

PROMOTING THE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL THROUGH FOLKTALES BASED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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Abstract:

The present research was conducted to improve the students' writing skill through the implementation of Folktales based learning activities. This study made use of classroom action research design conducted in two consecutive learning cycles. There were 32 students participating in this study who had low ability in writing as indicated by the result of their initial pre-test. The selected students were intensively engaged in folktales based learning activities to develop their writing skills actively. The result of this study showed that the students' writing skills improved significantly compared to their achievement in initial pre-test. In addition, the questionnaire also showed that the students strongly enjoyed learning to write through folktales based learning activities. It indicated that folktales based learning activities can be used to improve the students' writing skill. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers should strongly consider using folktales based learning activities to develop their students' writing skill.

Keywords: Promoting, writing skill, folktales, learning activities

INTRODUCTION

Learning a foreign language implies the strengthening of strategies that enable effective communication skills in appropriate meaningful contexts. The teaching of language skills has already taken place in language education institution for many years. Many language educators agree that all skills deserve the same importance, whereas others believe that writing should take first place, given its significance in all social, professional, and academic domains (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). Writing is the act of putting down the graphic symbols that present a language in order to convey some meaning so that the reader can grasp the information which the writer has tried to communicate (Abdalla, Adam & Babiker, 2015). The process of writing involves pre writing, actual writing, revising and editing, that writers go through to produce a piece of writing. Zemach and Islam (2005) state that writing is an act that takes place within context that accomplishes a particular purpose which is appropriately shaped for its intended audience (Sapkota, 2012). It is a way of sharing personal meanings (Abdalla & Adam, 2015).

Good writing can express and explore the ideas clearly; thus, the reader can easily catch and get the ideas of the writer. Therefore, in writing, creating writing decision is needed to state clear ideas and topics that will be expressed. Oshima & Hogue (2007) state that writing is a skill, not a natural gift. It means that writing is not a natural talent possessed by everyone; thus it needs some hard work and continuous practice to learn this skill. Everyone experiences different difficulties when they begin to write something, since in a good writing the students have to know the construction of sentence. In addition, the writers must think carefully before writing something to make sure that the readers can understand the content of the text (Sawaki, Quinlan & Lee, 2013).

Taylor (2009) states that if we want to write well, we need to know what we are talking about. The students need to become disciplined thinkers in order to communicate their ideas effectively. They also need to learn using standard written forms and other conventions of language. Then, the students must learn and focus on writing (Weigle & Parker, 2012). In writing, there are some important things that should be learnt by the students. The students must master the spelling of words, vocabulary, sentence construction, grammatical forms and other essential linguistic features.

Based on the interviews with the students in this study, it was found that students still have difficulties in expressing the ideas in a written form. This difficulty was caused by their inability to find ideas to write. In addition to students' difficulty, the students were also found to have poor linguistic ability especially in sentence structure and grammar, word spelling, the punctuation mark, and vocabularies. Based on the real conditions faced by the students, the researcher was very interested to help the students improve their ability in writing and develop the students' motivation in learning how to write. One of the ways to make a teaching how to write more effective and interesting is through the application of folktales based activities.

Using folktales in the EFL classroom exposes learners to distinctive opportunities for educational, intellectual, cultural and linguistic development (Khatib & Rahimi, 2012; Pardede, 2011)). Folktales are considered as one of the literary genres that can be used in the EFL classroom to enhance language skill, motivate students, and increase their cultural awareness and tolerance. Folktales can be utilized as engines, and a powerful and motivating source for teaching learners how to consolidate and practice language (Yeasmin, Azad & Ferdoush, 2011). Folktales are encouraging and fun, they can help students develop positive attitudes towards the foreign language and enrich their learning experiences (Abu Zahra & Farrah, 2016).

