STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS IN TEACHING PARAGRAPH WRITING MATERIALS BASED ON EGRA TECHNIQUE

Andi Asri Jumiaty¹, Haryanto Atmowardoyo², Kisman Salija³

¹,²,³State University of Makassar, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Paragraph writing is one of subject of study at university level but there are no books provide to teach this subject. Therefore, the researcher construct teh material for Paragraph Writing based on EGRA Technique. This research is to find out the students’ perceptions on paragraph writing material based on EGRA technique. The researcher applied the descriptive qualitative research. This research was conducted in English Education Department, Faculty of Education and Teacher Training of Muhammadiyah University of Makassar. The subjects of the research were the fourth semester students in academic year of 2018/2019. The questionnaires were given to the students as the instrument to find out the students’ perception on paragraph writing materials. There are several questions that are filled out by the students. The result of the students’ perception on the final draft of instructional paragraph writing materials based on EGRA technique was positive.

Keywords: Perception, Paragraph Writing, EGRA technique

INTRODUCTIONS

One of two skills which are tested in the final evaluation is Writing. In addition, a part of people assumed that writing skill is one most important skill in English language. Moreover, writing is important because students could accelerate in the process of learning in the target language. Writing is a complicated process which involves a number of cognitive and meta-cognitive activities, for instance, brainstorming, planning, outlining, organizing, drafting, and revising Byrne (1997:6).

As fundamental skill, writing as important as speaking, listening, and reading. Harmer (1998:79) explained four main reasons for teaching writing. Firstly, some students, instead of acquiring a language in an oral way, benefit greatly from seeing the language that is written down. Writing reinforces the grammatical structures and vocabulary that students have learned. Next is the writing process helps the student to think and to select words as well as sentences to construct a well-written text. It is all parts of learning experience that can increase the language mastery of the students. The third reason to teach writing is the differences between students learning styles. Not all people can express what they think orally and quickly. In writing, students have more time to think and produce a language in a slower way to reflect what they have learned.

Writing is a complex process that permits writers to explore thoughts and concepts, and make them visible and concrete (Graith, 2002). Graham and Perin
(2007-9-10) says that writing has two important benefits: 1. It's a skill that draws on the use of strategies (such as planning, evaluating, and revising text) to accomplish a variety of goals, like writing a report of expressing of an idea or opinion with the support of evidence, 2. Writing is a means of extending and deepening student knowledge; it acts as a tool for learning subject materials.

In writing, students should understand how to write letters, short messages, recount texts and other type of texts. Additionally, they also should know understand grammar, spelling, connectives, punctuation, and other aspects in writing, to create their writing understandable. In teaching learning process, the researcher should determine the teaching method that is suitable with the material.

Teaching technique is the way a teacher teaching in the class. Every teacher should have determined the teaching technique to be used before coming to the class. Choosing an appropriate teaching technique is one fundamental key to the success in teaching. There is a lot of teaching technique that can be applied for teaching writing. Because it is particularly.

The researcher found that the students have difficulties in writing such as lack of practicing in writing, lack of interest, and lack of English vocabulary. Therefore, they are unable to express their ideas in a good paragraph. Besides, some students are difficult to construct a paragraph because they have ability in grammar. In addition, the lecturer also faced the problem of teaching writing skill. There is no writing course book provided by the lecturer, so the lecturer needs to explore material from the internet. Based on students' information that some of the lessons provided are uninteresting topics, and they have no experiences or previous knowledge of instruction given by the lecturer.

Nowadays, there are some techniques used in teaching writing English, one of them is EGRA (Experience, Generalization, Reinforcement, and Application. By using this technique, the students are given opportunity to find out the form and function of the sentence by themselves. Brown (1994:351) says that it is built more intrinsic motivation by allowing the students to discover rules rather than being told them.

Henry (1973) says that perception is the process of discriminating among stimuli and interpreting their meanings. In other hand, Al-Khasawneh (2009) claims that teaching technique in order to improve students writing performance. Babalola (2012) concluded the reasons for students’ poor writing performance divided into two groups are teachers and teaching methodology and students’ attitude and motivation. Morgan, et.al (2007) suggest to provide teachers with strategies for promoting generalization of writing skills in each stage of the writing process: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. These ideas are mostly concerned of teaching strategies, teaching methods, and teaching techniques by the teacher.

Student feedback on the students’ perceptions of their learning environment including the climates, the teacher, the teacher’s instructional performance, and how they think of themselves in this environment. The influence of schools on students’ academic performance is derived from a students’ perception rather than...
the objective reality of the activities and interpersonal relations in educational environment.

