

IMPLEMENTING TASK – BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING ON CREATIVE TASK TO IMPROVE WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXTS

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Abstract *The purpose of this research was to improve students' writing descriptive texts of the eighth grade at SMPN 3 Anjongan in Mempawah Regency. The researcher employed Jane Willis' Task – Based Language Teaching (TBLT) framework which consisted of (1) Pre-task, (2) Task cycle and (3) Language focus. Moreover, the creative task which involved the authentic media that was tourist brochure energized the students enthusiastic in teaching learning process. The study results were derived from quantitative and qualitative data yielded from the action research designed. The result shown that the application of TBLT framework to teach writing descriptive through creative task (tourist brochure) could successfully improve students' ability in writing. The findings also revealed that tourist brochure's effective implementation required proper time management as well as sufficient teacher's guidance during the writing process.*

Keywords: *Task – Based Language Teaching, Writing Descriptive Text, Creative Task.*

Abstrak *Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah meningkatkan kemampuan menulis teks deskriptif pada peserta didik kelas delapan di SMPN 3 Anjongan di Kabupaten Mempawah. Peneliti melaksanakan kerangka Pembelajaran Bahasa Berbasis Tugas (TBLT) dari Jane Willis yang terdiri dari (1) Pre-task, (2) Siklus Task and (3) Fokus Kebahasaan. Terlebih lagi, Tugas yang Kreatif melibatkan media otentik berupa brosur wisata memicu antusiasme para peserta didik dalam proses pembelajaran. Hasil penelitian terdiri dari data kuantitatif dan data kualitatif pada penelitian tindakan kelas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa aplikasi kerangka TBLT pada pengajaran menulis deskriptif melalui Kreatif Task (brosur wisata) dapat meningkatkan kemampuan menulis para peserta didik. Hasil penelitian juga menunjukkan bahwa implementasi brosur wisata*

efektif bila penggunaan pengaturan waktu yang baik begitu pula bimbingan dari guru selama proses kegiatan menulis berlangsung.

Kata kunci: Task – Based Language Teaching, menulis teks deskriptif, Tugas yang Kreatif

Writing is one of the four language skills which is relatively difficult to acquire when compared with other fundamental skills such as listening, speaking, and reading. It is not an easy task for students in order to accomplish the standard of good writing. They consider writing as a tricky task to perform. It was because writing is not only the way of conveying ideas, feelings and emotions through a system of graphic symbol but also the way of developing concepts into an accurate graphic representation of spoken language. The researcher experienced as the English teacher of SMPN 3 Anjongan, noticed that the eighth grade students confronted with difficulties in writing activities. These were exposed in the preliminary study carried out to the eighth grade students of SMPN 3 Anjongan by observing students' writing on descriptive text.

In terms of content, students failed to elaborate the clear and complete details of the place they described. The students were aware to translate from their first language to English. In regard to the aspect of organization, students' descriptive writing products were lack of generic structures and it did not contain any sentence connectives. Concerning the use of grammar, they were plentiful incorrect grammatical features in their writing product such as the use of simple present tense, active verbs, adjectives and adverbs.

Students' writing product also performed numerous number of vocabulary inappropriateness. Some students applied ineffective choice of words as they merely translate from their first language to English. They frequently used incorrect vocabulary and word forms. Finally, in terms of mechanics, almost all students made incorrect of spelling, punctuation, capitalization. Particularly, they wrote the words in correct spelling. They reflected the spelling of the English words with the spelling of their first language. In terms of punctuation, they

mixed to used the comma and period in their sentence. Lastly, regarding the capitalization, they failed to start their sentence with proper capitalization.

The lack of writing activities became the second cause of the students' writing problem. The language learning activity was dominated by comprehending the reading text because the school final examination test was always administered in form of multiple choice tests. The teacher infrequently gave the students writing activity also because writing activity was difficult for students and they always spent much time in doing the activity.

