A SURVEY ON THE TEACHING OF WRITING AT SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN RIAU PROVINCE

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Abstract: Teaching writing in senior high schools provides students with knowledge, experience and strategies of writing simple texts to more complex ones. This research aims at looking at how writing skills are taught at senior high schools in Riau Province-Indonesia. Specifically, the research answers the research questions about teaching materials, methods/strategies used by English teachers in the teaching of writing and students' attitude towards writing skills. The samples are second year English Department students of FKIP Riau University coming from different cities and regencies in Riau Province. The data were collected through distributing a set of questionnaire. The results show that most writing materials consist of linguistics knowledge such as sentence structure, vocabulary and punctuation and lack of writing skills and strategies like brainstorming, drafting, revising and editing. Moreover, most teachers are product oriented in their teaching of writing. Finally, most students (65.9) have low attitude towards writing skills. From these findings, it can be concluded that: writing materials need to be focussed on writing skills and strategies, teachers' knowledge and skills on teaching methods/strategies need to be upgraded and students' attitude towards writing skills needs to be improved. These findings can be used as a reference to do some improvement in the teaching of writing in senior high schools in Riau province.

Keywords: *Survey, Writing Instruction, Senior High Schools*

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, English is one of the subjects offered to students at schools, starts from junior high schools, senior high schools, vocational schools and university. In the teaching and learning English, there are four language skills to be learned, listening and reading skills which are categorized into receptive skills; speaking and writing skills that are categorized into productive skills.

Ideally, the four language skills should have the same attention and treatment in its instruction at schools, including senior high schools. The existing phenomena are writing skills lack of

attention and treatment compared to other language skills, like speaking and reading skills (Alwasilah, 2006). This might cause negative effect as the skills and strategies the students get from high schools will be the stock for them to bring to higher education, university.

Writing is one of the language skills in the English instruction at senior high schools. The writing skill aims at giving knowledge, experience and strategies of writing to students of senior high schools. It covers how to write simple texts up to write more complex texts in various text types such as narrative, descriptive, expository, news item, recount, report, etc.

Based on the researcher informal interview with several senior high school English teachers, the previous phenomena seem true. This is shown from the teachers' lack of focus in preparing the lesson for the writing skills compared to their preparation for the reading and speaking skills. From several senior high school students met, nearly all of them said that they often only copied texts and other writing skill tasks from any books or other resources. They also often found and got them from the internet and submitted to the teacher.

From those phenomena, the researcher intends to know about the teaching and learning of writing skills at senior high schools in Riau province. This includes the teaching and learning materials of writing at senior high schools, methods and strategies used by English teachers in the writing instruction in senior high schools and senior high school students' attitude towards writing skills.

Writing skill

As it has been discussed before that writing is categorized into productive skill. In this skill, the writing product is the final target of the teaching and learning process (Syameducation, 2011). This writing skill is important for students because their writing can be a tool to express ideas and messages to the readers for specific purposes. Besides, through writing, they can explain and describe things to someone far from them (Duin, 1986).

As one of the language skills, writing is a very important means to express ideas and thought in mind. However, because of the complexity of the writing process in order to be able to produce a writing product, writing skill is considered to be the difficult skill (Demirel, 2011; Raimes, 1983; Wiratno, 2003:3). This is because in the writing process, a writer needs to think many factors at the same time, such as ideas, choice of words, the readers and the language structures.

Furthermore, Wiratno clarifies that the difficulty in writing might be caused by the lack of knowledge about (1) ideas to write, (2) the purpose of writing, (3), the way of expressing ideas, (4) good sentence structure, and (5) appropriate vocabulary (Wiratno, 2003:3). Therefore, someone with the limited ability is actually able to write if he/she knows the purpose of writing and is able express it with appropriate language features. The purpose of writing is actually the social function of text. The difficulty in vocabulary can be overcome through the help of dictionary.

Principally, the aim of writing is to express ideas and extend messages to the reader; therefore, those ideas are considered to be very important in writing. On the other hand, the writer needs to pay attention on the formal aspects of writing, such as: neat handwriting, spelling and good punctuation, correct structure and appropriate choice of words (Ur, 1996:163). Therefore, at the time the writer expresses his/her ideas, he/she also has to be able to express them with appropriate structure, choose appropriate words, and use correct spelling and punctuation.