In addition to the teaching strategies, methods and technique used by teacher in teaching of writing, another factor which is also very important and plays a very important role in improving students’ writing performance is their perception. Lindsay and Norman (1977) explained Perception is the process of interpreting and organizing sensation in order to produce a meaningful experience.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Perceptions**

Perception is the process of interpreting and organizing sensation in order to produce a meaningful experience (Lindsay and Norman 1977). It can be said that students’ perception widely to their experiences in higher education. Consideration of students’ perceptions and approaches could be integrated with work focusing in improving the student experience. As research by
Entwisle in Tudor et al (2010) shows, students’ perception of content affects the approaches they take to learning and therefore the subsequent quality of the learning achieved.

After defining the term of perception, it can be concluded that perception is a process of human thinking about certain phenomenon after they get the sensation from the environment through the sense of organ.

**Paragraph Writing**

A paragraph is a series of sentences that are organized and coherent, and all are related to a single topic. Almost every piece of writing you do that is longer than a few sentences should be organized into paragraphs. This is because paragraphs show a reader where the subdivisions of an essay begin and end, and thus help the reader see the organization of the essay and grasp its main points.

Oshima and Hogue (1983:3) stated that a paragraph is a basic unit of organization in writing in which a group of related sentences develops one main idea. A paragraph can be as short as one sentence or as long as ten sentences. The number of sentences is unimportant; however, the paragraph should be long enough to develop the main idea clearly. They also tell that a paragraph is made up of three kinds of sentences that develop the writer’s main idea, opinion or telling about the subject. These sentences are topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence.

Paragraph writing or the organization of paragraph is of primary importance. However, writing builds larger units from smaller ones; that is, writers use words to make sentences, sentences to make paragraphs, and paragraphs to make such compositions as letters, report, and college themes (Hart & Reinking 1990: 11). Rajatanun (1988:95) said that a paragraph is a unit of writing which expresses one central idea and consist of two kinds of sentences: a topic sentence and a number of supporting statements.

Unity and coherence are also main components of a paragraph, together with the main idea and the supporting details. Even when a paragraph is unified, and the topic sentence is well supported, the paragraph can still “sound” choppy unless the writer uses coherence devices to make the paragraph smoother. Coherence means “to stick together.” In Writing it means that one thought flows smoothly into the next. One way to achieve coherence is with the use of connectors called transition words or phrases that link one sentence to another (Wyrick 1999:211). Therefore, to produce an effective piece of writing, students should focus on organization by 1) choosing an appropriate topic sentence 2) identifying general and specific statements 3) arranging sentence in order and 4) inserting or deleting some sentences and ending with a concluding sentence.

**EGRA Technique**

EGRA is a shortened form of the term Experience, Generalization, Reinforcement, and Application. EGRA is one of the techniques which are effective in teaching. By using this technique, the students are given opportunity to find out the form and function of the sentence by themselves. Brown (1994: 351)
says that it is built more intrinsic motivation by allowing the students to discover rules rather than being told them.

EGRA’s steps have each objective. Experience is aimed to exposure a particular structure item in use. The objective of generalization is that learners better remember conclusion about form and function, they make by themselves. Reinforcement helps the students to check or revise their generalization and Application is to apply the structure items learned in the previous stage to communicate information or massages (Adrian, 1998).

Tomlinson (1990) states that EGRA is one of the classroom methodologies used by high school teachers of English participating in the PKG (Permantapan Kerja Guru: Strengthening of the Work of Teachers) Project in Indonesia. It has been experimenting with a student active discovery approach which has become known as EGRA, where the letters stand for Exposure, Generalization, Reinforcement, and Application.

Tomlinson (1990) argues that EGRA arises behind the perception that giving model of the structure use through reading or another activity will help the students to acquire the language. Besides, grammar is best taught in communicative context. Providing text to read and understand is the simple task but meaningful activity to do. As we know that the purpose of language teaching is the pupil can use the language to communicate both in written and spoken. The others are that the attention of the students to the grammar used will develop their communicative competence, the discovery activity done will build critical thinking of the students and application is the way to apply structure rules they learn before.

EGRA is a technique developed from communicative approach which views language as a mean of communication and the activities of language learning have to guide student to communicate. The following is the brief explanation each stage of EGRA technique.

a. Experience

Experience is a learning stage where students are subconsciously expose to the meaningful use of particular structure item by using picture, game, or video. This learning experience makes the students more active from the beginning of the teaching process where they will come into a great discovery. Harmer stated that (1991:114) such experiences give us points of common reference to talk about and can be used as reason to bond with each other. It is an ideal way of showing the material in picture, audio or video.

b. Generalization

In this stage the students are led through tasks in a group to discover form, meaning and function of a structure they have been exposed to. The rational for the generalization is the learner better remember conclusion about the form and function(s) they make for themselves. Krashen (1982: 66) said good teacher also take advantage of the students’ knowledge of the world in helping comprehension by discussing topic that familiar to the student.

