



IMPLEMENTING INTERACTIVE WRITING TO TEACHING WRITING TO YOUNG LEARNERS

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Abstract

This paper aims to explain how to teach writing to young learners by implementing Interactive Writing strategy. Interactive writing is an instructional writing method used for young learners; it is a collaborative writing experience where the teacher and the students work as a team to create a piece of writing. This strategy is known as sharing pen because the teacher guides the students to fix the word or sentences directly. Interactive Writing is a good strategy that supports strong reading and writing connections. Because during interactive writing students are encouraged to read a text and say words slowly before they begin writing the text. The process of analyzing new words by saying them slowly allows students to link sounds and letters together. Then, one by one student comes to write, the teacher guides the student at spelling the word, forming the letter, arranging the letter, adding the appropriate capitalization or punctuation and spacing the word. By using this strategy, the teacher can make the writing activity more fun and they will know all of their student's needs. Then, the young learners will easily organize their ideas and feel confident with their writing because students write a text by the teacher's help beside them. Also, it will make young learners more interested in writing.

Key words: Teaching Writing, Interactive writing strategy, Young learners

A. INTRODUCTION

Writing is a compulsory subject that should be taught by English teachers at school. Through writing, students can express their thoughts, opinions, ideas, events, and analyze the information. This is supported by Harmer (2001) that says writing is a way of communication to deliver thoughts or to declare feeling in written form. By writing the students will be able to convey their ideas to their readers through both paper and electronic devices.

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Being a productive skill, writing becomes the most difficult skill to be mastered. Richards and Renandya (2002, p. 30) state that “writing is the hardest skill for foreign language students”. The difficulties are not only in generating and organizing the ideas, but also in writing the ideas into readable and understandable the text. Then, the students have to work more, for example, writing the ideas in their mother tongue and then translate it into English before they write it into good writing.

In Indonesia, English is learnt as foreign language. Previously, KTSP (School-Based Curriculum) is implemented, where the elementary school students learned English as subject known as *Muatan Lokal*. But now, since Kurikulum 2013 (K-13) has been implemented, English is not taught in Elementary School subject. It does not belong to primary time allocation where it depends on the school policy to take English as extracurricular subject or not. In other words, the development of teaching English as foreign language in Elementary School has stopped. However, English is still taught in several private elementary schools as they may have additional curriculum besides K-13.

Suyanto (2008) states that young learners are elementary school students who have age between 6-12 years old. It means that students who have entered Elementary School can be categorized as young learners. At elementary school, they start to learn material that has been designed for their ages. In elementary school, children are encountering the elements of writing for the first time, from the formation of letters to organizing their ideas to using correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Since this is the beginning of learning a foreign language, the teacher and students may encounter obstacles and problems.

The first problem is most of the teachers of elementary school do not provide enough writing activities based on students’ needs and match of students’ interest (Richards & Renandya, 2002). It means that the teacher serves their writing activities just by following the activity in the courses book only. They do not consider with students individual needs, do not renew and make varied writing activity in class. The second problem is the weakness in students’ writing skill especially in generating and developing the ideas. Also, the students are uninterested in writing. The students are less motivated to write. It is because the students do not have enough interest in writing. It takes them into a situation where writing is a hard activity to be done.

In order to help the students in writing, the teachers should prepare a new method which can create the different learning style in the classroom. Moreover, the method given should be appropriate and effective for the students. In this case, the writer suggests the teacher to use Interactive writing strategy to help students in generating and developing ideas and make writing class became interested in the students. Interactive writing can be a strategy that provides fun learning and engages young learning in creating text.

Interactive writing is collaborative teaching or learning strategy in which the teacher and students jointly compose and write texts. Therefore, students can write with the teacher guidance beside them and feel more confident with their writing. Before the writing begins, the teacher and the students discuss ideas and thoughts about the composition of the written piece. The writing is centered on shared experience and the teacher and children collaboratively reflect on the experience as they write (Williams, 2011). During an interactive writing lesson,

the teacher will often sit near an easel as the children surround her to make sure all of the students are able to view the writing and participate in the process.

B. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

1. The Nature of Writing

Writing has been defined in various ways. Nunan (2005) defines writing as both physical and mental acts. In committing words or ideas into medium level such as hieroglyphics inked onto parchment or an email message typed into a computer, it was a physical act. In contrast, mental acts are like inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them and organizing them into statements and paragraphs that will be clear by the readers.

In line with this idea, Brown (2001: 336) says that “writing is the process of putting ideas down on paper to transform thought into words, to give the structure and coherent organization”. It can be interpreted that writing is a process of transferring ideas, opinions, issues, knowledge to ensure such words in written form with appropriate structures and organizations. It requires the students to express the content of writing into a good composition by considering the aspects of writing.