These mentioned gaps were also noticeable by ESL/EFL teachers and researchers both from Indonesia (Megawati & Anugerahwati, 2012, p. 258; Sari & Syafei, 2013) and other countries (Lan, Hung, & Hsu, 2011; Tangpermpoon, 2008) in their research studies. They recognized that writing is a discouraging task for students because it engaged them to have lexical and syntactic knowledge as well as principles of organization in target language to produce a proper text. Consequently, the students were mostly poor in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics such as spelling, capitalization and punctuation.

Among those factors, the teaching strategy was considered the most crucial problem since teaching writing requires the implementation of a certain approach which involved a number of stages that guided the students in producing a good composition. The researcher considered the use of TBLT as an appropriate strategy to develop the students' skills in producing good descriptive texts. In the Pre Task, students discussed a problem solving topic then the teacher set written Task - Based on the tourist brochure. Then in the Task Cycle, they experienced a cooperative activity in which they could share ideas with a partner through the pair work, they did pair draft notes, exchanged drafts with another pair and asked them to suggest improvements. Afterwards, they made final draft ready for audience. Also, the implementation of Language Focus gave them chance to build up their confidence to practice writing individually. The semantic mapping activities have made them more confident in producing a piece of writing because they have known what to write and how to write it well, Therefore, all of the

students enjoyed the writing activities and showed positive responses towards the implemented strategy.

Payman and Gorjian (2014) pointed out that the task of class discussion and mind mapping developed EFL learners' writing of English as a foreign language who accessed the target language was limited. While Zhaochun (2015) testified that the application of TBL framework to English writing classrooms in Chinese EFL settings was effective in improving English majors' writing competence and performance. Moreover, Seyedi and Farahani (2014) demonstrates the contribution of task-based writing to the development of reading comprehension of EFL advanced Iranian learners. In addition, Sholihah (2011) demonstrated that TBLT made the students able to make a composition using appropriate vocabulary, correct grammar, mechanic, content and organization. The strategies applied by these researchers could create attractive activities which increase both students' writing quality and motivation.

Another reason was the absence of interesting media that may support the teaching of writing and motivate the students. Thus, a suitable instructional media should be applied to overcome the students' difficulties in writing. Therefore, the researcher chose tourist brochure in order to stimulate students in writing creatively and properly. Sari and Syafei (2013) used tourist brochure as a media for improving speaking, listening, reading and writing for vocational school students while Johari (2008) carried out writing lessons associated with tourist brochures and it helped her students planned, wrote, evaluated and displayed their writing.

The researcher confirmed that the use of tourist brochure as creative task through Task - Based Language Teaching approach contributed positive result in improving students' ability in writing descriptive text since tourist brochure provided students with authentic language input and clear idea about the object being described. Furthermore, tourist brochure as creative task improved the students' motivation as it creates an interesting atmosphere in the classroom.

METHOD

This research was designed to investigate how Task - Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach improved students' writing a descriptive text that is; a) in constructing a good paragraph in terms of content and organization; b) in using proper vocabulary, grammar mastery and mechanism in writing descriptive texts; c) in classifying students' creative task and; d) the students' enthusiastic toward writing descriptive texts from the implementation of TBLT through creative task. In implementing this Classroom Action Research, the researcher applied the model developed by Kemmis, S., McTaggart, as cited Burns (2010, p. 9) which consists of four steps which took the spiral of planning, acting observing and reflecting. Preliminary study became the starting point of the cycle aiming at determining problems.

1. Preliminary Study

The preliminary study was conducted to know students' achievement in writing skill. Preliminary study was carried out through preliminary survey, questionnaire and the interview with the teacher. The result of the preliminary study showed the real condition of the students in the classroom and also the evidence of the students' problems in writing descriptive text. From the preliminary study, 19 from 22 students had difficulties in writing English, they feel unconfident in writing descriptive text, they also had difficulties in generating ideas in order to write descriptive text. Furthermore, they did not know how to use proper vocabulary, grammatical feature and mechanic in writing descriptive text. From the interview with the teacher, it was found that students had difficulties in generating ideas (planning), developing ideas into a paragraph (drafting) and using English grammar correctly. Moreover, students also had low motivation in writing activities.

