IMPLEMENTATION OF PICTURE SEQUENCE TASK TO ASSESS THE NARRATIVE PARAGRAPH WRITING ABILITY OF THE FIRST SEMESTER OF LAW FACULTY

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ABSTRACT

The most effective way to improve the students' writing skill is to first figure out their strengths and weaknesses by assessing their ability through appropriate tasks and scoring procedures. This research was conducted to figure out the more accurate degree of narrative paragraph writing ability of the first semester of Law Faculty which was assessed through picture sequence task. The study made use of ex post facto research with descriptive analysis. Thirty-two of the first semester students of Law Faculty Mahasaraswati Denpasar University were selected by means of random sampling method as samples of the present study. Picture sequence task was used as an instrument to assess their narrative paragraph writing ability. The samples' works were scored by using analytic scoring rubric which measured format, punctuation and mechanic, content, organization, and grammar and structure. The obtained data were analyzed by using norm-reference measures of standard values. The findings showed that 71.90% of the samples succeeded while the other 28.10% failed. In conclusion, the present study showed that the narrative paragraph ability of the eighth grade students of first semester of Law Faculty Mahasaraswati Denpasar University which was assessed through picture sequence task could be categorized as sufficient.

Keywords: narrative paragraph writing ability, picture sequence task, and law faculty

Introduction

Writing skill is one of the four skills in the English language that needs to be mastered by anyone who wants to be able to compete in the globalization era. Writing has become a prominent tool for people from all social classes. Whether it is used in journals, business reports, letters, or email messages, the ability to write effectively allows individuals from different cultures and background to communicate. In academic life, writing ability is one of the variables that determines the students' graduation. This research is one example of how important writing skill is. Without a good writing skill, it is almost impossible to finish it.

However, the expectation often does not match with the reality. Many students fail to meet the standard set by the curriculum for narrative paragraph writing. Based on the previous researches of similar variable, the findings showed that first semester of Law Faculty students still had difficulties in producing a good narrative paragraph.

In assessing narrative paragraph writing ability for example, the teachers would ask the students to write a narrative paragraph by giving them only the title and sometimes only the topic from which they have to develop a narrative paragraph. The first semester of Law Faculty would find this task very difficult to complete because they do not have the level of English required yet.

One of the tasks that can be used to better assess the students' narrative paragraph writing ability is picture sequence task. Brown (2004:226) states that the main advantage in the picture- sequence task is in detaching the most ubiquitous reading and writing connection and offering instead a nonverbal means to stimulate written response. Students in junior high school level will be able to construct better sentences when presented with pictures instead of mere text instructions. Therefore, the narrative paragraph produced by the students most likely be better. In addition, the students' works should be assessed with appropriate scoring

rubric in order to find out the students' true ability in narrative paragraph writing.

The Objectives of the Study

Specific investigation is intended to find out a scientific solution about the research question. Based on the research question that has been formulated above, the present study is intended to figure out the degree achievement of narrative paragraph writing ability of first semester of Law Faculty which is assessed through picture sequence task.

Theoretical Basis

The fundamental theoretical framework can largely be summarize in the minimize versions of the ex post facto research. The present study is conducted on the ground of the following theories.

Writing Skill

Writing is one of language skills that students must learn besides the other language skills. Most people use writing skill every day such as in writing report, letter, diary, note, e-mail, job application or simply sending messages via cell phone. Nevertheless, as a productive skill, the students have recognized writing skill as a difficult skill to master. This is not without reason. Writing requires a lot more accuracy in grammar, vocabulary mastery, mechanical aspect of writing, and creativity in some cases than other skills.

Brown (2004:218) argues that people are having difficulties to produce a good piece of writing in their first language, let alone in the second language. Despite the above statements, students learning English as a second language are expected to be able to write a unified and coherent piece of writings. Fortunately, according to Langan (2008:11), writing is a skill, not a natural gift. It is a skill like driving, typing, or cooking; and, like any skill, it can be learned. It means that writing skill is not a natural talent possessed by everyone; therefore, it requires hard work and continuous practice in order to master the skill.

Writing skill is an essential skill for everyday life. Weigle (2002:1) adds that writing is now an important tool for people of all occupations in the global community. In support to the above statements, Graham and Perin

(2007:3) state that the ability to write well is a predictor of academic success and a basic requirement for participating in civic life and in the global economy. In addition, writing is also a learning tool. Harmer (2007:112) argues that writing is frequently useful as preparation for some other activities, in particular when students write sentences as a preamble to discussion activities. Writing is essential features of learning a language because it provides a very good means of foxing the vocabulary, spelling, and sentence pattern. It becomes an important aspect of students' expression at higher stage (Patel and Jain, 2008:125).

