COMIC STRIPS:A STUDY ON THE TEACHING OF WRITING NARRATIVE TEXTS TO INDONESIAN EFL STUDENTS

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Abstract: Comic strips are proposed in the teaching of writing not only because of their appealing forms, but also due to their salient features as media to present content, organization and grammatical aspects of narrative texts. This study investigates the implementation of comic strips in teaching writing through a collaborative classroom action research at MAN Bangil. The procedures included planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. The results show that teaching writing using comic strips through Process-Genre Based Approach (PGBA) could successfully improve students' ability in writing. The findings also reveal that comic strips' effective implementation requires proper stories as well as sufficient teacher's guidance during the writing process.

Key words: writing, media, comic strips, narrative, action research

Writing is one of the crucial ways to deliver information through a language mastered by both the writer and the reader. Having realized the importance of English as one of the international languages in the globalization era, people consider mastering English writing skill a pivotal expertise in the world of communication. By means of writing English, language learners are able to convey messages to the readers across places and time (Brown, 2007: 363-364;

Cahyono, 2009: xiii). Similarly, Troyka (1987) argues that writing can create a permanent and visible record of ideas for readers. More specifically, Raimes (1983) asserts that writing is considered as a tool in learning due to three reasons. Firstly, in the process of writing, students are applying their knowledge of gram-mar, idioms, and vocabulary. Secondly, they have an opportunity to be exploratory with the language. Thirdly, they become very much involved with the new language.

To investigate the EFL learners' proficiency in English com-position, the researchers conducted a preliminary study on the twelfth graders of language program at MAN Bangil. The researchers found that the students' writing ability in narrative texts was unsatisfactory. Most of the students could not achieve the minimum passing criterion, 70. In addition, during the teaching and learning process, they seemed unmotivated and had difficulty in composing their own writings. The difficulties were due to a number of factors including students' low interest in English, particularly writing skill, the monotonous teaching strategy, the students' limited vocabulary and grammar mastery, and the absence of instructional media. Among those factors, the teaching strategy was considered the most crucial problem since teaching writing requires the implementation of a certain approach which involves a number of stages that guide the students in producing a sound composition.

The researchers consider the use of comic strips as an appropriate strategy to help develop the students' skills in producing good narrative texts. First of all, comic strips assist the students in generating ideas and retrieving words for their writing. Besides, they can make students more careful in using correct spellings (Wright, 1983:42). As one type of visual media, it also provides the students with interesting writing prompts. Another confident opinion is expressed by Djiwandono (1999:73) and Brown (2004:226-228) in discussing the relationship between visual media and test of writing composition. They affirm that one of the effective ways in testing writing skill is by assigning the students to write a composition based on ideas they gather from pictures. Comic strips meet this characteristic since they are series of pictures in which the students are expected to gain the ideas easily from the chronological order of the story. The students are also able to practice gram-matical rules through this media by changing direct speech in the speech balloon into indirect speech. This kind of assessment is essential in developing the students' writing skill (Brown, 2004:226).

Pertinent to the real practice in writing class, the effectiveness of using comic strips is indicated by Purwanitasari (2010) and Lutfifati (2011). Both conducted their research to the same education level and the same aspects of writing, but on a different genre of the text. Purwanitasari's findings showed that comic strips successfully improved the ability of the eighth graders of SMPN 2 Malang in writing recount texts. Meanwhile, Lutfifati's findings supported Purwanitasari's research by giving evidence that comic strip is a good strategy to solve writing problems faced by the eighth graders of SMPN 9 Malang, particularly in writing narrative texts.

Considering the positive contribution of comic strips to the teaching of English writing and its suitability with the characteristics of narrative texts and that of class XII language program of MAN Bangil who really need motivating media, the researchers conducted a study on the implementation of comic strips strategy through Process-Genre Based Approach (PGBA) to improve the ability of the students of XII-language program of MAN Bangil in writing narrative texts.

METHOD

Having conducted preliminary study to identify the problems, the researcher carried out a Classroom Action Research in class XII-Language Program of MAN Bangil which has 31 students. The researchers collaborated with the English teacher of the class in designing the lesson plan, determining the criteria of success, observing the teaching and learning process, and doing the reflection. The researchers administered comic strips in the teaching of writing, while the collaborator (the classroom English teacher) conducted the classroom observation during the implementation of the action (observer).