2. Planning Phase

Planning is the next step in this research. Lewin states that the production of a plan of action to reach an identified objective, together with a decision on the first steps to be taken as cited in (Cohen, Manion, & Morison, 2000, p. 234). Designing the teaching scenario was conducted in the next step. The process of

writing was divided into five steps namely planning (pre cycle), drafting, revising and editing (task cycle), and publishing (language focus).

3. Acting Phase

In this phase, the researcher acted as the practitioner who implemented the proposed strategy by referring the activities done in class. The teaching writing descriptive text by using a tourist brochure through TBLT was divided into three main stages of Pre-Cycle, Task Cycle and Language Focus. The students were encountered with the process of writing: planning, drafting, revising, editing and publishing. Regarding the students' lack of vocabulary, the students were allowed to open their dictionary to assist them in their writing.

The following framework are the implementation of TBLT through creative task in writing descriptive texts in each cycle:

TBLT Stage	Writing Process	Students' Participation
Cycle 1		
19th April 2016, Meeting 1		
Pre Task	Pre Writing	Listen to teacher in introductory talk with the students about a letter from a Malaysian pen pal with inserting tourist brochure.
Task Cycle	Pre Writing	Discuss a mysterious envelope on the blackboard.(problem solving task)
	Pre Writing	Read the tourist brochure about Malaysia in pair
	Drafting	Complete the table with information from the brochure in descriptive scaffold. (ordering and sorting))
	Redrafting	Make a draft about one place in Malaysia by writing information in the descriptive scaffold into a descriptive text
	Revising and editing	By the help of peer correction guidance, the students correct other pairs' writing and give feedback.
20th April 2016, Meeting 2		
Task Cyle	Revising and editing	Revise and edit the writing regarding the feedback received the other pairs.
	Publishing	Read the final writing in front of the class
Language Focus	Analysis and Practice	Do semantic mapping on given text in pairs.
	Draft	Fill in the descriptive scaffold based on the information about Mempawah Regency.
	Redraft	Redraft and revise their writing. Revise and edit the writing regarding the feedback received from the other pairs
26th April 2016, Meeting 3		
Task Cycle	Revising and editing	Design tourist brochure about Mempawah Regency.
	Publishing	Show their tourist brochure for the class

Language Focus	Analysis and Practice	Revise and edit the writing on the brochure regarding the feedback received from the other pair
	Writing assessment	Write a descriptive text in 50 to 100 words about Kijing Beach
	Revising and editing	Design tourist brochure about Mempawah Regency.

Cycle 2

3rd May 2016, Meeting 1

Task Cycle	Draft	Write the information from the tourist brochure about one place in the descriptive scaffold
	Redraft	Write the information in the descriptive scaffold into a descriptive text.
	Revising and editing	Swap the writing with other pairs and proofreading it in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics based on the proof reading guidance
Language Focus	Analysis Practice	Do semantic mapping on given text in pairs.
	Writing assessment	Write a descriptive text in 50 to 100 words about Wisata Nusantara Resort

4th May 2016

Task Cycle	Draft and redraft	Fill in the designed tourist brochure collaboratively
	Editing	Describe the place based on the designed tourist brochure
	Publishing	Decorate the tourist brochure
Language Focus	Analysis	Design a tourist brochure collaboratively by the students' initiative.
	Practices	Describe the places and pictures based on the places that chosen by the students
	Publish	Decorate their tourist brochure
	Draft and redraft	Fill in the designed tourist brochure collaboratively

4. Observing Phase

In observing the students' attitude toward the teaching writing descriptive text by incorporating TBLT, the researcher invited the teacher of SMPN 3 Anjongan to be the observer. This was done in order to validate the action research by involving others in making judgment (McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 2002, p. 24). She reported all the teaching learning process to assist the observation checklist and the field note, the teacher also distributed questionnaire to all students so that she obtained the perception directly from them.