Narrative Pargraph

Oshima and Hogue (2007:24) write that narration is a story writing and when one writes a narrative paragraph, one writes about events in the order that they happen. In addition, Savage and Shafiei (2007:126) state that a narrative is a story. It has topic sentence that engages the reader's interest, a body that gives details about the main event or action in the story, and a conclusion that describes the outcome. A narrative paragraph, according to Bivens (2002:36), might be a fictional story or might focus on an event that actually has occurred to the writer. It is always written in chronological order. Based on the experts definitions of narrative paragraph above, it can be concluded that narrative paragraph is a paragraph that tells a story, whether fictional or non-fictional, written in chronological order by using time order signal. The first semester of Law Faculty were asked to write narrative paragraph, which contains orientation, complication, resolution, and re-orientation.

Assessment of Writing

Assessment is one of the most significant areas of an education system. It defines what the students take to be important, how they spend much of their academic time, and in many ways, how they value themselves (Mc.Culloch, 2007:1). Ideally, the teachers are suggested to assess all parts and skills entailed in writing. Barkaoui (2007:104) argues that designing and implementing writing assessments in an interactive process should include considerations about scoring procedures from the very beginning. The scoring

procedure helps to determine whether the results are accurately representing the students' ability or not. Analytic scoring is one of the scoring procedures commonly used in classroom assessments.

Assessment is very important to be administered in order to find out the students' mastery in narrative paragraph writing during teaching and learning process. Therefore, in association to this study, the assessment is only focused on assessing the students' ability in narrative paragraph writing. The students are asked to write a narrative paragraph based on a sequence of pictures. Furthermore, the students' work are graded using an analytic scoring rubric based on Oshima and Hogues's rubric that consists of format, punctuation and mechanics, content, organization, grammar and sentence structure.

Picture Sequence Task

One of the visual media which is commonly used in the teaching and learning process is pictures. Smaldino et al. (2005:240) state that pictures are photographic representations of people, places, and things in the form of two-dimensional that sometime in the form of sequential pictures (in series). Pictures as media are also to assess the students' ability. Assessing students' ability by using media is much more interesting and engaging. The replacement of the prevalent connection of reading and writing with the use of media to elicit both oral and written response is one of the most prominent benefit of picture- cued task (Brown, 2004). Picture-cued tasks have several characteristics which differentiate them from other kinds of tasks. They use pictures to get production from what the students see in the pictures. The students' production can be a word, a phrase, or even a sentence. Picture-cued task in the form of sequences of pictures is normally used to elicit stories.

The present study used the picture sequence task to assess the narrative paragraph writing ability of the test- takers in which they were shown a sequence of six pictures depicting a single story. The samples under study were instructed to compose a narrative paragraph based on the sequences of pictures shown.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research is a scientific inquiry aimed at learning new facts, testing ideas, etc. It is the systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data to generate new knowledge and answer a certain question or solve a problem. Therefore, research design is the process that guides researchers on how to collect, analyze and interpret the data or observation; it is a logical model that guides the investigator in the various stages of the research. In addition, research design is a planning stage of research which is usually made logically, visualizing its practicability.

The present study used an ex post facto research design with a descriptive analysis. When translated literally, ex post facto means 'from what is done afterwards'. In the context of social and educational research the phrase means 'after the fact' or 'retrospectively' and refers to those studies which investigate possible cause-and-effect relationships by observing an existing condition or state of affairs and searching back in time for plausible causal factors, (Cohen et al. 2007:264).

Population and Sample

The present study was conducted at the eighth grade students of first semester of Law Faculty with the total population of 256 students. In general, the population is regarded to have rather homogeneous characteristic in term of some traits, such as socioeconomic background, age, learning motivation, intelligence, aptitude, and attitude towards English. The method used in selecting the samples for the present study was random sampling with lottery system. The steps were as follows:

1. The researcher made 256 rolls of paper with number written on it from 1 to 256 in accordance with the population size.
2. The papers were distributed to the students
3. The students getting the paper the number 1 until 32 were chosen as the samples of the study.

From the steps above, 32 students were selected as samples for the present study. The samples consisted of 17 male and 15 female students. They were regarded as representative enough in conducting the research of assessing narrative paragraph writing ability through picture sequence task.

Research Instrument

The instrument of this study was in the form of picture sequence task. Picture sequence task was considered more interesting and engaging for the students in this level rather than a mere written instruction. The research instrument consisted of six pictures telling a single story about an event happened in the past. The samples were asked to observe the pictures which were arranged in sequence and then write a simple narrative paragraph from them. The narrative paragraph should follow the generic structure of a simple narrative paragraph which consists of orientation, complication, resolution, and also reorientation. The researcher used analytic scoring rubric to score the samples' results in order to get a more accurate representation of the samples' ability in narrative paragraph writing when assessed through picture sequence task.