Cycle 1

Planning the Action

In this stage, the researchers prepared lesson plans, instruments, handout, and worksheet dealing with the teaching strategy of using comic strips. The strategy required the students to be guided when writing a narrative text using comic strips with PGBA. The comic strips given were adapted from local and foreign stories as suggested by the teacher on the basis of the suitability between the content of the story and the characteristics of the narrative text.

Another consideration used is that the stories should be the ones that are never used in the students' English classes, so that the students can get new information from the comic strips.

Implementing

The teaching procedure was implemented in class XII-language program of MAN Bangil in four meetings, July, 15th, 18th, 22nd, 25th 2011. The strategy covered four stages, namely: (1) Building Knowledge of the Text (BKoF) by explaining Narrative text and Past Tense followed by introducing comic strips; (2) Modeling of the Text (MoT) on the writing process using comic strips especially filling in narrative scaffold; (3) Joint Construction of the Text (JCoT) including collaborative writing part I (writing with process approach in group); (4) collaborative writing part II (writing with process approach under the teacher's guidance); and (5) writing test as the Independent Construction of the Text (ICoT).

Observing

In this step, the researcher was assisted by a collaborator to observe the results of the implementation of comic strips strategy. The researcher collected two kinds of data, namely numerical data and verbal data. The numerical data were obtained from the students' writing scores. Information showing the students' attitude during the implementation of comic strips represented verbal data. The students' attitude toward and opinion on the comic strips strategy applied in the writing class were collected through student questionnaires, observation checklists and field notes.

The instruments in this study were, therefore, questionnaire, observation checklist, field notes, and a test. The questionnaires were distributed to find out the students' responses on the strategy implemented. It was used to know the students' opinion during the process of teaching writing using comic strips. Meanwhile, an observation checklist was used to monitor the students' performance and participation during the teaching and learning process using comic strips strategy. The collaborator used the observation checklist while carrying out the observations. The data obtained from the observation checklists was analyzed using the following formula and the categorization in Table 1.

The percentage of students' involvement: $\underline{\text{The score obtained}}$ x 100%

$\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\quad$ **Total score**

Table 1. The Description of the Students' Involvement from the Observation Checklist

No	Categories	Description
1	Very poor	less than 20% of the students do the activity
2	Poor	20%-40% of the students do the activity
3	Fair	41%-60% of the students do the activity
4	Good	61%-80% of the students do the activity
5	Very good	81%-100% of the students do the activity

Field notes were used to record what the observer heard, saw, and thought of at the stage of collecting and reflecting on the data. They covered the strengths, weaknesses, and suggestions concerning the setting of the class, the classroom atmosphere, the interaction between the teacher and the students, and other things that happened in the class. The field notes were analyzed descriptively.

The other instrument used in the research was a test administered at the ICoT stage. The test required the students to produce a piece of narrative writing based on comic strips. The scoring of the test is based on a scoring rubric. The scoring rubric was developed based on the need of scoring narrative writing. The consideration of using analytic scoring adapted from Cohen (1994:328-329) for writing test is because it provides simple and clear criteria of each aspect. Besides, this rubric gives opportunities for the students to receive detailed feedback and allows for the positive washback effect of the test to take place. Due to its rich data, the researcher can also inform decisions about remedial action.

Table 2. Writing Scoring Rubric

WRITING ASPECT	SCORE	CATEGORY	DESCRIPTOR
Content	4	Very good	All ideas in the sentences are relevant to the topic; the sentences contain a lot of supporting details to the main ideas.
	3	Good	Most of the ideas in the sentences are relevant to the topic; the sentences contain some supporting details to the main ideas.
	2	Fair	Some ideas are relevant to the topic; the sentences contain few supporting details to the main ideas.
	1	Poor	Limited number of ideas are relevant to the topic; the sentences contain very limited supporting details related to the main ideas.
Organization	4	Very good	Well organized and perfectly coherent; the composition contains complete generic structure of narrative text, namely orientation, complication, and resolution.
	3	Good	Fairly well organized and generally coherent; the composition contains two generic structures of narrative text (one of the generic structure components is missing).
	2	Fair	Loosely organized; the composition only contains one generic structure of narrative text (two of the generic structure components are missing).
	1	Poor	Ideas disorganized, lack logical sequencing; the composition does not contain any generic structure of narrative text (all of generic structure components are missing).