5. Reflecting Phase

Reflecting was the last stage of the cycle in the Classroom Action Research. The notion of reflexivity is a self-conscious awareness of the effects

that the participants-as-practitioners-and researchers are having on the research process, how their values, attitudes, perceptions, opinions, actions, feelings etc (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 310). The researcher referred into qualitative data and quantitative data to be reflected. Discussions on the findings took place in the light of previously agreed evaluative criteria. Errors, mistakes and problems were considered. A general summing up, maintain a reflective and enquiring attitude to teaching learning process (Burns, 2010, p. 167).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The data presented in this study were obtained from the implementation of the classroom action research which cover the students' involvement during the implementation of the action, students' individual writing products, and their responses toward their writing ability through the use of Tourist Brochure in Cycle 1, and Cycle 2.

1. The Students' Involvement during the Teaching Learning Activities

This data in Cycle 1 was gathered from the observations sheets and field notes which done by the collaborator. The percentage of the students' involvement in each meeting that is in Meeting 1 to Meeting 3 were 75%, 79% and 81% respectively. Thus the final percentage for the students' involvement during the teaching learning process in Cycle 1 was 78.3%. It means that the first criteria of success obtained from the observation sheets have not been achieved yet.

While in Cycle 2, in general all of the students were involved in all main activities starting from Meeting 1 to Meeting 2. Therefore, the percentage for the students' involvement during the teaching and learning activities in Cycle 2 was 100%. It means that the criteria that the first criterion of success obtained from the observation sheets has been achieved.

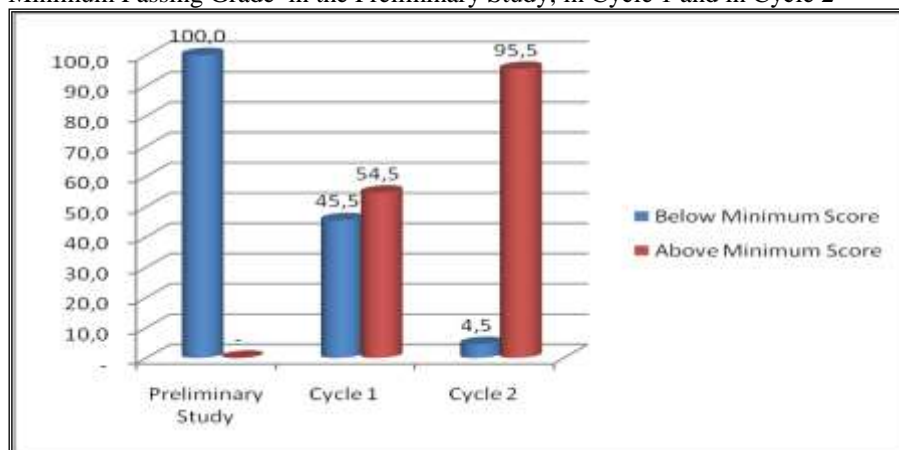
2. The Students' Writing Product

The data of the students' final products were obtained from the students' final writing at the Language Focus stage. The data were then scored by using the

scoring rubric by the two raters. Based on the application of the formula to compute Pearson – Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, it was found that in Cycle 1 the correlation coefficient for students’ scores which was known as the calculated value was 0.96. Whereas in Cycle 2 the correlation coefficient for students’ scores that was known as the calculated valued was 0.97. Meanwhile, the critical value which was obtained from the Table of Pearson – Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was 0.4227. Since the calculated value was greater than the critical one, it could be said that the set of the scores given by the two raters were reliable. Therefore, the two raters were considered consistent in giving the scores on the students’ final writing product.

