowest score</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Students achieved competence</td>
<td>Ten students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Students not achieved competence</td>
<td>11 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Classical competence presentation</td>
<td>47.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Classical absorption presentation</td>
<td>60.95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the table, it is shown that the result of the test is classical competence presentation is 47.61%, and the classical absorption presentation is 60.95%. The test result has not yet achieved the standard of indicator achievement as stated in the curriculum: the classical competence presentation is 70%, and the classical absorption presentation is 80%. From the data obtained, 11 students out of 21 have not achieved competence from the test, so the researcher continued her action into cycle II by emphasizing several learning materials that were still difficult to comprehend.

The next activity was evaluated based on observing the teacher’s and students’ activities and test results in cycle I. The development of the evaluation was used to consider what effective efforts to improve in the action of cycle II. From the information from cycle I, we can see the strengths and weaknesses, what factors affected the problems, and what solutions should be done to improve the student’s writing skills, especially in writing personal letters. The implementation of the action of cycle II is not so far different from the implementation of process I. The weaknesses and strengths found in implementing the activities of cycle I after being analyzed would be improved in implementing the step of cycle II. The result of that implementation would be used to conclude.

After analyzing and reflecting on the action of cycle I, the activity in the action of cycle II is as follows:

a. Making lesson plan
b. Making worksheet (LKS)
c. Making an observation sheet of the teacher’s activity
d. Making observation sheet of students’ activity
e. Preparing test results of cycle II

4.1.3.2 The Implementation of Action

The implementation of action in cycle II implemented the technique proposed in the classroom action research to improve students’ writing skills by mastering the text structure by following the instructions written in the lesson plan prepared by the
researcher. The instrument included a worksheet (LKS), an observation sheet of teachers’ and students’ activities, and an evaluation at the end of cycle II. The implementation of the action of cycle II is for four times of meetings, three times of meetings for the teaching and learning process, and one meeting for the test of the action of cycle II. Meeting 1 was conducted on 19 February 2020, meeting two on 26 February 2020, meeting three on 4 March 2020, and a test of action of cycle II on 11 March 2020. As long as this classroom action research was taking place, the researcher was always accompanied by the observer who helped the researcher conduct this research.

The observation of the student’s activity in the classroom was done by filling up the observation sheet prepared by the researcher. The result of observing the students’ activities can be shown in the following table. Based on the observation result mentioned above, there are 20 out of 32 maximum scores, so 62.5% of the average percentage with enough criteria at the first meeting is obtained. At the second meeting, the score sum was 24 of 32 maximum scores, so it obtained 75.00% with good criteria. At the third meeting, the score sum was 32 of 32 maximum scores, obtained 100% with very good criteria. It may be concluded that the result of the student’s activity observation was improved significantly. The researcher concluded that from observing their activities during the teaching-learning process, the student’s interest, attention, and seriousness in learning play an important role in their success in education.

In observing the teacher’s activities when teaching the learning materials to the students in the classroom, the observer fills up the observation sheet by observing whether the teacher applied the lesson plan prepared well. The result of the observation can be shown in the following table.

Based on the observation result of the teacher’s activities in teaching English in the above classroom, it is obtained that the score is 32 of 44 maximum scores at the first meeting. Hence, the average percentage obtained is 72.70%, with good criteria. The score is 33 of 44 maximum scores at the second meeting, so the average percentage is 75.00% with good criteria. While at the third meeting, the score was 44 of 44 maximum scores, so the average percentage obtained is 100%, in very good criteria. It might be concluded that the teacher’s teaching technique in the classroom is improved significantly in cycle II.

After the teaching-learning process in cycle II, by mastering the text structure to improve student’s writing skills, especially in writing personal letters, the next activity was to give the students a test/evaluation. The test was writing a personal letter by mastering the structure of the text. The aspects the researcher evaluated, including the content of their writing, are:

- The suitability between the title and the content
- Chronological order
- Using correct punctuation, capitalization, and spelling
- Using the appropriate generic structure of the personal letter
- Using appropriate language features of a personal letter

The following table will give us a description of the result of the test in cycle II.
Based on the table above, it is shown that the result of the test is the classical competence presentation is 85.71%, and the classical absorption presentation is 83.33%. We may conclude that the standard/target of the indicator achievement stated before, that the classical competence presentation is 70% and the classical absorption presentation is 80%, have been achieved well in cycle II. So, this classroom action research will not be continued again.