WRITING ASPECT	SCORE	CATEGORY	DESCRIPTOR
Vocabulary	4	Very good	Very effective choice of words; no misuse of vocabulary and word forms
	3	Good	Effective choice of words; few misuse of vocabulary and word forms
	2	Fair	Less effective choice of words; some misuse of vocabulary, and word forms
	1	Poor	Ineffective choice of words and a lot of misuse of vocabulary and words forms
Grammar	4	Very Good	No errors, full control of structure
	3	Good	Few errors, good control of structure
	2	Fair	Many errors, fair control of structure
	1	Poor	Dominated by errors, no control of structure
Mechanics	4	Very Good	No errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing
	3	Good	Few errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing
	2	Fair	Frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing
	1	Poor	Dominated by errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing

Based on the scoring rubric, each component of narrative paragraph is scored within the range of 1-4. The maximum score gained by the students is 4 for each component. The proportion is 30% for content, 20% for organization, 20% for vocabulary, 20% for grammar, and 10% for mechanics. The minimum score gained is 1 for each component of writing assessed, so the total converted score obtained from each aspect is 25. Meanwhile, the maximum score gained is 4; therefore, the total converted score obtained from each aspect is 100. The formula for obtaining individual score and the table of score conversion are as follows:

The students' score = $\frac{\sum (\text{score x weight}) \times 100}{40}$

Table 3. Score Conversion

WRITING ASPECT	WEIGHT	SCORE	CONVERTED SCORE
Content	3	4	30
		3	22.5
		2	15
		1	7.5
Organization	2	4	20
		3	15
		2	10
		1	5
Vocabulary	2	4	20
		3	15
		2	10
		1	5
Grammar	2	4	20
		3	15
		2	10
		1	5
Mechanics	1	4	10
		3	7.5
		2	5
		1	2.5

Reflecting on the Action

The reflection part involves an analysis of the results of the action implementation during the first cycle. The data obtained in the observing stage were compared to the indicators of the criteria of success. The criteria of

success concern two aspects: the teaching and learning writing process and the product of the students' writing.

Table 4. Criteria of Success, Data Source, and Instrument

The criteria of success	Data source	Instrument
The process: - All students (100%) of XII-Language program of MAN Bangil respond positively during the implementation of comic strips strategy - All students (100%) of XII-Language program of MAN Bangil are motivated during the action	- The students' statements about their attitude toward the implementation of the strategy - The students' involvement in the class activities - The students' responses and behavior during the implementation of the strategy	Questionnaire Observation Checklist Field Notes
The product: The average score of all students is equal or above the minimum passing criterion, which is 70. (70 is the standard minimum score used in MAN Bangil)	The scores of the students' writing	Writing Test

Cycle 2

Planning the Action

In this stage, the researchers prepared revised lesson plans, instruments, handouts, and worksheets dealing with the teaching strategy of using comic

strips. The strategy covered four stages, namely: (1) BKoF about Past Tense, Direct & Indirect Speech and MoT of writing a narrative text with comic strips (meeting 1); (2) JCoT part 1 in the form of collaborative writing in group (meeting 2); (3) JCoT part 2 in the form of collaborative writing in pairs (meeting 3), and (4) ICoT as the writing test (meeting 4).

Implementing the Action

Cycle II of the research was conducted on August 8th, 12th, 15th, 19th, 2011. In the first meeting, the students learned about a narrative text through jumbled sentences and reading comprehension questions based on the comic strips, followed by explanation and exercise of Past Tense and Direct and Indirect Speech which was still related to the content of comic strips given on that day. In the following day, the students conducted collaborative writing part 1. The students worked in groups consisting of four students like in the first cycle. Each group worked with the comic strips and narrative scaffold. Afterwards, based on the in-formation from the scaffold, the students wrote the story through process writing.