According to Harmer’s theory (2004), writing is the only skill that can produce a real product, which is touchable, readable, and keep able for a long time. When the spoken form of language is an act of here and now the world, the written one involves time and also space. In writing, people must get everything right. Unlike speaking where the clarification and explanation can be made directly in order to make the messages clearer we deliver to people we talk to, writing tends to be more exact, precise and uses some special devices to make it works properly on the readers without creating any confusion and misunderstanding or misinterpretation (Harmer, 2004).

2. Teaching writing

In writing activity, there are some reasons that should be considered by the teacher. Harmer (cited in Larasanti, 2007, p.7) mentions some reasons to teach writing. The first is reinforcement. It means people learn language whether oral or aural way. It would be great to see the language in written form. Second, language development. The language that is acquired should be followed by some activities that encourage the students’ thinking skill. Third, language style. The writing that will be done should depend on the students’ level of proficiency. They will not do a great thing when they get something over what they are supposed to do. The last, writing as a skill. Since there are many kinds of writing and it depends on its purposes, the students need to know how to write and use it in the appropriate circumstance.

The type of tasks that will be chosen by the teacher is also important. The teacher cannot use random tasks, but he/she must check the quality of the activity. Ur (2012) mentions, there are some criteria should be considered by the English teacher in choosing writing task (p. 157). They are:

1. Interest. The task can stimulate and motivate the students.
2. Level. The language being used is suitable for the students’ level
3. Relevance. It is related to the students’ daily lives.
4. Simplicity. The task is not complicated.

5. Personal Appropriateness. It fits with the student's need, the teaching style, learning outcomes and references.

3. Overview of Interactive Writing Strategy

Interactive writing is the co-construction process in teaching writing, but it is familiar known as share the pen. This strategy was introduced by a group of researchers and teachers associated with Ohio State University in 1991. Interactive writing was developed to model the writing process for students and encourage the beginning of independent writing in the primary grades (McCarrier et al., 1999).

McCarrier, Pinell, and Fountas (2000) defined interactive writing as an instructional approach where a group or a class of students create a meaningful text while attending to sounds, letters, and words. Interactive writing is intertwined as a cognitive and social process where the teacher and the students work collaboratively through meaningful interactions to transcribe a message.

According to Mackenzie (2010:27), "Interactive writing is a teaching strategy which provides change for the explicit teaching of both authorial skills (text structure, grammar, vocabulary) and secretarial skills (spelling, punctuation, and handwriting) as well as reading. It means in Interactive writing, students will get multi-ability such as writing skill and phonetic skill. In addition, according to Clay (2001), interactive writing is used to engage students in useful conversations that include the purposes and conventions of writing. Interactive writing follows "from ideas to spoken words, to printed messages". It means first they determine the topic then they discuss it with teacher guidance and for the last, they write it on the dry-erase or blackboard as it is repeated by the whole class.

C. DISCUSSION

1. Preparation

a. Choosing Teaching Materials

In the teaching-learning process, the material is the most important thing to be prepared well. The teacher should prepare all about the things that will be taught to the students. This material will help the teacher to deliver the lesson to the students. The material must be taken from reliable resources. It means that the material must be factual, authentic, and appropriate. In teaching writing, by using Interactive Writing strategy the material should be based on students' experiences so that the teacher may use recount text.

b. Preparing Media

In this strategy, materials needed:

- Chart paper taped to a wall or chalkboard to write on
- Marker or chalk for writing (recommended to using black, although dark blue)
- White tape or white labels to correct and revise writing
- Children's books as sources
- Pointer

c. Preparing the Exercises

The teacher also has to prepare some exercises for the students. The exercises should be made closer to the example given. In Interactive Writing usually the

teacher uses the story of recount text. So, the teacher should prepare the exercises for the students to compose a few paragraphs of report text.

2. Implementing the Interactive Writing Strategy in Teaching Process.

a) Pre - Teaching

In this activity, the teacher greets the students. This activity is important to make a good first impression for the students. And then, the teacher and the students pray to God in order to make the teaching-learning process runs well. Then, the teacher checks the students' attendance. It is a compulsory activity. Next, the teacher and the students manage the classroom become as comfortable as possible.

b) Whilst-Teaching Activity

In this activity, the students are guided by the teacher to the primary activity in teaching writing by applying Interactive Writing strategy. There are some stages in this activity that should be followed: planning, drafting, sharing, evaluating, revising, editing and an additional component, publishing.

i. Planning/ Pre-writing

- The teacher facilitated a conversation about the shared experience as that can be written about.
- The teacher offers the reading a children's book as a way to share a learning experience. The teacher read it and asks the student to repeat sentence by sentence. The teacher has to check and fix students' pronunciation while reading. At that moment, the teacher interprets the meaning of each sentence to the students. The teacher has to make sure the students can catch the meaning of the topic of the book.
- After finish reading a book the teacher leads the discussion of the topic. The teacher makes a questioning phase about the information from the book given. The teacher may ask one by one about the meaning of each sentence. Teachers often ask thought-provoking questions to spur students' thinking. Also, the teacher allows the students to ask some questions related to the topic that is not understood yet. It can be about the information that has been informed before by the teacher and unfamiliar words or difficult words found in the children's book given.

