

Developing Writing Materials for Students of the Eighth Grade of SMP Negeri 2 Sewon

Johanes Baptista Ivan
Agus Widyantoro.
johanesbaptistaivan@gmail.com

Abstract: The objectives of this study were: (1) to identify the learners' needs of the eighth grade students of SMP N 2 Sewon, and (2) to develop appropriate writing materials for eighth grade students of SMP N 2 Sewon. This was a Research and Development (R&D) study. The subjects of the study were the students of eighth grade of SMP N 2 Sewon. The research procedures were adapted from Jolly and Bolitho's model in Tomlinson (1998) with some modifications consisting of conducting the needs analysis, writing the course grid, developing the first draft, getting expert judgment and evaluating the first draft, and also revising the first draft of the materials. The instruments to collect the data were needs analysis questionnaire and expert judgment questionnaire. The data from the needs analysis were analyzed quantitatively using frequency and percentage, then, the results were used to develop the course grid. The data from the expert judgment were analyzed quantitatively through descriptive statistics while the suggestions were used to revise the first draft of the writing materials. The product of this study is a set of writing materials entitled "Guides for Writing" for students of eighth grade of SMP N 2 Sewon. The writing materials consist of three units: "My Best Friend", "My Unforgettable Experience", and "My Favorite Story". Each unit consists of Pre-writing, Drafting, Responding, and Editing tasks ranging from 15-17 tasks.

Keywords: research and development, writing materials, materials development

Abstrak: Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah: (1) untuk mengidentifikasi kebutuhan peserta didik siswa kelas VIII SMP N 2 Sewon, dan (2) untuk mengembangkan bahan-bahan ajar menulis yang sesuai untuk siswa kelas VIII SMP N 2 Sewon. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian Research and Development (R & D). Subyek penelitian adalah siswa kelas VIII SMP N 2 Sewon. Prosedur penelitian diadaptasi dari model Jolly dan Bolitho di Tomlinson (1998) dengan beberapa modifikasi yang terdiri dari melakukan analisis kebutuhan, menulis *course grid*, mengembangkan *draft* pertama, mendapatkan penilaian ahli dan mengevaluasi *draft* pertama, dan juga merevisi *draft* pertama. Instrumen untuk mengumpulkan data adalah kuesioner analisis kebutuhan dan kuesioner penilaian ahli. Data dari analisis kebutuhan dianalisis secara kuantitatif menggunakan frekuensi dan persentase, kemudian, hasilnya digunakan untuk mengembangkan *course grid*. Data dari penilaian ahli dianalisis secara kuantitatif melalui statistik deskriptif sedangkan saran yang digunakan untuk merevisi *draft* pertama dari bahan penulisan. Produk dari penelitian ini adalah satu set bahan ajar menulis yang berjudul "Guides for Writing" untuk siswa kelas VIII SMP N 2 Sewon. Bahan penulisan terdiri dari tiga unit: "My Best Friend", "My Unforgettable Experience", dan "My Favorite Story". Setiap unit terdiri dari *Pre-writing*, *Drafting*, *Responding*, dan *Editing* yang terdiri dari 15-17 tugas.

Kata kunci: penelitian dan pengembangan, bahan ajar menulis, pengembangan materi ajar

Introduction

As a major international language, English has a significant role in global communication. Proficiency in spoken and written English enables people to communicate and participate in international context. Productive skills including speaking and writing skills become the most important skills required by people to contribute in international context. In recent years, written communication is developing continually so that writing skills are becoming crucial needs in global communication. Bachani (2006) also suggests that writing is like speech that has been considered as a powerful mode of communication. As proof, writing skills are used extensively in higher education and in workplaces. Nowadays, professional communication like proposals, memos, reports, applications, and e-mails requires writing skills. In the curriculum applied in Indonesia, writing skills also have an equal position with speaking skills. The government expects that the students can develop both oral and written communication skills equally (*Depdiknas 2006*). It is obvious that writing skills are important to be learned in English language learning. Students have to master writing skills, because they need them for their academic and occupational purposes.

Despite its important role in global communication, writing is not an easy task for students. Producing a fluent piece of writing is probably the most difficult task that should be done in a language. Luchini (2003) finds out that the majority of language learners consider the writing skill as one of the most challenging linguistic abilities to foster. Teachers of writing often hear their students complain of uncertainty about how to express their ideas in writing. Writing requires the students to express their ideas in well-structured written texts. In transforming all of their ideas into writing forms, the students should consider many things such as the ideas, the organization of the texts, cohesiveness and coherence of the texts, the grammatical structures, mechanics and also the choice of words.