In the third meeting, the students were assigned to write in pairs based on the story in the comic strips through process approach. This activity is called collaborative writing 2. Finally, the researchers conducted the real independent construction of the narrative text in the fourth meeting to get the students' final writing achievement. The researchers provided one-paper comic strips with different stories to solve practical problems occured during Cycle I.

Observing the Action

The researchers collected the data of what happened during the implementation of the action using observation checklists, questionnaires, and field notes. Meanwhile, the students' writing products were assessed using the scoring rubric. The criteria of success, research instruments, and pattern to compute the data were the same as those of Cycle I.

Reflecting on the Action

The last stage was the reflection on the observation. The activities were the same with what the researcher had done in Cycle I. Because the indicators

of success in terms of the expected writing scores and the students' motivation and response were already shown, the researchers decided to stop the action.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings of Cycle 1

The findings of the study include the students' involvement, the students' final product, and the students' responses to the implementation of comic strips strategy in writing narrative texts. The findings in the first cycle had not met the criterion of success; therefore, the researchers and the observer decided on the revision of the strategy for the cycle which followed.

The Students' Involvement in the Teaching and Learning Process

To identify the students' involvement in the implementation of comic strips strategy, the observer used an observation checklist and field notes. The students' activities during the teaching and learning process using comic strips during the first cycle had not resulted in expected outcome.

Table 5. Summary of the Students' Involvement in Cycle 1

Meeting	Number of Activities	Focus	% of Students' Involvement	Interpretation
1	14	Explanation of Past Tense and introduction to Comic Strips followed by modeling on the writing process using comic strips.	87.5	Very good
2	7	Collaborative writing part 1, writing a narrative text using comic strips in group.	85.71	Very good
3	6	Collaborative writing part 2,	66.6	Good

Meeting	Number of Activities	Focus	% of Students' Involvement	Interpretation
		writing a narrative text using comic strips assisted by the teacher		
4	6	Writing Test	91.6	Very good

Besides reporting the findings that represent the students' involvement from the observation checklist, the observer also supported the findings by writing some points in the field notes. In meeting 1, four points were considered as the strengths of the implementation of comic strips strategy. The strengths included that the students were very enthusiastic in paying attention to the comic strips and the story since every student got the comic strips. They could see the picture and the dialog clearly. The other positive points in the first meeting were that most of the students actively participated in brainstorming and modeling activity. The students seemed to be vivacious and brave to engage in the activities. Meanwhile, the weakness found was related to the use of LCD and time management.

Based on such a situation, the observer had two suggestions made to the teacher-researcher. First, the teacher should have been more careful in using LCD projector because the materials were unclear for some students in the back row. Second, the researcher should have checked the time carefully so that the students did not need to work too long and could finish every task punctually.

In meeting 2, three points were considered as the strengths for comic strips strategy. Firstly, during the writing process in group, most of the students got involved in participating their idea. Then, most of them tried to cooperate with others in finishing each step of process writing. The last point was that the story given was easy to follow as seen from the picture and the dialog. Meanwhile, there was one point as the weakness of the implementation of comic strips strategy in the second meeting. Some groups did not share the idea they got from comic strips in completing the task. They divided the job from

the first time and directly did it without confirming to the other members of the group. In this sense, they did not implement the cooperative learning so that they could not learn cooperatively to finish the task. This point was considered less effective by the observer since the goal of that meeting could not be completely achieved. The goal was the students were able to write a narrative text in group appropriately.

The observer suggested that the researcher should be strict in man-aging the time. Besides, she also considered that each group was supposed to get one comic strips so that they have same attention and could share ideas in completing the task in writing process of a narrative text.

Then, four days after the second meeting, the third meeting was conducted. Two good points were found in this time, namely all of the students enjoyed the story and liked the appearance of the pictures in comic strips. The observer, then, found several weaknesses related to the vocabulary items. The students found it difficult to understand some words and tended to ask the teacher rather than searched it in their dictionary. It was because they did not have a good dictionary. Next, some students did not do the task which asked them to fill a narrative scaffold and the worksheet for drafting since they were confident enough to make the story in the work sheet for final product. In addition, some students did not get the opportunity to share or ask their problems to the teacher.