Harmer (1991: 124) said where they have been discussing an issue or predicting the content of a writing text, we will encourage them to talk the conclusion with us. By comparing different solutions, ideas, and problems,
everyone gets a greater understanding of the topic. The generalization is the central of EGRA technique where students are expected to make a discovery of language structure.

c. Reinforcement

Reinforcement is a learning stage where students are provided with correct and conscious knowledge of the form, and functions of the structure item that they have been exposed to. The objective of this stage is to help learners to check or revise their generalization that students should have corrected and consciousness of the form and function of a certain structure item. Harmer (1991: 109) stated when students do workbook based on controlled testing activities, we will mark their efforts right or wrong, possibly penciling in the correct answer for them to study. However, when we give feedback on more creative writing, we will approach the task.

d. Application

Application is learning stage where students individually are given opportunities to use or apply the structure item that they have learned in communication either receptively or productively. According to Harmer (1991: 115) we (teacher) can ask them (students) to complete worksheet or writing task by themselves individually.

There are some advantages of using EGRA technique in teaching recount text proposed by Helena (in Afriani et. al, 2014:6). The advantages are EGRA technique can be useful to the language teacher. EGRA technique helps the teacher make the students active by giving challenging question to get the use and form of recount text. EGRA technique makes students learn by themselves before the teacher explain the use and the form of the structure.

According to Helena (2004) in Afriani (2014: 2) that EGRA technique is an effective way to create lively interaction among the students, EGRA technique will make students active. EGRA has a particular objective. Adrian (1998) in Syahara (2013: 5) said that the objective of the experience unconsciously learners to expose a particular structure item in use, the objective of generalization is that learners better remember conclusion about form and function, they make by themselves, the objective of the reinforcement helps the learners to check or revise their generalization, and the objective of the application uses or applies structure items learned in the previous stage to communicate information or massages.

**METHODOLGY**

The researcher conducted through descriptive qualitative because as Gay (2006) states, “It does describe an existing condition: it determines and report the way thing are“. The main objective of conducting this research is to find out the students’ perception of paragraph writing material based on EGRA technique in teaching and learning process. The target population of this study is the fourth semester students of English Education of Makassar University of Makassar 2018 / 2019. Particularly the researcher used a questionnaire as instruments of the research. Likert-Scale was used to measure the data from the questionnaire of perception.

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RESULTS

To know the students’ perception toward the use of the Instructional Writing Material based on EGRA technique, the research distributed the questionnaire to the students. The data was analyzed by Likert scale. The result show the students have positive perception in writing skill based on EGRA technique. This indicated by the percentage of the students’ questionnaire shown in following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Positive</td>
<td>65 – 80</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>50 – 65</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>85 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>35 – 49</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Negative</td>
<td>20 – 34</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the percentage analysis of the students’ perception on the table above, the analysis shows that there were no students who state strongly negative statement category to the use Instructional Writing Material based on EGRA technique, there were 5 students (12.5%) state strongly positive statement by interval score in 65 – 80 and there were 34 students (80%) gives positive statement category in interval score 50 – 65. The table above indicates the use Instructional Writing Material based on EGRA technique is interested to the students. This supported by the following table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Respondent</th>
<th>Total of Students’ Score</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>2188</td>
<td>72.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows that the mean score of the students’ perception is 72.93 which is in a strongly positive category according to the range of the students’ perception score. Therefore, the students have positive attitude to use of the Instructional Writing Material based on EGRA technique.

The students agree that learning writing English by Instructional Writing skill based on EGRA technique are established the enjoyable learning atmosphere and create the students to be autonomous learners (3.83), help to enhance the students’ knowledge (3.8), help to enhance the students’ self confidence (3.93), help to improve the students’ writing ability (3.9), increase the students’ enthusiasm to study (3.9), improve students’ motivation (3.9) and more active in learning (3.8).

In conclusion, according the average score of questionnaire 3.64 classified as very good. Its shows that the students have positive perception toward learning paragraph writing skill based on EGRA technique.
As explained before that, the students’ perceptions were taken by using a questionnaire consist some items. The implementation of the product is conducted at English Education Department fourth semester classroom that consist 40 students.

The questionnaire was given that after post test to show that the students interested in the use of writing skill material based on EGRA technique. It shows that the mean score of students’ interest was 3.64. It is relevant to Goldstein (2014) stated that perception is something we experience constantly; knowing about how it works is interesting in its own right.

CONCLUSION
Based on the analysis of questionnaire, the researcher concluded that the students were strongly interest toward the use Writing Material. It means that is a good applicable strategy in teaching Paragraph Writing skill. As research by Entwisle in Tudor et al (2010) shows, students’ perception of content affects the approaches they take to learning and therefore the subsequent quality of the learning achieved.

REFERENCES