Compared to the percentage between the number of students’ minimum passing grade in the preliminary study and in Cycle 1 can be seen in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1. The Comparison of the Percentage between the number of the Students’ Minimum Passing Grade in the Preliminary Study, in Cycle 1 and in Cycle 2



From the data, it could be said that the implementation had not met the criterion of success related to the students’ writing products. It was because the students had not achieved the target score, which was at least 70 %. Thus, the students’ achievement in descriptive writing was still under the target score. Therefore, the researcher needed to go to the next Cycle to make the students’ performance in writing a descriptive text better and achieve the criteria of success, The next cycle was to improve the students’ ability in writing descriptive text so that they could achieve the target score, at least 60 as the minimum passing grade. For those who have achieved the score at least 60 within one cycle, they were still

acquire to join Cycle 2 for the sake of ensuring that their improvement in their writing ability, particularly in writing a descriptive text, was because of the implementation of Task - Based Language Teaching through creative task. After conducting the action in Cycle 2, in general the number of the students obtaining the score at least 60 as the minimum passing grade in Cycle 2 increased significantly. It increased from no students (0%) in the preliminary study to 12 students (54.5%) in Cycle 1 and to 21 students (95.5%) in Cycle 2.

Figure 2.2. The Comparison of the Percentage between Students' Score Distribution in Terms of Content in the Preliminary Study, Cycle 1 and Cycle 2.

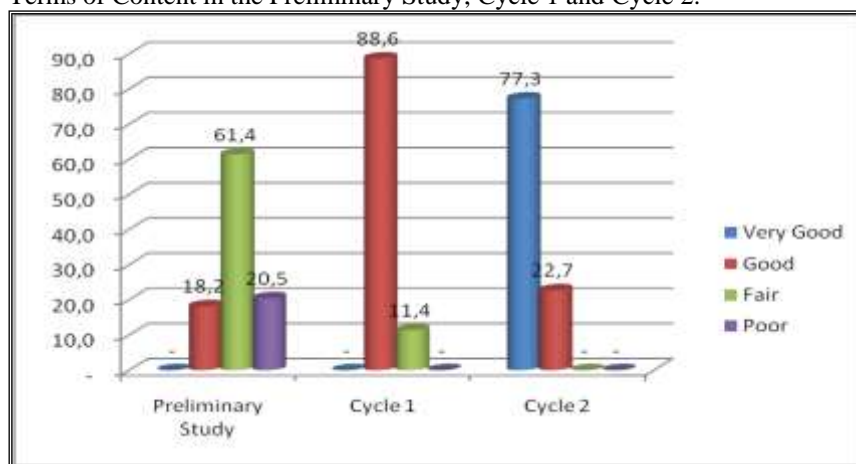


Figure 2.3. The Comparison of the Percentage between Students' Score Distribution in Terms of Organization in the Preliminary Study, in Preliminary Study, in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