Reflecting on the weaknesses, therefore, the observer suggested that the long comic strips should have been provided with vocabulary list that represented the words or key words in the speech bubble so that they did not spend much time to search the meaning of vocabulary in their dictionary. Moreover, for the collaborative writing part 2, it is better for the teacher to ask the students to write collaboratively with pairs. It would be more effective since they could have more time to share and did not need to be shy if they asked many questions to the teacher.

After three days of training the students, the fourth meeting was carried out. Three points were found as the strengths in this implementation. First, the students were ready to have writing test since they had been told in the previous meeting. The students also concentrated more since they had to write a different story from their pairs. This made them more focused in finishing their writing. No student was found cheating. Then, the observer did not find any weaknesses during the writing test. Finally, it was suggested that the

researcher kept conducting writing test by giving them different stories because it successfully made them work independently. The next suggestion was that it was better for the re-searcher to write the aspects of writing in the instruction to remind them to be more careful in writing.

The Students' Responses to the Implementation of Comic Strips in Writing Narrative Texts

In relation to the students' response toward the implementation of comic strips, the students expressed their opinion through questionnaire that showed that most of the students were interested in writing using comic strips. However, they still faced difficulties in transferring their idea into narrative text, especially in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics.

The Students' Writing Achievement

The data on the students' final products were obtained from the writing test. The data show that the achievement of the students improved, but the improvement had not met the criterion of success yet because only 61% (not 100%) achieved the target score, 70. This means that the teaching of writing narrative using comic strips in the first cycle had not made a significant improvement yet, mainly in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Considering that the findings in Cycle 1 of the present study have not met all the criteria of success, the researcher and observer concluded that the action had to be continued to the next cycle.

Revision of the Strategy Implemented in Cycle 1

In the first meeting, the researcher gave more explanation and examples of materials related to Past Tense and Direct & Indirect Speech. Besides, the teacher provided the exercise that reminded the students to be careful in punctuation.

In the next stage, the students received comic strips and then the printed text of the story. They compared the comic strips form and the real text followed by identifying the appropriate part of comic strips that represented the generic structure of narrative text. This was considered more effective than the

first cycle since at that moment the students just read the story shown in LCD in brief and then received the comic strips.

In the collaborative writing part two and writing test, the revision was made. To make the students more motivated, in collaborative writing part 2, the publishing was done by making compilation from the students' writing in the folder and displaying it in the class so that they could see their own writing as well as their friends' anytime. In addition, different from the implementation of collaborative writing part 1, the students in this revised plan were asked to write a narrative text with their pairs.

Meanwhile, in the writing test, the researcher gave one-paper comic strips followed by clearer instruction that reminded the students to be careful in writing in terms of content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. To raise their confidence, the teacher gave a chance to all students to show their writing by sticking it on the wall magazine of the class. In one day six writings were displayed so that in five days the whole writings could be published in the class. Then, the researcher selected the best writing product best and gave reward to the writer.

Furthermore, during the fourth meetings the researcher provided the story that was not too long when the students changed the story into the narrative text. Therefore, the comic strips were limited to one-paper form. In order to make the class more efficient, the students also received a list of vocabulary items showing the key words in comic strips so that they could save their time and focused on searching the other necessary vocabulary items that would be written in worksheet from their dictionary.

Findings of Cycle 2

The Students' Involvement in the Teaching and Learning Process

Based on the information of observation checklists, it was found that the students were active and motivated during the teaching and learning process. The observer's report from observation checklists indicated that most of the students got involved well in each activity.

Table 6. Summary of the Students' Involvement in Cycle 2

Meeting	Numbers of Activities	Focus	%	Interpretation
1	12	Reviewing Past Tense, Direct & Indirect Speech, and Modeling on how to write a Narrative Text appropriately from comic strips.	97.9	Very good
2	7	Collaborative writing part 1 (writing a narrative text in a group)	100	Very good
3	7	Collaborative writing part 2 (writing a narrative text with pairs)	100	Very good
4	6	Writing test	91.6	Very good

From the field notes, the results were also in line with the observation checklist which showed that the implementation of comic strips brought positive effects to the students' ability in writing narrative text as their response towards the teaching and learning process.