Finally, we look at what is proposed by Oshima and Ann (1991:3) clarifying that writing skill, particularly academic writing skill is not easy, for both native speakers and students who just start learning English. Writing is a process, not a product, which needs review, revise, review and revise so that it can be said that writing activity is never complete. In the writing activity, 'prewriting' is the first step where a writer brainstorms for ideas. After ideas are collected, they are put into outline and then are developed into a draft. After finishing the draft, the writer firstly revises the ideas and organization. After the ideas are complete, it is edited focussing on the structure, spelling and punctuation, (Hyland, 2008; Tribble, 2009).

Because of the complexity of the writing process, students need to be trained and provided enough experience in all techniques and strategies they need to do. The experience needs to be possessed when they learn at schools and this will influence their interest, motivation and attitude toward writing activities they do. Through this research, the condition of teaching and learning writing at senior high schools in Riau province will be uncovered in accordance with the reality. Therefore, the next steps and action can be done in order to increase teachers' skill and talent in teaching, at the same time to increase students' ability in writing.

Approaches to Teaching Writing

Tribble (2009) proposes that there are three main approaches to the teaching of writing: focusing on form, on the writer, and on the reader. The three approaches are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Product Approach

Product Approach is grounded on behaviourist principles and relates language teaching to linguistic forms, separate linguistics skills and habit formation. Tribble (2009) claims that in Product Appraoch, the focus is on form. It is a traditional, text-based approach which is still used in many materials today. In this approach, the teacher often presents some texts for students to imitate or adapt. Errors are considered as something that should be corrected, or if possible, eliminated. The teacher's main role is to instil notions of correctness and conformity.

The focus of a writing lesson using a Product Approach is on accuracy. Badger and White (2000: 154) clarify that "product-based approaches see writing as mainly concerned with knowledge about the structure of language, and writing development as mainly the result of

the imitation of input, in the form of texts provided by the teacher". Therefore, linguistic skills are not developed in Product Approach. In line with this, Pincas (1982b) sees writing in a Product Approach as mainly about linguistic knowledge, with the focus on the appropriate use of vocabulary, syntax, and cohesive devices.

Tyack and Tobin (1994) view Product Approach as a product-centred pedagogy which is known as current-traditional rhetoric (Matsuda 2003, Pullman 1999). In the past, students learned the discourse and then applied it to write five-paragraph essays on particular topics provided by the teacher. The essays were then graded by the teacher and the students did not get feedback with which to revise their work.

From the discussion, it is seen that the weaknesses of the Product Approach are that process skills, such as planning, drafting and revising are granted a relatively small role, so that the knowledge and skills that students bring to the classroom are undervalued (Badger and White 2000: 157). In addition, grammatical accuracy, including spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation, is not enough to master writing skills. They further explain the strengths of a Product Approach include that it recognizes the students' needs in terms of linguistic knowledge, and imitation is a way in which people learn (p. 157).

Process Approach

Contrasted from the Product Approach which focuses on the product, in the Process Approach, students focus on the process of how they produce their writing. By focusing on the writing process, students understand more about themselves and are expected to find out how to work through their writing. Applebee (1986 cited in Kroll 1990:96) explains that the process approach "provided a way to think about writing in terms of what the writer does (planning, revising, and the like) instead of what the final product looks like (patterns of organization, spelling, and grammar)". Therefore, students are considered as central in learning. Through the writing process, students need to maximize their writing abilities in both knowledge and skills. This can be done with help and cooperation from the teacher/lecturer and other students. It also encourages students to feel free to express thoughts or feelings by providing them with enough time and opportunity to reconsider and revise their writing. At each step, students are encouraged to get assistance from lecturers.

The Process Approach can be considered an innovation in academic writing. The overstressed focus on linguistic knowledge in a Product Approach is reoriented in a Process Approach to a greater focus on linguistic skills. The development of the writers' skills in writing will be dominant together with the application of collaborative writing. This approach focuses more on a variety of classroom activities used to "promote the development of skilled language use, and a number of interesting classroom techniques, including conferencing" (Nunan, 1991: 86-87). These activities become the strength of a Process Approach. Nunan further affirms that the Process Approach encourages collaborative group work between students as a way of increasing motivation and developing positive attitudes towards writing.