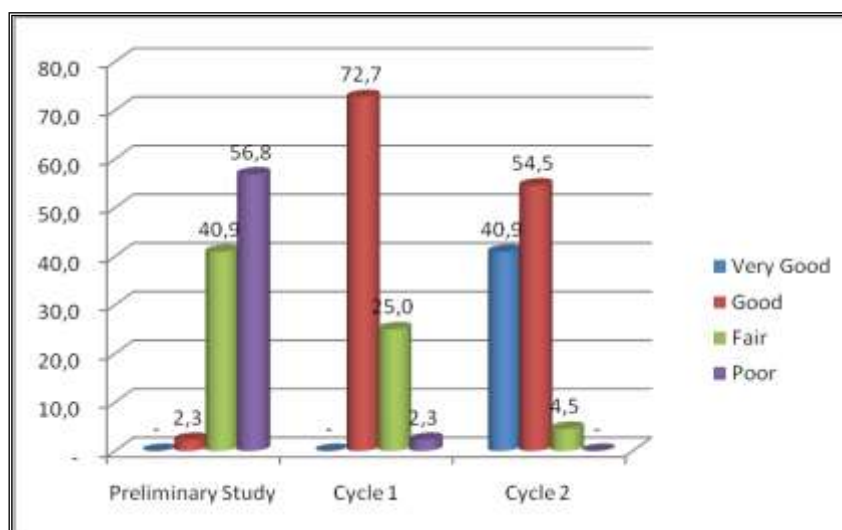


Figure 2.4. The Comparison of the Percentage between Students' Score Distribution in Terms of Grammar in the Preliminary Study ,in Cylce 1 and in Cycle 2

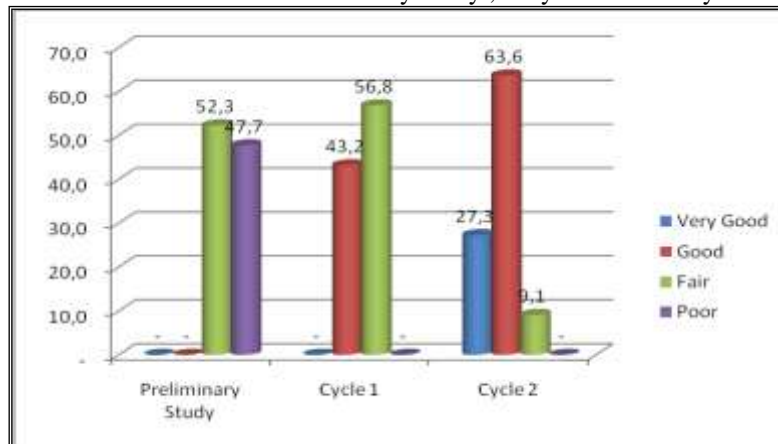


Table 2.5. The Comparison of the Percentage between Students' Score Distribution in Terms of Vocabulary in the Preliminary Study, in Cycle 1 and in Cycle 2.

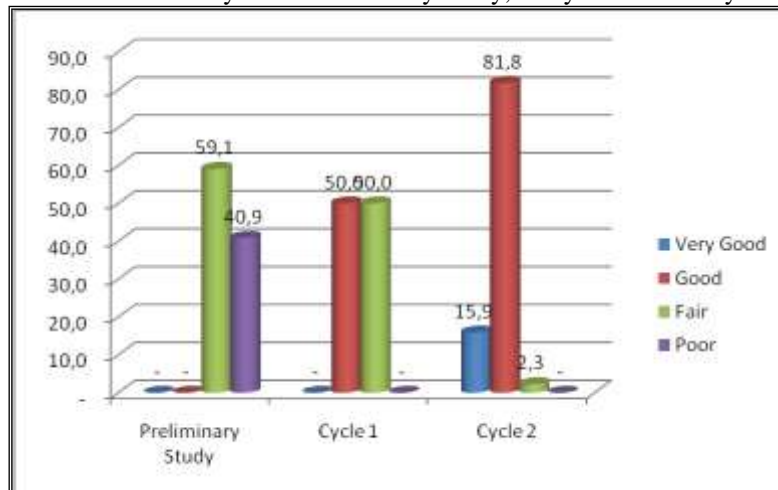


Figure 2.6. The Comparison of the Percentage between Students' Score Distribution in Tems of Mechanic in the Preliminary Study, in Cycle 1 and in Cycle 2