The students were active during the implementation of the comic strips strategy in Cycle II probably because of several reasons. First, the comic strips were given together with the real text of the story so that the students got deep understanding on how to compose narrative text than just seeing it from LCD. Second, giving one comic strips for one group was found effective to make the group focus during writing process. Besides, the teacher and the observer frequently reminded the students about the use of Simple Past Tense, Direct and Indirect speech, and the use of appropriate paragraphing and punctuation. Then, the students got more chances to work with their friends so that they could share how to write the narrative texts appropriately. In this case, the students were combined equally, meaning that in one pair they consisted of the one who was good in writing and the one who had low proficiency in English.

From this strategy, the students were more cooperative and interactive in order to improve their ability in writing narrative text.

The Students' Attitude toward the Implementation of Comic Strips in Writing Narrative Texts

In relation to the students' attitude which was shown from their response in questionnaire, most of the students gave positive points in response to the effects they felt after experiencing writing narrative process using comic strips. Therefore, their answers in the questionnaire were dominated by item a and item b meaning that they strongly agreed and agreed that comic strips brought positive influences in terms of raising their interest, confidence, and motivation. Related to the writing aspects, most of the students also showed the same perception for the good effect of comic strips in assisting them in writing in terms of content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics.

The Students' Writing Achievement

The data from the writing test conducted on August, 19th 2011 shows that from the second cycle, 31 students achieved the target score, 70. The improvement of the students score had met the third criterion of the success. Thus, the researcher and the observer concluded that the ac-tion could be terminated.

Discussion

The finding of this study showed that the use of comic strips could improve the students' ability in writing a narrative text. The students' improvement on each aspect was gained through the form of comic strips and the teacher's guidance during the writing process. The progress in the aspect of content was influenced through the dialog which was clear to read, supported by the pictures reflecting the action and the comprehension questions during the discussion session.

Meanwhile, the students' improvement on organization was obtained through the order of the comic strips that already represented the chronological order of the story which is considered as a significant part of narrative texts. This is in line with Brown, et al. (1983:294) who state that chronological order

is a way of organizing events in the time order in which they take place. Reflecting on the findings and Brown, et al's statement, this study shows that comic strips are helpful for students in writing story with appropriate organization since every event or generic structure of Narrative text was set in the correct order. Next, the students' improvement on grammar was obtained through grammar task given in Modeling stage in which the students were assigned to change the form of verbs into past tense and to change the direct speech sentence into indirect speech sentence. The sentences used in the explanation session were related to the dialog in the comic strips presented.

The use of comic strips is also considered good in assisting the students in understanding vocabulary since the picture and the dialog cooperate with each other meaning that most of the expressions shown by the characters reflect the content of the dialog. Therefore, the students can take advantage by guessing the words through the pictures. Besides, the use of comic strips also gives contribution to the aspect of mechanics, especially spelling and punctuation. For the part of paragraphing and capitalization, the role of researcher is highly needed. The last, the students could learn about *onomatopoeic* effect as they write since narrative text is closely interconnected with direct speech (Davis, 2006).

The result of this study demonstrates that comic strips can be an effective medium because not only it is unique, but also it is suitable to present narrative text in a different way since comic strips consist of the generic structure of narrative texts, namely orientation, complication, and resolution. This is supported by Lutfifati (2011) and Purwanitasari (2010) who stated that the use of comic strips is effective to increase the students' writing achievement and stimulate the students' motivation in writing since it is completed with interesting pictures and chronological order of the story. Moreover, the stories of comic strips are considered as communicative source for the language exposure (Pitoy, 2012). The exposure influences the students' way of thinking in understanding particular information during the reading activity. This study reveals that most of the students could understand the story well and could transfer the story to their writing product.

Furthermore, the use of comic strips made the students give full attention to the learning process. This affected their motivation and their learning of writing English well. What happened during the teaching and learning process dealing with the use of comic strips was in line with Csabay (2006:24) and Yang (2003) who state that one of the strongest benefits of using comic strips

to teach is the ability to motivate students since it brings a cheerful atmosphere into the class. If the classroom is enjoyable and attractive, the students will learn preferably. Thus, appropriate strategy combined with attractive instructional media is strongly recommended to create this condition. Brown (2007:92), Kasbolah and Latief (1993:34), and Spolsky (2000:158) proposed that a pleasant teaching style or strategy in the classroom can increase the students' motivation to learn.