Steele (2004) stresses that Process Approach is a collaborative work. In generating and organizing ideas, discussion is considered very important. He further explains that once students have written their first drafts, model texts can be introduced for comparison. Learning is optimal in situations where students know what they want to say and a teacher intervention makes it clear that there is a particular way to say it. The teacher's intervention through model texts supports the learning process.

Another benefit of a Process Approach is the possibility of exchanging drafts. This enables students to be readers of each other's' work. Steele (2004) claims that this is an important part of a writing experience as through participating as readers, both during the collaborative stage of writing and in reading another group member's work, the students realize that a writer is producing something to be read by someone else.

Badger and White (2000: 157) describe the disadvantages of a Process Approach which uses the same set of processes for all writing. The kinds of texts produced and why they are produced are given less importance. A Process Approach does not offer learners enough input particularly in terms of linguistic knowledge. On the other hand, Badger and White also point out the main advantages of a Process Approach, such as the importance of skills involved in writing and taking into account students' background knowledge, which contribute to the development of their writing ability**.**

Due to the limitations of the Process Approach, in the late 1980s and the 1990s, theoretical interest shifted to a Genre Approach that considers writing as a purposeful act. This approach focuses on the analysis of the context of the situation in which writing takes place (Atkinson 2003; Paltridge 1996). Paltridge (2007) also claims that many writing programs would be unclear to L2 students if teachers did not teach forms and patterns of language use. He clarifies that writing strategies in the Process Approach, such as drafting, planning and editing, are only aspects of the writing process and the Process Approach was inadequate because it did not provide students with clear guidelines on how to construct different kinds of texts. This is very important as different texts have different structures and language features. A Genre Approach provides students with all of these guidelines.

Genre Approach

Genre Approach is grounded on the systemic functional model that refers to the theory of genre as theory of language use, which describe the relationship between the context and the language used (Gee 1997). Halliday (1994 cited in Yasuda 2011) describes that genre draws on systemic functional linguistics which uses language as a resource for making meaning in a certain context of use, not as a set of fixed rules and structures. The important aspect is the social aspect uses of language based on context. In addition, it is believed that language is a tool for teachers to use in teaching and learning process.

Among the three approaches (Product Approach, Process Approach and Genre Approach), the Genre Approach is considered new, and bears strong similarities with the Product

Approach (Harmer 2007). Badger and White (2000) regard the Genre Approach as an extension of the Product Approach. Paltridge (2004) further explains that the Genre Approach focuses on teaching particular genres such as essays, assignments, and other pieces of writing. These genres, together with the language features and the context in which the text is produced are the focus in academic settings.

Like the two previous approaches, a Genre Approach also has strengths and weaknesses. The benefits of a Genre Approach have been proposed by a number of genre theorists. Paltridge (2001), for example, claims that a Genre Approach focuses on increasing students' awareness about different ways of organising information in writing. This is done through discussion of the various features of different purposeful texts. As a result, students acquire a linguistic awareness about the English language which enables them to achieve different purposes through writing. Furthermore, students' level of confidence in writing will increase since it also improves students' attitudes and motivation toward language learning (Swami 2008). Some other arguments have also been proposed in support of genre as a principle for the development of L2 learning activities.

The application of a Genre Approach in teaching has also been criticized as decreasing creativity by imposing model texts on students (Hyland 2008). However, Hyland clarifies that it does not dictate how students write or what they should write but provides them with choices with which to create meaning. This argument might be true in some ways, but the students are automatically guided to imitate because they have limited practice in developing their linguistic skills. In accordance with this, Badger and White (2000: 157) argue that the weakness of a Genre Approach is that it does not value the skills of writing needed to produce a text and students are somewhat passive.

Having discussed the three approaches to teaching writing, it can be concluded that each has strengths and weaknesses. The appropriate approach to the teaching of writing is expected to be ascertained so that teachers and lecturers can apply it appropriately in the classroom.

METHOD

This is a descriptive qualitative research, that is a survey about the teaching of writing at senior high schools in Riau province. The research was carried out at the English Study Program of FKIP Riau University at the odd semester of 2017-2018 academic year. The sample of the research was three classes of the third semester students with the total of 82 students. They are from various senior high schools that consists of 12 cities and districts in Riau Province.