Data Collection

The data of the present study were collected by administering the research instrument to the samples under study of the first semester of Law Faculty. The research instrument was in the form of picture sequence task comprised of six sequential pictures telling a single story. The subjects under study were given 30 minutes to complete the task. They were expected to produce at least one sentence for each picture to create a complete story from the pictures.

Data Analysis

The main purpose of the study was to measure the narrative paragraph writing ability of the first semester of Law Faculty of Mahasaraswati Denpasar University. Their ability in arithmetic mean and it was symbolized by "M". The formula used to find out the mean score of the present study was as follows:

Where:

$$M = \frac{\Sigma x}{N}$$

M   = Mean of Score Test

x   = Total Scores

N   = Number of Samples

3. The next step was to find out the standard deviation (SD). The standard deviation is another way of showing the spread of the scores. It measures the degree to which the group of scores deviation from the mean. The formula which was used to find out the standard deviation (SD) of the scores of the present study was as follows:

$$SD = \frac{\sqrt{\Sigma D^2}}{N}$$

Where:

SD   = Standard Deviation

D^2 = Squared Deviation of each score from the mean

N   = Number of Samples

The obtained data were analyzed by using norm-reference measure of five standard values, which respectively showed excellent, good, sufficient, and insufficient and poor achievement of narrative paragraph writing. The formulas of norm-references measure of five standard values were as follows:

M + 1.5 SD	=	A/Excellent achievement
M + 0.5 SD	=	B/Good achievement
M – 0.5 SD	=	C/Sufficient achievement
M – 1.5 SD	=	D/Insufficient achievement
< M – 1.5 SD	=	E/Poor achievement

Finding And Discussion

The data analysis showed that the mean score was 2.74. The next step was to find out the standard deviation of the present study. The standard deviation was another way of showing the distribution of the scores. To find out the standard deviation, the deviation of each sample's score was counted by subtracting the score with the mean score. The value was then squared to figure out the squared deviation of each score. The result of the squared deviation of the scores of the samples is 0.66.

The computation of the mean scores (M) and the standard deviation of the scores (SD) respectively resulted in the figures of 2.73 and 0.66. After finding out both the mean and standard deviation of the scores, the samples' achievement in narrative paragraph writing

ability could be categorized into the norm reference value of five standard measures. The score range of 3.73, 3.07 <3.73, 2.41<3.07, 1.74<2.41 and<1.74, respectively indicated the excellent (A), good (B), sufficient (C), insufficient (D), and poor achievement (E).

The findings showed that there were 3 samples with excellent achievement; 7 samples, good achievement; 13 samples, sufficient achievement; 7 samples, insufficient achievement; and 2 samples, poor achievement. The results of the data analysis above showed that 71.90% of the samples under study succeeded and the other 28.10% of the samples under study failed in writing narrative paragraph through picture sequence task. It meant that most of the first semester of Law Faculty of Mahasaraswati Denpasar University could be said to have some capability to write simple narrative paragraph. The samples in general have already had adequate understanding in writing narrative paragraph. The summary of the finding could be summarized in the form of percentages from the table below:

Table 1
Summary of Finding

N	Converted Scores	Total	Percentage
1	3.73 (A/Excellent)	3	9.38 %
2	3.07 <3.73 (A/Good)	7	21.90%
3	2.41 <3.07 (C/Sufficient)	13	40.62%
4	1.74 < 2.41 (D/Insufficient)	7	21.90%
5	< 1.74 (E/Poor)	2	6.20%
		32	100%

Conclusion And Suggestion

The data analysis using norm- reference measure of five standard values showed that there were 71.90% of the samples under study succeeded and the other 28.10% failed. The samples in general have already had adequate understanding in writing format. They were able to write the paragraph in the correct format. However, many students failed in organization and punctuation. They were mostly had

difficulty in using the apostrophe. Most of them have difficulty in grammar, particularly the past tense. They were also lack in vocabulary especially verbs.

Based on the research finding, the degree achievement of narrative paragraph writing ability the first semester of Law Faculty of Mahasaraswati Denpasar University which was assessed through picture sequence task could be categorized as sufficient achievement.

Based on the above conclusion, the researcher would like to give some suggestions for the teachers, the students, and other researchers. This research showed that most of the students could construct better sentences when they were assessed with picture sequence task. The task used to assess the students' narrative paragraph writing ability in the present study could also be used as teaching media to increase the students' interest in learning to write narrative paragraph. In addition, the use of analytic scoring rubric also greatly helps to show the real ability of the students. Thus, revealing more accurate information regarding their weakness and strength could be used as a guideline to better plan the next lesson.

The first semester of Law Faculty of Mahasaraswati Denpasar University students are suggested to be more motivated and serious in learning English especially in writing narrative paragraph.

For other researcher, this study can be used as reference for future investigation of similar variables. Moreover, these findings could be used to estimate the students' ability in narrative paragraph writing when it is assessed through picture sequence task.

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