In line with the fact that writing is difficult to be mastered, based on the observation during the researcher's teaching practice on January, 2016 in SMP N 2 Sewon, the eighth grade students of SMP N 2 Sewon had difficulties in learning writing. The students found writing as a difficult and complicated activity. Firstly, most of the students were blocked to generate ideas. It was difficult for them to find what they were going to say in their writing. Secondly, they tended to make mistakes in using grammatical rules and mechanics. Thirdly, they were also observed to have poor participation in their learning. Those problems impeded them to achieve the learning objectives.

Among other aspects in the teaching learning process, learning materials have the most important role in facilitating the students to achieve the learning objectives. They become the main component that contributes to the learning activities. They should always meet the students' needs. Appropriate materials will facilitate the students to achieve the learning objectives. Relating to the problems faced by the students above, activities in process-based approach to teaching writing including pre-writing/ planning, drafting, editing and finally

producing final works are very potential to overcome the problems. Brown (2001: 335) claims that the process-based approach is advantageous to students in language learning because in this approach, students are the creators of language, they need to focus on content and messages, and their own intrinsic motives are valued. Language skills are best learned when learners have their own intrinsic motives. It will encourage students to learn by being active participants rather than by passively absorbing information. Moreover, Raimes (1983: 10) indicates that in the process-based approach, students explore their own topics through writing. Brown (2000: 348) also states that pre-writing stage in process-based approach encourages the generation of ideas. In addition, in editing stage, as Tangpermpoon (2008) explains, the students can reflect and improve their writing by employing peer feedback or teacher review.

That is why, to help the eighth grade students of SMP N 2 Sewon overcome their difficulties in learning writing, adding the classroom activities covering writing process that are pre-writing/ planning, drafting, editing, and producing final works for the students will be helpful. They will learn to generate and develop their own ideas in pre-writing/ planning stage, reflect and revise inappropriate mechanics and grammatical mistakes in their works in editing stage and in the same time improve their participation. Unfortunately, these kind of classroom activities have not been covered in their materials. Since the problems faced by the students above were problems that commonly exist in the teaching writing process in eighth grade classes of SMP N 2 Sewon, it will be the best solution if the teacher provides additional source of writing materials for the eighth grade students that cover process-based approach activities. However, it is very rare to find writing materials that also cover process approach activities in the market and the teacher also did not have enough time to develop her own materials since she had to teach six classes with a very strict schedule.

Based on the background of the problem above, the researcher was motivated to conduct a study on developing writing materials for the eighth grade students of SMP N 2 Sewon. The main purpose of the study is to develop writing materials that accommodate the students' needs and overcome their difficulties in learning writing.

Research Method

The objective of this research is to develop writing materials for students of the eighth grade of SMP N 2 Sewon. These materials are developed based on the students' needs. This research is categorized as an Educational Research and Development (R&D). Gall, Gall and Borg (2003: 569) state that "Educational R&D is an industry-based development model in which the findings of research are used to design new products and procedures, which systematically field-tested, evaluated, and refined to meet the specified criteria of effectiveness, quality or similar standards". The result of this study is writing materials for students of eighth grade of SMP N 2 Sewon. The research procedures of the research were adapted from Jolly and Bolitho (in Tomlinson, 1998) with some modifications. There are 5 steps of the research procedures which were conducting needs analysis, writing the course grid, developing the first draft of the materials, getting expert judgment and revising the first draft of the materials.

In this research, there were two techniques which were used. Those were the students' needs analysis and the expert judgment. The first technique, the students' needs analysis, was the technique conducted before the first draft of the writing materials was developed. The data were the target needs and the learning needs collected by distributing questionnaires for students. The second was the expert judgment. It was conducted after developing the first draft. The data was conducted to evaluate the appropriateness of the materials. There were two instruments of questionnaires guidelines which were used in collecting the data. Those are needs analysis questionnaires and expert judgment questionnaires.

Findings and Discussion

The respondents of the needs analysis of this research were students of the eighth grade of SMP N 2 Sewon. The respondents consisted of 88 students. The age of the respondents was around 13-15 years old. Based on the questionnaires, there are three main points included the targets' opinions of writing; they are the difficulties of writing, the importance of writing and the frequency of students' writing. It can be seen that the students' opinions of writing are divided into three points. First, it was the difficulties of writing. More than half of the students stated that writing was difficult to do. Further 6,8 % of the students stated that writing was very difficult to do. They said that it was difficult because they had to deal with grammar, vocabulary, coherence and others. They also said that they got problems in developing their idea in writing a text. There were 10.2% of the students stated that writing was easy to do. The rest of students stated that writing was quite easy to do. Only one student stated that writing was very easy to do. To sum up, the students still found some problems to do writing activity.