The data were collected through a set of questionnaire. It contained statements about teaching and learning materials of writing at senior high schools, methods/strategies used by teachers in the teaching and learning of writing in senior high schools, and senior high school students' attitude towards writing skills. The students were asked to respond to the statements in accordance with the condition and fact they experienced about the teaching and learning of writing in senior high schools.

The questionnaire was arranged in English and Indonesian, so that the samples had more or less similar understanding about each available statement. There were all 8 items of statements about teaching and learning materials of writing in senior high schools, 10 items about methods/strategies used by English teachers in the teaching of writing in senior high schools, and 16 items about senior high school students' attitude towards writing skills.

The researcher used Likert Scale which contains information about statements of agreement and the frequency level of certain activity done. In order to express statement of agreement, the scales used are Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). To express the frequency level of certain activity done, the scales used are Always (AW), Often (OT), Sometimes (ST), Rarely (RL) and Never (NV), (Setiyadi 2006)

For the content validity of the questionnaires, it was validated by an expert from FKIP Riau University. Changes were incorporated based on the feedback, comments and suggestions. Ambiguous and vague statements were rephrased for clarity. Double-barrelled statements were separated into two statement items.

For the purpose of testing the internal reliability of the questionnaire, it was distributed to one class of the third semester students of English Department. Pallant (2001) states that one of the most commonly used indicators of internal consistency is Cronbach Alpha coefficient. Pallant (2001) recommends that the Cronbach alpha coefficient should be of a scale 0.70 and above to indicate that the instrument used is a reliable measure. Bryman and Cramer (1990) suggest that the reliability level is acceptable at 0.80. For this research, the reliability level used is 0.80. Then, the data about the teaching and learning materials of writing in senior high schools, about methods/strategies used by English teachers in the teaching of writing in senior high schools and about senior high school students' attitude towards writing skills were analysed using SPSS.

FINDINGS

The objective of the study was to find out how writing skills are taught at senior high schools in Riau Province-Indonesia. Specifically, the research answers the research questions about teaching and learning materials of writing in senior high schools, methods/strategies used by English teachers in the teaching of writing in senior high schools and the senior high school students' attitude towards writing skills. The students' responses to the questionnaire are presented in the following tables.

Table 1: Teaching and Learning Materials of Writing

Writing Materials	Scores	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Linguistic skills	$> 36.7 \leq 50$	4	4.9
Combination of Linguistic skills	$> 23.4 \leq 36.7$	46	56.1

and Linguistic Forms			
Linguistic Forms	> 10.1 ≤ 23.4	32	39

Table 1 shows that only a few students (4.9%) who experienced linguistic skills in their writing classes in senior high school. The majority of the students (56.1%) experienced combination between Linguistic skills and Linguistic Forms. While more than one third (39%) of the students experienced Linguistic Forms.

Table 2: English Teachers' Methods/Strategies in Teaching Writing

Methods/Strategies	Scores	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Process Approach	> 29.3 ≤ 40	3	3.7
Combination between Process Approach and Product Approach	> 18.6 ≤ 29.3	25	30.5
Product Approach	> 8.3 ≤ 18.6	54	65.9

From table 2, it is seen that nearly two-third (65.9%) of the senior high school English teachers used Product-oriented Approach in their writing classes. Only few of them (3.7%) used Process Approach. Furthermore, nearly one-third of the English teachers used combination between Process Approach and Product Approach.

Table 3: Students' Attitude towards Writing Skills

Attitude	Scores	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
High	> 29.3 ≤ 40	3	3.7
Medium	> 18.6 ≤ 29.3	25	30.5
Low	> 8.3 ≤ 18.6	54	65.9

As shown in the table, most students (65.9%) had low attitude towards writing skills. Nearly one-third of the students (30.5) had medium attitude and only a few of them (3.7%) had high attitude towards writing skills.

DISCUSSION

From the finding, it can be concluded that most senior high school English teachers in Riau province are Product-oriented Approach in their teaching of writing. Product-oriented Approach English teachers emphasize the teaching of writing on the linguistic forms such as sentence structures, vocabulary and punctuation (Tribble 2009; Pincas 1982b). The writing process is neglected or lack of emphasis.

