The Students' Perception of Teaching English Paragraph Writing Based on Problem-Based Learning Method

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ABSTRACT— *This research is to find out the students' perceptions of teaching English paragraph writing based on Problem-based learning method. The researcher applied descriptive qualitative research. This research was conducted in English Education Department, Faculty of Education and Teacher Training of Muhammadiyah University of Makassar. The subject of the research were fourth semester students in academic year of 2018/2019. The instruments of this research were a questionnaire to find out the student's perception. The result of this research found that the students' perception of English Paragraph Writing materials based on Problem-based Learning was positive.*

Keywords— Perception, Paragraph Writing, Problem-Based Learning (PBL)

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1. INTRODUCTION

English has a special status among the foreign languages. It was chosen as the language of more extensive communication in the immediate post-independence period and is presently the only foreign language which is a compulsory subject in schools. The need for English as a language of international communication exists in equal distribution to that of Indonesian as a language of national unity. In Indonesia, the success of the national language, which has developed from modest beginnings to being able to meet the communication needs of modern society, has been achieved at the price of people not having a working ability in English. (Lauder, 2008)

English as a compulsory subject in Indonesian school covers four skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. These skills are derived into two parts productive skill and receptive skills. Productive skills are speaking and writing while receptive skills are listening and reading. Writing is essential. It brings about a lot of advantages (Chappell, 2011) since it helps to express one's personality, foster communication, develop thinking skills, make logical and persuasive arguments, give a person a chance to later reflect on his/her ideas and re-evaluate them, provide and receive feedback, and prepare for school and employment.

Writing can help the students to learn; he adds that writing can help the students reinforced to grammatical structures, idioms, and vocabularies that the teacher has given to them. Not only students face the problem of writing but also the teacher. The students sometimes confused to complete their writing task because many reasons such as lack of vocabulary, cannot formulate a good sentence, not having enough ideas and many other reasons. The main problem that the teacher faces the teaching writing problem in their classroom is how to motivate the students to write with exciting and useful materials and to find a good strategy that can implement in their classroom. (Raimes, 1983). Writing is often not time-bound in the way conversation. Writing encourages students to focus on accurate language use, and because they think as they write, it may well provoke language development as the resolve problems which the writer puts into their minds. When writing, students frequently have more time to think that they do in oral activities, (Harmer, 2004:31).

In student-centered discourse, students drive the discussion, and the teacher serves to scaffold the learning process (Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1989). In this model, the agenda may be co-constructed by the students and teacher. Understanding how student-centered learning can be facilitated is important in being able to implement constructivist approaches such as PBL.

Problem-based learning (PBL) is a curricular and instructional approach to a learner-centered education in which learners are afforded opportunities to explore, collaborate, research, and respond to authentic, real-world problems and situations. Such experiences provide immense scope for interdisciplinary learning in which learners draw on knowledge, skills, and experiences across the curriculum in their search for new learning. Given the emphasis of collaboration and problem solving within technology education, such an approach is arguably the most appropriate pedagogy for such a unique learning area. Engaging in authentic tasks to devise and develop design-based solutions, PBL facilitates a powerful opportunity to foster students' intrinsic motivation to learn, within the classroom and beyond. (Best, 2016). The context of Problem-based learning (PBL) is widely used in higher education. There is evidence available that students and faculty are highly satisfied with PBL. Nevertheless, in educational practice problems are often encountered, such as tutors who are too dominant and then finally solved through PBL (Dolmans, De Grave, Wolfhagen, & Van Der Vleuten, 2005).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of writing

Writing is a tool of communication in a written form such as email, business letters, newspapers, diary, and so on. This skill is an essential part to convey our thought, ideas and organize them into sentences or paragraph as Harmer (2002) points out that the writing skill has finally recognized as an important skill for language learning. He emphasizes the importance of writing skill to be taught to English, foreign language students such as learning encouragement, language development, learning approach, and most importantly, writing skill as a compulsory subject.