ii. Drafting

- In this stage, the teacher will apply the Interactive Writing strategy in teaching writing. The students are going to write kind of report text based on the book that they have read before.
- Before starting to write in front of the class, the teacher asks the students who still remember the information about the topic before. So, the students have to remember the sentences and can predict the word when it comes time to write.
- Then, the students will raise their hands, and then the teacher will choose her students carefully to write each sentence or word on the Chart paper taped to a wall. The teacher should ask different children to contribute to the writing.

- While the student comes to write, the teacher guides the student at spelling the word, forming the letter, arranging the letter, adding the appropriate capitalization or punctuation and spacing the word. At the same time, other students also write it on their own books.
- To make the students understand the teacher may use a different marker color with the students. The teacher writes bold letters/word for capitalization, punctuation, conjunction word or the special word that students have to understand more.
- After that, the teacher will invite different students or may also ask a volunteer to come up front to write next sections by recalling students' memories about the next sentences of text that they had read before. This process will be repeated until all of the information accomplished.

iii. Sharing

The teacher asks students to exchange their writing with their friend and check it whether it is as same as the report text on the chart paper.

iv. Evaluating, Revising, and Editing

The teacher asks students to review the report text that they made together. Its means the teacher and the student discuss it and making meaning of the text. The teacher asks the students reread what has been written to ensure it's accurate and comprehensible. And checking the text to make sure it makes sense sounds right, and that what we meant is being communicated.

v. Publishing

The writing that the teacher and students have done is purposeful and can be used as a reference. The teacher can attach it on working wall and displayed in the classroom.

c) Post-Teaching Activity

In the post-teaching activity, the teacher asks the students whether the Interactive Writing strategy can help them or not. The students also can give confirmation to the teacher whether they find difficulties in writing a text by using this strategy. After that, both the teacher and the students conclude the lesson and also retell about the lesson. The teacher highlighting some new learning, the teacher is making sure what they've just done together will show up in the students' independent writing. In other words, summarizing helps students consolidate information so they can apply it on their own. The teacher also gives additional information or retells the lesson that has been taught.

In order to make the students understand more about how to write an interesting text by using the Interactive Writing strategy, the teacher may give the students some homework. Homework will make the students practice a lot in writing.

3. The Advantages of Applying the Interactive Writing Strategy in Teaching Writing to Young Learners

There are many strategies in teaching writing. One of them is the Interactive Writing strategy. This strategy will give positive impacts to young on writing a text. These are the advantages:

1. Interactive Strategy gives the youngest writers the ability to put their thoughts in writing, even as they're learning formative skills of composition.
2. Through interactive writing, children become apprentices; they feel more confident in their writing. Because they are working alongside a more expert writer, their teacher. They feel proud of their work and feel like an author.
3. Interactive writing also improves student's spelling knowledge, provides a letter-sound connection, and links the decoding process to writing. Also, student phonological awareness and early reading abilities are improved as well.
4. They can apply this strategy during independent writing.
5. This strategy helps to improve teachers' ability in teaching writing, the teacher can revise the way he/she teaches in class and knows each student needs in writing. Furthermore, the teacher can use this strategy in teaching writing all kinds of texts.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The Interactive writing is a collaborative writing experience where the teacher and the young learners work as a team to create a piece of writing which holds meaning and truth to the children who created the piece. Interactive writing is an alternative strategy for the teacher who has struggled in teaching writing for young learners. By using this strategy, the teacher can make the writing activity more fun and they will know all of their student's needs. Then, the young learners will easily organize their ideas because students write a text by the teacher's help beside them. Also, it will make young learners more interested in writing.

Moreover, it can improve students' ability in spelling, punctuation, letter formation, phonics, and voice. As a conclusion, Interactive writing is a cooperative event in which teacher and students jointly compose and write a text together. Not only do they share the decision about what they are going to write, but they also share the duties of the scribe. The teacher uses the interactive writing session to model reading and writing strategies as he or she engages students in creating text. Writing should begin right from the start, and interactive writing is the right place for young learners to begin.

On the other hand, the Interactive Writing strategy also has disadvantages. One of them is teachers may find difficulties to control students' attention during scaffolding. The teacher must warn the students who are not paying attention to. Sometimes the students who are sitting at the back cannot get full attention. So, the writer suggests that the teacher combine this strategy with another strategy. The teacher is also suggested to be more aware and responsive to students needs. Also, It is suggested to the teacher to use media (laptop and in focus) when introducing the topic to the students because by media the teacher can show a variety of pictures in order to catch their attention and interest to make the lesson more fun.

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