Research question no 1 is about teaching and learning materials of writing in senior high schools. Responses to statement no 3 are in line with responses to statement no 4, where nearly 50% students say that in learning writing, they learn about sentence structures like the use of tenses and vocabulary (statement no 3) and they learn about the use of punctuation like full stop, comma and spelling (statement no 4). These responses are in accordance with what is proposed by Tribble (2009) that Product-oriented English teachers focus the teaching and learning writing on structures, vocabulary and punctuation, not on the activities that will guide students to how to write good English texts. This is also in line with the students' responses on statement no 6 where more than 50% students claim that teachers use Indonesian language in the English writing instruction. This fact is also the characteristic of the Product Approach. Meanwhile responses to statement no 5 where more than 50% students claim that in learning writing they are taught how to write good English texts, needs further data and evidence to support this.

Research question no 2 is about methods/strategies used by English teachers in the teaching of writing in senior high schools. Several responses to statements in the questionnaire show that senior high school English teachers in Riau province are Product-oriented Approach. Nearly all students did tasks about sentence structures like tenses and vocabulary in the English writing instruction (statement no 1). Statement no 2 supports statement 1 where nearly all students thought that practice about sentence structures, vocabulary and punctuation help them when they are writing. The complete response can be seen in statement no 8 where 100% students felt that model text is very important for them to learn before they write. Badger and White (2000: 154) clarifies that writing skill instruction based on the Product Approach is imitation of input in the form of texts given by the teacher. This is also in line with responses to statement no 5 where more than 50% students referred to model texts when they write individually.

Responses to statement no 7 show that teachers are Process-oriented Approach where more than 50% students agreed that teachers returned and provided feedback on students' writing tasks. However, this also needs additional data whether teachers' feedback is only about sentence structures, vocabulary or punctuation. If so, it is clear that most senior high school English teachers in Riau province are Product-oriented Approach in the teaching of writing and they neglect writing process with important strategies that can guide students on how to write well.

Research question no 3 is about senior high school students' attitude towards writing skills. From the data presented in table 3, nearly two-thirds of the students (65.9%) have low attitude towards writing skills. Furthermore, only a few students (3.7%) have high attitude and the rest (30%) of the students have medium attitude towards writing skills.

The research finding where (1) teaching and learning materials of writing are dominated by linguistic forms such as sentence structures, vocabulary and punctuation of which the characteristics of Product Approach is in accordance with the research finding (2) where most senior high school English teachers in Riau Province are Product-oriented Approach in their teaching of writing. The research findings 1 and 2 are also in line with research finding (3)

where most students have low attitude towards writing skills. Further research is highly needed to convince data consistency from the students' responses of the questionnaire.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Senior high school English teachers in Riau Province emphasize the writing materials on the linguistic forms such as sentence structures, vocabulary and punctuation. This is in accordance with the Product Approach which is used by nearly all English teachers and is supported by the students' responses towards the statements in the questionnaire, particularly statements no 3, no 4 and no 5. Further research is also highly needed to convince the students' responses, particularly the responses towards statement no 5, about activities in the writing skill instruction.

Furthermore, Senior high school English teachers in Riau Province are Product-oriented Approach in their writing skill instruction. This can be seen from the students' responses towards statements in the questionnaire like responses to statements no 1, no 2, no 5 and no 8. Further research is needed to convince the students' responses toward statement no 7 that English teachers return students' writing tasks and provide feedback as the characteristics of Process Approach. Detail feedback given by teachers need to be further analysed.

Finally, senior high school students' attitude towards writing skill is low. This finding is in line with the research findings no 1 and no 2 where the teaching and learning materials of writing are mostly about linguistic forms such as sentence structures, vocabulary and punctuation; and methods and strategies used by most English teachers in teaching writing is Product-oriented Approach.

Suggestion

Based on the research findings, some suggestions about writing skill instruction in senior high schools in Riau province are put forward as follows:
a. The materials about linguistic forms such as sentence structures, vocabulary and punctuation are needed in the teaching of writing; however, Process Approach skills and strategies need to be emphasized such as brainstorming strategy, outlining, drafting, revising and editing. By having some experience about those strategies, students learn how to write texts correctly.
b. By being oriented to Process Approach, the writing skill materials emphasize on practices about Process Approach strategies like 'brainstorming', 'outlining' 'drafting' 'revising' and 'editing'.

c. By being oriented to Process Approach where strategies in the writing instruction emphasize on practices on those strategies, it is expected that senior high school students' attitude towards writing instruction will increase to good (high) level.

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