Writing is physical and mental act, it's about discovering ideas, thinking about how to communicate (develop them into statements and paragraphs that will be comprehensible to a reader). Writing has dual purpose to express and impress. Writers must select the most advantageous medium for their writing. Each types have a different level of difficulty which determined by its objectives. Writing is a process and also a product. The writer creates, plans, writes various drafts, revises, edits and publishes. The audience reads is a product. Nunan (2003)

Writing can be divided into several components. Some components in writing based on the researcher such as content, organization, vocabulary language, and mechanics. Jacobs in Bacha (2001) presented the components of writing in the following:

a) Content

In order to have good content in writing, the content should be well unified and completed. So, the reader can understand the message conveyed and gain information from the writing. The term is usually known as unity and completeness. The writing is regarded to have unity if it has some ideas and the sentences contained in it developed the idea.

b) Organization

The process of organization in writing involves coherence, the order of importance, general to specific, specific to general, chronological order and spatial pattern.

c) Vocabulary

One of the requirements of good writing always depends on the effective use of words. Word plays a dual role: to communicate and to evoke to the readers to perceive and feel. These two purposes are evident even if such as a practical and common form of writing as an advertisement.

d) Language Use

Writing involves correct usage endpoint of grammar (verb, nouns, and agreement). Specific nouns and string the verbs give a reader a mental image of description. These specific nouns can be characterized by using a modifier of adjectives, adverb, and participle forms.

e) Mechanism

The use of mechanics is due to capitalization, punctuation and spelling appropriately. This aspect is very important since it leads readers to understand and recognize immediately what the reader means to express definitely. The use of favorable mechanics in writing skill make readers can easy to understand the conveying ideas or the messages stated in writing.

2.2 Paragraph Writing

A paragraph is defined as "a group of sentences or a single sentence that forms a unit" (Lunsford, 2008). Length and appearance do not determine whether a section in a paper is a paragraph. For instance, in some styles of writing,

particularly journalistic styles, a paragraph can be just one sentence long. Ultimately, a paragraph is a sentence or group of sentences that support one main idea. In this handout, we will refer to this as the "controlling idea," because it controls what happens in the rest of the paragraph.

Paragraphs can contain many different kinds of information. A paragraph could contain a series of brief examples or a single long illustration of a general point. It might describe a place, character, or process; narrate a series of events; compare or contrast two or more things; classify items into categories; or describe causes and effects. Regardless of the kind of information they contain, all paragraphs share certain characteristics.

It is important for students to understand a paragraph before they actually write it. Oshima and Hogue (2006) stated that paragraph is basic unit of organization in writing group-related sentences which consists of two kinds of sentences: a topic sentence and supportive statements. The number of the supporting sentences of a paragraph is not fixed but they should be sufficient to develop main idea clearly.

The basic paragraph consists of three parts: a topic sentence, supporting details, and a concluding sentence. This basic paragraph format will help you to write and organize one paragraph and transition to the next.

a.   Topic Sentence:

Often, the Topic sentence is the first sentence of a paragraph. Also, we can call an introduction sentence of a paragraph. It states the main idea of each paragraph and displays how the idea connects to the thesis or overall focus of the paper. All consequent points presented in the paragraphs must support the topic sentence. Topic sentences also serve other functions. They present the main idea of that paragraph and give a sample of what the paragraph is going to be about. This is important for your readers, but it's also important for you as a writer. Your topic sentence keeps you "on topic." It makes sure that all of the information that follows fits in that paragraph. For fiction writers, topic sentences still give an overview of the paragraph. They may introduce what a character is doing or feeling before you go into more detail, or they may introduce a specific setting that you plan to elaborate on.

b.   Supporting Details

The supporting sentences explain more about the topic sentence by showing some facts, stats, or examples regarding the topic. It also includes the writer's experience & own analysis and used to develop the topic sentence. The supporting sentences are the meat of your paragraph. In any sort of academic or technical writing, this is where most of your argument is presented. What sort of things can you include in supporting sentences? You can present evidence or facts that support both your topic sentence and your overall paper topic. But evidence alone isn't very compelling. You can extend your point by offering further explanation and description. You can give specific examples or make comparisons. Your supporting sentences should also include some more in-depth analysis and evaluation. If opinions are appropriate for your topic, they can go here, too. The most important thing to remember is that all your supporting sentences must relate back to your topic sentence.

c.   Concluding Sentence

It is the end of the paragraph which is also known as final statement about the topic. It ties all ideas given in the paragraph and emphasizes the main idea one last time. In the concluding sentence, the writer usually restates their topic sentence or summarizes the main points of the paragraph. Finally, your paragraph will usually have a concluding sentence. A concluding sentence ties up your paragraph with a neat little bow. It should tie back to your topic sentence or back to the topic of the paper as a whole. Sometimes, you might not need a concluding sentence.