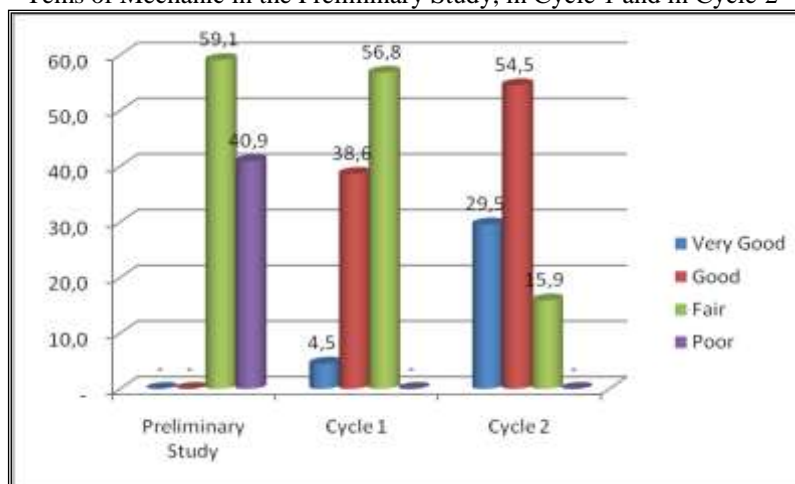
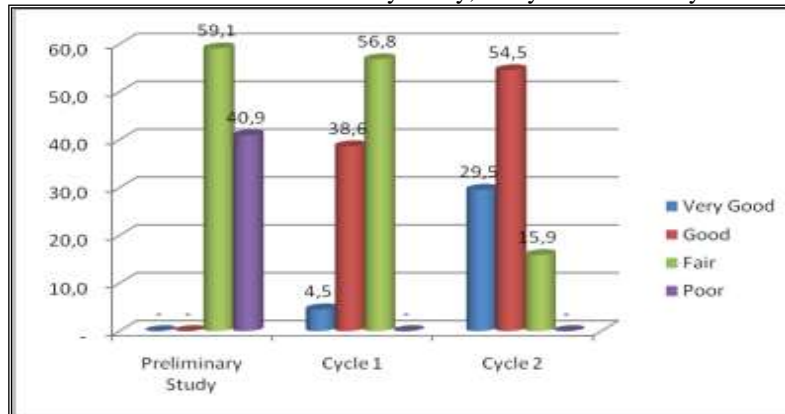


Figure 2.7. The Comparison of the Percentage between Students' Score Distribution in Terms of Mechanic in the Preliminary Study, in Cycle 1 and in Cycle 2



3. The Students' Responses toward the Implementation of Task - Based Language Teaching through Creative Task in Writing a Descriptive Text.

From the finding of questionnaires distributed in Meeting 3 after the students had finished their final products in Cycle 1, it could be stated that all students had positive responses towards the implementation of the strategy. As can be seen in the table, 14 out of 22 (64%) students considered that writing writing was an interesting activity. However, there were 9 (41%) students doubt about their writing ability. There were about 15 (68 %) students felt that tourist brochures were helpful in generating ideas, so they could write several expressions in English properly. There were 16 (73%) out of 22 strongly agreed that tourist brochures in TBLT Teaching approach as the teaching media. About 18 (82%) out of 22 students were strongly agreed that the usage of descriptive scaffold in teaching writing was very important. In addition, 14 (64%) out of 22 students were strongly agreed that the usage of tourist brochure in English was very interesting and enjoyable for students in learning new vocabulary. Furthermore, 19 (86%) out of 22 students were strongly agreed that they could describe the places mechanically using the tourist brochure through descriptive scaffold. Like wise, there were 17 (77%) out of 22 students were strongly agreed that they knew how to write a descriptive text using tourist brochure through descriptive scaffold.

While the finding in Cycle 2, it could be stated that all students had positive responses towards the implementation of the strategy. There were 21 out of 22 (95.5%) students considered that writing was an interesting activity. However, there was 1 (4.5%) students doubt about their writing ability; nevertheless, 19 (86.4%) students felt confident in writing activity. There were about 16 (72.7 %) students felt that tourist brochures were helpful in generating ideas, so they could write several expressions in English properly. There were 19 (86.4%) out of 22 *strongly agreed* that tourist brochures in TBLT approach as the teaching media. About 21 (95.5%) out of 22 students were *strongly agreed* that the usage of descriptive scaffold in teaching writing was very important. In addition, 15 (%) out of 22 students were *strongly agreed* that the usage of tourist brochure in English was very interesting and enjoyable for students in learning new vocabulary. Furthermore, 21 (95.5%) out of 22 students were *strongly agreed* that they could describe the places mechanically using the tourist brochure through descriptive scaffold. Like wise, there were 19 (86.4%) out of 22 students *strongly agreed* that they knew how to write a descriptive text using tourist brochure through descriptive scaffold.