According to Collie and Slater in Hismanoglu (2005), there are four main reasons which lead a language teacher to use literature in the classroom. These are valuable authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enrichment and personal involvement. In addition to these four main reasons, universality, non-triviality, personal relevance, variety, interest, economy and suggestive power and ambiguity are some other factors requiring the use of literature as a powerful resource in the classroom context (Sapkota, 2012). The success of folktales as learning media can be found in the study conducted by Muslim, Nafisah and Damayanti (2009), folktales improved the students' learning motivation. Dardjowidjojo (2001) revealed that teachers strongly believed that the use of folktales certainly improved the students' learning ability. Deacon & Murphy (200) revealed that folktales improve students to comprehend the vocabulary usage in context and language forms. Moreover, Abdalla & Adam (2015) found that that teaching English literature can enhance students' creative writings, dramatic scenes and develop creative imagination. Meanwhile, Tasneen (2010) found that folktales strongly motivate the students to be creative in writing. Similarly, Khatib,, Shokoufeh & Fathi (2012) and also Violetta-Irene (2015) found that folktales bring the students' attention in practicing writing to the classroom.

The present study was considered to be necessary because writing is an important language skill that should be mastered by the students, meanwhile, folktales are part of the Indonesian cultural identity that should be preserved in their existence by utilizing them as much as possible for the character development of the community. This study was conducted to promote the students writing skills by using various folktales based learning activities. The use of folktales were considered to be useful ways of learning how to write due the facts that students are accustomed with folktales in their daily lives.

METHOD

As action research in nature, the main task in this research was to look at the progressive changes of the students' writing skills when they were taught through folktales based learning activities. An action research is conducted aiming at the improvement of the current affairs through the processes of identifying and solving problem in a specific context. As a classroom investigation, it is carried out to find out and solve the specific problems occurred in a particular class. The main aim of the action research is to improve the current state within the educational context in which research is being carried out. Action research ultimately solves the practical problems of an academic context by bridging the gap between theory and practice (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2010). It is a practical process of identifying, recognizing and solving the programs in the scientific way. It always orients towards the results, and change of certain problem, situation or phenomena that occur in the classroom.

This classroom action investigation makes use of a collection of a pre-test post-test research design. Hence, this classroom action study is concerned with teaching writing through folktales based learning activities by using two kinds of tests, that is, initial reflection or pre-test and reflection or post-test. Initial reflection (IR) is intended to evaluate the pre-existing writing skill, while reflection (R) which is administered at the end of each session, is meant to reveal the expected increase in the students' writing skill after they have been taught writing skills through folktales based learning activities. The required data for the present study was collected through the administration of pre-test, post-test and questioners. The data was collected throughout the process of eight interconnected teaching sessions which were divided in two successive learning cycles.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Three kinds of instruments were used to gather the data of the present classroom action study; they are pre-test, post-tests and questionnaires. The pre-test of IR in writing skill was administered to the subjects of the study to obtain their pre-existing ability in writing skill. In pre-test the subjects were asked

to write a descriptive paragraph to determine their ability in writing skill. Post test or reflection was administered for eight times (four times in cycle I and four more times in cycle II). As a result, there are nine sets of raw scores obtained for the present classroom action study, that is, IR or pre-test scores, and reflection scores for all session (S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7 and S8). The additional data required for the present class action study were collected through administering questionnaires to the subjects of this study at the end cycle I. The answers of the questionnaires were quantitatively scored using the rating scale 0 - 3. The scores gathered from administering questionnaires showed the subjects' changing attitudes and motivation in learning writing through folktales based learning activities.

The students showed progress in writing skill after they were taught through folktales based learning activities were in the form of result of pre test, post test and questionnaire. First, the mean score of the pre-test or IR scores (X_o) obtained by the students was 3.66. This shows obviously the low ability of the subjects of the study. Second, the mean of the reflection or post test scores of cycle I (S1, S2, S3, and S4) obtained by the subjects of the study showed the mean figures of 4.85, 5.33, 5.89 and 6.29. The mean figure obtained by the subjects for each session is comparatively higher than the mean figure or the IR scores. Third, the means of the reflection or post test scores for cycle II (S5, S6, S7 and S8) obtained by the subjects under study pointed out the mean figures of 6.93, 7.16, 7.70 and 7.97. The mean figures of cycle II showed that each session of cycle II was comparatively much higher than the mean figure of the IR scores and the cycle I.