Based on the analysis and reflection of Cycle I, the researchers made some alternatives action to reflect the weaknesses in Cycle I to be improved in Cycle II. After the improvement was made in cycle II, the researcher concluded some strengths found in cycle II as follows:

1. The students prepared themselves for learning, sat in groups, pay attention to the teacher while the teacher conveyed the learning objective and learning materials in the classroom.
2. The students do the tasks well, reflect and conclude the materials, doing tasks, evaluation, and homework well.
3. The test result obtained a classical competence presentation of 85.71% and a classical absorption presentation of 83.33%. This test result achieved the minimal indicator achievement target in this research.
4. The Observation result of the teacher’s and students’ activities is commonly categorized in very good criteria.

This classroom action research intends to improve students’ writing skills and personal letters by mastering the text's structure for second-year MA students. Alkhairaat Biromaru.

Based on the data collected from the students’ observation result of cycle one, the researcher found that the students’ preparation in a learning activity, their attention to the learning objective and learning materials, doing tasks, reporting/informing their tasks results, their activeness in reflection and concluding were still in enough criteria. At the second meeting, their actions in doing the tasks, reporting/informing their tasks result by writing on the whiteboard, and doing evaluation were in good criteria. However, the other aspects were still in enough criteria. At the third meeting, their active in doing the tasks, reporting, sitting in groups, and making reflections, conclusions, and evaluations were in good criteria. However, the other aspects were still in enough criteria.

The teacher’s observation result of a cycle I obtained that at the first meeting, creating a good condition in the class, checking attendance, apperception, conveying the
learning objective, explaining learning materials, giving instruction on how to do the tasks, asking students’ difficulties, asking students to report their tasks, doing reflection and conclusion, and giving homework into enough criteria, and at the third meeting those aspects were improved into good criteria.

The test result of the cycle I obtained, the classical competence presentation was 47.61%, and the classical absorption presentation was 60.95%. It means that the test result in cycle I was not yet achieved the standard/target of the indicator achievement as stated in the curriculum.

While the observation of students’ activities in cycle II found that at the first meeting, the student’s preparation in learning, their attention to the learning objective and learning materials were still in enough criteria, but the other aspects were in good criteria. At the second meeting, all aspects of observation were in good criteria. At the third meeting, those aspects were improved into very good criteria.

The teacher’s observation result of cycle II found that at the first meeting, all aspects of observation were in good criteria; at the second meeting, those aspects were also in good criteria. At the third meeting, those aspects were improved into very good criteria. It means that all the aspects of teaching had been implemented well according to the lesson plan prepared.

The test result at the second cycle (cycle II) was far from that obtained at the first cycle (cycle I). This improvement caused by the weaknesses found in implementing the action in Cycle I was improved in Cycle II.

The test result of the cycle I obtained was that 11 of 21 students had not achieved competence; in the second cycle, the sum of the students who did not achieve competence decreased to 3. It means that their writing skill in personal letters can be improved by mastering the structure of the text. The classical competence presentation was 47.61%, and the classical absorption presentation was 60.95% in cycle I. The classical competence presentation was 85.71%, and the classical absorption presentation was 83.33% in cycle II. It means that the result of the post-action test was improved significantly in cycle II, and these results of the test have achieved the target of the indicator achievement as stated before, that is, the classical competence presentation is 80%. The classical absorption presentation is 70%.

CONCLUSION

The analysis findings in the previous chapter allow the researchers to draw some conclusions regarding students’ motivation to learn English in the new normal. Based on the findings, the researchers found that the percentage of strongly agree and agree was higher than that of neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. It can be shown that students have high motivation to learn English in the new normal; students show some efforts such as increasing the value of learning, achieving learning achievement, being fluent in English, and interest in learning comes from the students themselves.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Alhamdulillah aabil’alamiin, the researchers praise the almighty God, Allah SWT, for blessing the researchers with his mercy and guidance to complete this project paper entitled Analyzing Students’ Motivation in Learning English in New Normal at SMP Negeri 19 Palu. The researchers also thank all the English Education Study Program lecturers, which cannot be mentioned individually. Next, we would like to express our deepest thanks and appreciation to our family. May Allah receive all their works and kindness. Aamiin.

REFERENCES


Alizedah, M. (2016). *The Impact of Motivation of English Language Learning*. Islamic Azad University: Iran. Use the "Insert Citation" button to add citations to this document.