Discussion

After implementing of TBLT on creative task to assist the students wrote a better descriptive text, the students' attitude towards writing activities and their writing performance had improved. The students' improvement on their attitude, which was shown through their involvement during the teaching and learning process and their responses towards the implemented strategy, was gained through the use of tourist brochure.

The use of tourist brochure and its practicality for the teaching learning activities had given positive effects to the students' motivation. This fact is supported with Sari and Syafei (2013) who also state that the students more interested in learning by using tourism brochure as material in teaching English. Moreover, the skills is taught with same proportion according to the students' need without losing the element of fun in learning, comfort and eager during learning process. This is in line with Brinton (2001, pp. 457 - 476) who states that

use media to involve students more integrally in the learning process and to facilitate language learning by making it a more authentic and meaningful process. The students appeared to be highly motivated by the real-life tasks by introducing authentic pictures, it enabled them to experience more real-life tasks and gain more confidence in task performance (Park, 2012, p. 230). Thus, tourist brochure is an authentic media to be used in teaching learning process. The advantages of tourist brochure for learning in order to make learning more interesting, comfort as stated by Johari (2008).

In addition the implementation of TBLT through creative tasks is also line with the theories proposed by Willis (1996), Hyland (2003) and Harmer (2004) about the importance of process in the teaching of writing. Furthermore, the success of this present study supported the previous studies concerning the implementing of TBLT to improve students' writing ability conducted by Zhaochun (2015) and Sholihah (2011).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Based on the discussion on the previous chapter, it could be concluded that the result of the implementation TBLT approach through Creative Task in this study showed that the students' ability in writing a descriptive text had improved during the cycles conducted. The implementation of the creative task through TBLT approach had given the students chances to produce a piece of writing both cooperatively and independently through the writing process. In addition, the writing process had given them an opportunity to do prewriting, drafting, revising and editing their draft for composing good writing in terms of good content, appropriate organization, suitable vocabulary, correct grammar and proper mechanics. Moreover, the students' attitude towards writing activities improved from the preliminary study to Cycle 1 and from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2. In the preliminary study, their attitude towards writing activities was not really positive. Most of the students did not like writing because they considered writing difficult and boring. Meanwhile, in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2, they were more confident in writing and felt that the use of tourist brochure was interesting.

Suggestion

The aim of this research is to elevate the quality of the practice of teaching and learning, particularly the practice of teaching writing. For this reason, the researcher propounds some suggestions for English teachers, they should give chances to have writing task since it will encourage the students to write. Due to the positive result on TBLT in improving students' writing in English, it can be a recommendation for the English teachers to deal with the writing problems encountered by the students. In other words, the findings of this research project can be the reflection to enhance the other students' performance and confident in writing class. Peer checking in writing using semantic mapping in TBLT approach boosts the students' interest in writing, they learn through their classmates' strength and weaknesses. Furthermore, the English teachers at high school level may utilize creative task incorporated with TBLT approach as an alternative to handle students with similar problems in writing descriptive text. The teachers may modify the teaching and learning activities to be adjusted to their students' characteristics and condition especially for the time management that should be arranged properly during the teaching learning process as there are several tasks that should be done by the students. TBLT may also be used in any content area such as Mathematics, Biology, and other subjects. The forthcoming researchers who will conduct the allied research to overcome students' writing difficulties by applying TBLT and creative tasks to different text and students of different level.

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