In addition, the process writing proposed by Thompskins (1994) applied in this study also assisted the students in improving their writing ability. Having experienced the stage in process writing, the students became more confident in writing because they had opportunities to revise and edit their texts. Another opinion is proposed by Sun and Feng (2009) stating that process writing allows a writer to get closer to perfection. One important point to agree in teaching EFL/ESL writing is that good product depends on good process.

In relation to the stage of process writing, it is noted that comic strips played an important role in prewriting activities. In this stage, the students were equipped with a topic in the form of story to get ideas which later on were put in a narrative scaffold as the outline in developing their narrative composition. Reflecting on the fact that prewriting stage is the first step to encourage the generation of ideas, comic strips strategy in this present study successfully showed that it was very influential in assisting the students to write appropriately in terms of content and organization. This is in line with Brown (2007:404) who states that branstorming is the frame of writing process before the students face the core of process writing, namely drafting and revising. This means that the students with clear ideas or concept before writing have a lot of op-portunities to write well since they know what they have to tell in their composition.

Regarding on the importance of brainstorming stage and comic strips, the researcher has conducted the teaching procedure in two ways, individually and collaboratively. This strategy is supported by Brown (2007:404) affirming that brainstorming can be done independently and Hyland (2003:12) who agrees that group discussion is one of the effective ways for the teacher in writing class to guide the students in generating ideas.

Moreover, the implementation of Genre Based Approach (Puskur, 2006) in the teaching of writing made the students understand comprehensively what text type they were writing as well as its social function since in Building Knowledge of the Field and Modeling of the Text stages the students'

background knowledge about narrative texts including the definition, the generic structure, and the language features was activated. In relation to Modeling of the Text, the students got meaningful language exposure from reading text, writing outline, and grammar exercise. These activities were significant for the students since the teacher gave error feedback in the form of oral conferencing on their accuracy in discussion session (Pan, 2010). The stage of Genre Based Approach in this study also gave the students more chances to practice producing a narrative text cooperatively within their groups or pairs; as a result, they were ready to produce the writing independently.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

The implementation of comic strips through Process-Genre based Approach can improve the students' ability in writing a narrative text, particularly in aiding the students to generate and organize ideas and select more appropriate grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation. The procedures of conducting the present study to improve the writing ability were generally divided into some tasks (taken from the result of Cycle II). Firstly, the students' background knowledge about a narrative text and its language features was activated by analyzing a model text given. Secondly, the students were given comic strips which were related to the story. Thirdly, the students were given a task as a practice to convert the forms of verbs from the verb 1 into the verb 2 and to change the Direct speech in the comic strips into Indirect Speech. Fourthly, the students were asked to make sentences based on information in narrative scaffold. Next, the students arranged the sentences into a narrative text. At last, the students revised, edited, and wrote the final writing products before publishing it in the class. In the the training of writing process, the students worked in three ways, collaborative writing in group, collaborative writing in pair, and individual writing.

The result of the use of comic strips for composing narrative texts through writing process in this study showed that the students' writing ability improved during the cycles conducted. Besides, the mean scores of each aspect of writing; content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics also improved. All of the students of XII-language program can achieve the

minimum passing criterion, 70. Furthermore, the students' attitude towards writing activities had improved. They were more confident in writing and felt that the implementation of comic strips was helpful for them in writing a narrative text.

Suggestions

Based on the research findings, some suggestions are proposed in order to improve the quality of the English teaching and learning process in the future. For the English teachers of MAN Bangil, the result of the study is one of the solutions for the teaching problem related to improving the students' writing ability, especially narrative texts. Other English teachers at senior high school level can also take the findings of this research into consideration in developing strategies to enhance the students' ability in writing. It is also suggested that the teachers be selective in choosing the appropriate stories for the students based on their educational and proficiency levels as well as their interests.

Meanwhile, for future researchers, the findings of the study can be used as valuable sources to conduct further research to improve the students' ability in writing sentences or paragraphs using certain grammatical structures. The findings can also be used as a reference to conduct further research using different strategies in the implementation phase or a different research design, or language skill, or even genres.

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