3. Concept of PBL

The brief history of Problem Based Learning as the model emerged from some medical schools especially the Case Western Reserve University in the United States of America in the 1950s and McMaster University Faculty of Health Sciences in Canada in the late 1960s (Barrows and Tamblyn, 1980; Boud and Feletti, 1994). The concern at that time was on the effectiveness of traditional science courses in preparing students for the real world and problems they would have to solve as physicians. Other concerns included students' lack of critical thinking skills in class and beyond, and courses being too focused on content, the latter easily causing boredom among students and 'burnt-outs' in them as well as teachers (Tan, 2003). In the humanities, it is still slowly being experimented, but in the language it is going at a snail-pace, probably because the English language is a non-content subject and teachers tend to spend time on the prescriptive aspects of the language.

PBL is an instructional (and curricular) learner-centered approach that empowers learners to conduct research, integrate theory and practice, and apply knowledge and skills to develop a viable solution to a defined problem. Critical to the success of the approach is the selection of ill-structured problems (often interdisciplinary) and a tutor who guides the learning process and conducts a thorough debriefing after the learning experience. Several authors have described the characteristics and features required for a successful PBL approach to instruction. The reader is encouraged to read the source documents, as brief quotes do not do justice to the level of detail provided by the authors. Boud and Feletti (1997)

provided a list of the practices considered characteristic of the philosophy, strategies, and tactics of problem-based learning. Duch, Groh, and Allen (2001) described the methods used in PBL and the specific skills developed, including the ability to think critically, analyze and solve complex, real-world problems, to find, evaluate, and use appropriate learning resources; to work cooperatively, to demonstrate effective communication skills, and to use content knowledge and intellectual skills to become continual learners. Torp and Sage (2002) described PBL as focused, experiential learning organized around the investigation and resolution of messy, real-world problems. They describe students as engaged problem solvers, seeking to identify the root problem and the conditions needed for a good solution and in the process becoming self-directed learners. Hmelo-Silver (2004) described PBL as an instructional method in which students learn through facilitated problem solving that center on a complex problem that does not have a single correct answer. She noted that students work in collaborative groups to identify what they need to learn in order to solve a problem, engage in self-directed learning, apply their new knowledge to the problem, and reflect on what they learned and the effectiveness of the strategies employed. Besides, the PBL method requires students to become responsible for their learning. The PBL teacher is a facilitator of student learning, and his/her interventions diminish as students progressively take on responsibility for their learning processes. This method is characteristically carried out in small, facilitated groups and takes advantage of the social aspect of learning through discussion, problem-solving, and study with peers (Hmelo-Silver, 2004).

Problem-based learning is an active learning method based on the use of ill-structured problems as a stimulus for learning (Barrows, 2000). Ill-structured problems are complex problems that cannot be solved by a simple algorithm. Such problems do not necessarily have a single correct answer but require learners to consider alternatives and to provide a reasoned argument to support the solution that they generate. In PBL, students have the opportunity to develop skills in reasoning and self-directed learning.

According to Rusman (2011: 85), the steps of the problem-based learning model in the classroom are:

1)   Orient students to problems, with detailed activities, inform the learning objectives, create a classroom environment that allows an open exchange of ideas, direct to questions or problems, and encourage students to express their opinions.

2)   Organize students to study, with specific activities helps students to find concepts based on problems, and test students' understanding of the concepts found.

3)   Helps to investigate individually / in groups. This step encourages collaboration and completion of tasks, encourages dialogue with friends, helps students to formulate hypotheses, and helps students in providing solutions.

4)   Develop and present the work. This step guides the students in working on the activity sheet and guides the students in presenting work results.

5)   Analyze and evaluate the problem-solving process. It helps students review the results of problem-solving, motivate students to be involved in problem-solving, and evaluate material.

The process of Problem based Learning instruction according to (Boud&Felletti, 1997) is as follows:

a.   Students are presented with a problem (case, research paper, videotape). Students working in permanent groups organize their ideas, and previous knowledge related to the problem and attempts to define the broad nature of the problem.

b.   Throughout the discussion, students pose questions called "learning issues" that delineate aspects of the problem that they do not understand. These learning issues are recorded by the group and help generate and focus the discussion. Students are continually encouraged to define what they know and more importantly what they do not know.

c.   Students rank, in order of importance, the learning issues generated in the session. They decide which questions will be followed up by the whole group and which issues can be assigned to individuals, who later teach the rest of the group. Students and instructor also discuss what resources will be needed to research the learning issues and where they could be found.

d.   When students reconvene, they explore the previous learning issues, integrating their new knowledge into the context of the problem. Students are also encouraged to summarize their knowledge and connect the new concept to old ones. They continue to define new learning issues as they progress through the problem. Students soon see that learning is an ongoing process and that there will always be (even for the teacher) learning issues to be explored.