Second, it was students' opinion about the importance of writing. There were 33% of the students stated that writing was very important, 42% of them told writing was important and the rest of the students stated that it was quite important. It means that students already realized the importance of writing. Third, it was students' frequency in doing writing. The needs analysis gave information that most of the students sometimes practiced their writing activity. There were 11.4% of them stating that they often practice their writing activity. The rest of the students stated that they never practiced their writing activity. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that the students of the eighth grade of SMP N 2 Sewon already knew the importance of writing, but they still had some difficulties in writing.

The researcher developed three course grids for three units as the learning materials. Each unit represents the different text types; those are descriptive text, recount text and narrative text. Moreover, the activities for each unit consist of four stages of writing process adapted from some experts. They are pre-writing, drafting, responding and editing.

The aim of this research was to develop appropriate writing materials for the students of the eighth grade of SMP N 2 Sewon. The research was conducted in

SMP N 2 Sewon. The population sample of this research was 88 students of eighth grade. In developing materials, there are several steps to develop them. Those were conducting need analysis, writing course grids, making the first draft of the materials, getting expert judgment and making the final product. The first step before developing the materials was conducting the needs analysis. The data of the needs analysis were obtained by distributing questionnaires to the students of eighth grade. The aim of this step was to find out the target needs and the learning needs. The needs analysis questionnaires were developed according to Hutchinson and Waters (1987) and Nunan (2004).

After conducting the needs analysis, the next step was developing a course grid. A course grid was needed as the guidance to develop materials. The materials cover only the writing skill. There were three units in these materials. Each unit represented the different text types; those were descriptive text, recount text and narrative text. Unit 1 consisted of 16 activities, Unit 2 had 15 activities and Unit 3 had 17 activities with the similar pattern. Unit 1 discussed about descriptive text. The title of the first unit was *My Best Friend*. The grammar used in this unit was simple present tense. Unit 2 discussed about recount text. The title of the unit was *My Unforgettable Experience*. The grammar used in this unit was simple past tense. Unit 3 discussed about narrative text. The title of the unit was *My Favorite Story*. The grammar used in this unit was past continuous tense.

The next step was writing the materials. In the developed materials, each unit was conducted in four stages, those were *Pre-Writing*, *Drafting*, *Responding* and *Editing*. In *Pre-Writing*, students were provided a text, generic structure of the text and grammar. In *Drafting*, try to write their first draft of the text. In *Responding*, students' writing gets a feedback from the teacher or peers. In *Editing*, students edit their writing. The materials also include reflection, the summary of each unit and my dictionary (Words' list).

Conclusions

Based on the research findings, the needs analysis are divided into two aspects which are target needs and learning needs. Those aspects are described below:

- 1) More than a half of students (53.4%) state that writing is difficult to do.
- 2) There are 42% of the students say that writing is an important skill and 33% of them say that writing is very important.
- 3) Most of the students (72.7%) sometimes practice their writing activity.
- 4) More than a half of students (63.6%) choose the skill that they need in writing text is using the suitable structure organization and words choice.
- 5) More than a half of students (61.4%) agree that they have lack of grammar.
- 6) Most of the students (73.9%) claim they want to increase their ability in writing English.

Based on the results of the needs analysis, the learning needs are listed below:

- 1) In terms of input, more than a half of the students (67%) want the topic of materials related to daily life. For input of materials, 63.6% of students want pictures as the input before writing. Regarding the input length, most of students (64.8%) want to have input texts with 100-200 words in length. Most of students

also (97.7%) state that the comprehension of grammar is important. 95.5% of students said that the comprehension of text type was important.

2) In terms of writing procedure, almost a half of the students (45.5%) want to write text by given the certain topic.

3) Related to the setting, more than a half of students (69.3%) want to do writing activities individually.

4) In terms of students' role, most of students (60.2%) want to study by discussion.

5) In terms of teacher' roles, most of the students (63.6%) like the teacher explains the materials during writing activities. 60.2% of the students like if the teacher explains the materials again when they have difficulties in writing activity. Most of students (70.5%) like after finishing the task; they want the teacher give them corrections and provides signs on the students' mistakes.
Suggestions.

References

- Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan (BNSP). 2006. *Standar Kompetensi dan Kompetensi Dasar SMP/MTS*. Jakarta: Depdikbud.
- . 2006. *Panduan Umum KTSP*. Jakarta: Depdikbud.
- Brown, H D. 2001. *Teaching by Principles An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy (2Ed)*. San Fransisco: Longman.
- Gall, M D., Gall, J P., and Borg, Walter R. 2003. *Educational Research An Introduction(7Ed)*. New York: Pearson.
- Raimes, Ann. 1983. *Techniques in Teaching Writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Pres.
- Tomlinson, B. 1998. *Materials Development in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Pers.