The grand means obtained by the subjects of the study for both cycle I and cycle II which showed the grand mean figures of XI = 5.59; XII = 7.44 are higher than their corresponding pre-test mean scores. The grand mean of cycle II is also realistically higher than the grand mean of cycle I. The different of the grand figure of cycle I and cycle II is 1.85. The difference is clearly significant. The findings of the present classroom action study discovered that the ability of the students in writing skill was improved significantly from session to session after they had been taught through folktales based learning activities.

In addition to the post test results, the results of the analysis of the questionnaire scores showed the comparative percentages of 61.55%, 29.57%, 8.87% and 0% for the total responses of the questionnaires items of options A, B, C, and D. These findings undoubtedly supported the main findings of the present classroom action study. The obtained comparative percentages of the items of the questionnaires indicated a positive change of the subjects' attitudes and motivation in learning writing through folktales based learning activities. These findings also convincingly proved the effectiveness of folktales based learning activities in improving the writing skill of the students.

DISCUSSION

Folktales are considered as a resource providing writing practice opportunities to the students and helps stimulating students' personal intellectual growth through exposing them with cultures around them. By using folktales in learning, students can understand their own literature, traditions, heritage, and culture. The following are critical discussions about the students' learning activities and their improvement in writing skill:

According to the findings, cycle II was started with planning. The researcher revised the lesson plan which was made in the first planning. In the planning, additional material presentation was prepared. If in cycle I the material was explained verbally in cycle II the material in whilst-activities was conducted based on the learning activities using folktales as proposed by Taylor (2006). He suggests that teaching writing through folktales in the simple form can be carried out using procedures, such as: (1) asking the students to tell a folktale, (2) asking the the students write it down, correcting the grammatical mistakes, (3) returning the written folktales back to the students and asking the students to read it, (4) asking the students to revise and expand their written folktales, (5) practicing the students to comprehend the vocabulary used in the written folktales, (6) asking the students to retell the folktales in front of the class, while the others are listening, (7) asking the students to share their correction, (8) discussing the moral value of the folktales. This procedure helps the students to involve in learning activity which also develops their other language skills as well.

The findings of the present classroom action study are in line with the existing research findings, which have revealed the effectiveness of folktales based learning activities in teaching writing. In relation to the objective of the present classroom action study, based on the findings of the present classroom action, folktales based learning activities can be used an alternative medium of teaching writing.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

CONCLUSION

According to the data analysis, the results confirm that teaching writing through folktales based activities certainly enhances students' creative writing skills and develops their imagination, thought, ideas and opinion as well as their literature and culture knowledge. This could be achieved through utilizing many types of folktales based learning activities that introduce students to a new way of learning how to write. It provides students with good background for creative writing and also helps them in promoting their appreciation to literature and increase their motivation to writing folktales in the same time. The students' behaviour changes in learning how to write through folktales based learning was significantly proved by the result of questionnaire analysis which showed that the attitudes and the learning motivation changed and heightened positively from session to session of learning activities. Therefore, it can be summed up that teaching writing through folktales based learning activities clearly create an active learning atmosphere. Moreover, Folktales also educate, enlighten, and inspire the students to speak about their culture.

SUGGESTION

As what has been mentioned in the conclusion above, folktales based learning activities can give good contributions to the students in terms of motivation, interest, enjoyment, and achievement as well. Therefore, English lecturers are suggested to consider using folktales based learning activities in teaching how to write. The use of folktales based learning activities in language teaching makes the students more active and motivated in participating in the teaching and learning process because they are familiar with the materials. This study also suggests that folktales based learning activities may enrich the students' local cultures awareness and comprehend their diversity. Therefore, the writer assumes that using folktales in the teaching and learning process certainly increases the students' motivation in learning English.

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