3.   METHODOLOGY

The researcher applied descriptive qualitative research 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 PBL method 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 reseach. Likert-Scale was used to measure the data from the questionnaire of perception

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After applied the materials the researcher asked to the students to answer a checklist of perception to know how they think about the English paragraph writing materials. The answer of students will reveal whether the materials are applicable or not.

The classification of the student's perception

No	Statements	Average	Classification
1.	Materi pembelajaran Writing ini sangat membantu saya dalam meningkatkan kemampuan menulis "Writing"	3.70	Strongly agree
2.	Ide-ide dalam Materi "Writing" ini dapat membantu dalam menambah wawasan pengetahuan saya tentang "Writing"	3.62	Strongly agree
3.	Materi "Writing" ini membuat suasana belajar menjadi menyenangkan	3.55	Strongly agree
4.	Saya termotivasi untuk belajar "Writing" bahasa inggris dengan menggunakan materi ini	3.52	Strongly agree
5.	Saya senang jika materi "Writing" ini dijadikan sebagai materi dalam mata kuliah menulis "Writing" bahasa inggris	3.50	Strongly agree
6.	Materi "Writing" ini menambah semangat belajar menulis.	3.55	Strongly agree
7.	Materi "Writing" ini membosankan	3.60	Strongly agree
8.	Materi "Writing" ini, meningkatkan rasa percaya diri saya dalam belajar menulis bahasa inggris	3.52	Strongly agree
9.	Dengan materi ini saya menjadi lebih aktif dengan pembelajaran "Writing"/ menulis bahasa inggris	3.60	Strongly agree
10.	Materi "Writing" ini, mendorong saya untuk belajar mandiri	3.65	Strongly agree
11.	Materi "Writing" ini tidak membantu saya untuk meningkatkan kemampuan menulis saya	2.35	Disagree
12.	Ide-ide dalam materi "Writing" ini tidak dapat membantu dalam menambah wawasan pengetahuan saya tentang menulis/ Writing.	2.42	Disagree
13.	Materi Writing ini tidak membuat suasana belajar menjadi menyenangkan	2.52	Disagree
14.	Saya tidak termotivasi untuk belajar menulis/Writing bahasa inggris dengan menggunakan materi ini	2.32	Disagree
15.	Saya tidak senang jika materi "Writing"/ menulis ini dijadikan sebagai materi dalam mata kuliah "Writing" bahasa inggris	2.52	Disagree

16.	Materi ini tidak menambah semangat belajar menulis	2.32	Disagree
17.	Materi "Writing" ini tidak membosankan	2.37	Disagree
18.	Materi ini tidak meningkatkan rasa percaya diri saya dalam belajar menulis bahasa inggris	2.47	Disagree
19.	Dengan materi ini saya menjadi lebih tidak aktif dengan pembelajaran "Writing"/ menulis bahasa inggris	2.42	Disagree
20.	Materi menulis ini tidak mendorong saya untuk belajar mandiri	2.45	Disagree

As seen from the table above, the researcher can concluded that the students agree to learning English Paragraph Writing can establish help to improve the students' Writing skill (3.70), create the students to be autonomous learners (3.65), help to enhance the students' knowledge (3.62), English materials are tedious and more active in learning translation (3.60), increase the students' enthuasiasm to studying and enjoying learning atmosphere in learning Writing (3.55), English Paragraph Writing materials improve students motivation and self confidence in writing subject (3.52), students are happy if the English Paragraph Writing material is used as material in the Writing course (3.50).

As a conclusion, according to the average score of the questionnaire 3.00 its classified as agree. It shows that students have positive perception toward learning English Paragraph Writing based on PBL method.

The Percentage of Student's Perception

Categories	Range	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly positive	65 - 80	14	35%
Positive	50 - 64	26	65%
Negative	35 - 49	-	-
Strongly negative	20 - 34	-	-
Total		40	100%

Based on the percentage analysis os students' perception on the table, analysis shows the there were no students state negative statement to the use of instructional of learning English Paragraph Writing materials, 14 students (35%) were strongly positive who get score in interval 65-80 score and 26 students (65%) were positive category interval 50-64 score. The table above indicates the use English Paragraph Writing materials is interested to the students, its supported by the following table:

The Mean Score of Students' Perception

Total respondent	Total of students' score	Mean
40	2401	60.02

The table shows that the mean score of the students' perception is 60.02 which means it is in a positive perception category according to the range of students' perception score. Therefore, the students have positive perception the instructional of English Paragraph Writing materials.

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