

BIG BOOK PROJECT CAN IMPROVE STUDENTS' GRAMMAR ABILITY AND WRITING COMPETENCE

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Abstrak

Tujuan artikel ini adalah untuk mengetahui apakah siswa yang diajar dengan menggunakan Big-Book dapat meningkatkan kemampuan tata bahasa menjadi lebih baik dalam menulis; dalam hal konten, organisasi, tata bahasa, kosa kata, dan mekanika. Siswa yang diajar dengan menggunakan Big-Book memiliki menulis yang lebih baik daripada siswa yang diajar tanpa menggunakan Big-Book . Dengan kata lain, Big-Book dapat membantu siswa dalam menulis. Dengan menggunakan Big Book dapat meningkatkan kemampuan menggunakan tata bahasa yang baik dan kemampuan menulis mereka.

Kata Kunci: Big-Book, Kemampuan Menulis, dan Tata Bahasa

INTRODUCTION

The big book is introduced during the English lesson in the classroom. Its emphasis is on a whole class teaching and shared writing. Every class in schools now spends part of each literacy lesson looking at a book together, but it is difficult for thirty children and a teacher to discuss the contents of the book and for them to share and view one book of an ordinary or small size. Hence the large format book is designed for the whole class to share and participate in the instructional program. This big book could perhaps offer an excellent way to develop literacy, in particular, improving students' grammar ability and writing competence. The advantage of the big book is it comprises self contained double page spreads display of appealing colorful photographs, fact files, board games and stories of our daily life which capture the distinctive physical and cultural aspects of life in Indonesia.

Big books are a valuable tool in the teaching of English for children in Indonesia as English is a foreign language. Teachers agree that using big books can improve the development of the four language skills. Writing is one of four language skills. Students are difficult in writing because they are lack grammar ability. If students want to be good writing, the students must have ability in grammar. Grammar is a basic when students write. Grammar is important lesson

in English language. The introductory part of the lessons, which include writing and discussion of the big books, followed by activities based on the theme of the book, promote pupils' interest in learning English. Children's confidence in using English can be enhanced.

Big Books are also produced for *pedagogical* reasons, and using them in the classroom makes good teaching sense. Big Books can help the students to extend or for some less fortunate children, to establish the positive effects of writing. Large print and colourful illustrations allow whole classrooms to share good stories, memorable poems and interesting books of fact. And especially when used with small groups (up to eight children), Big Books enrich oral language development through your modeled writing, through risk-free participation by the children in subsequent writing and discussions, and through the meaningful teaching of skills within context all positive and therefore powerful learning experiences.

WRITING COMPETENCE

Writing is a powerful instrument for students to use to express their thoughts, feelings, and assessments about what they have read, seen, experienced. As students continue to develop an understanding of the writing process; the elements of writing; text forms, genres, formats; and technology, they are able to express themselves more confidently and effectively.

Writing is also an activity that takes time and cannot be treated as a one-step affair. They also know that readers expect much more than just correct grammar; they expect interesting, clearly written, and well organized content. The basic rule of writing says that you need to think about what you are going to write before you write and go over your writing a few times before sending it out or publishing it. This is because the act of writing is a complicated task, which involves many thought processes all going on at once. In order to produce written material more efficiently, these processes can be broken down into stages. We suggest the following six stages: Planning, Drafting, Revising, Editing, Proofreading, Presenting.

Teachers use their professional assessments and careful observation in order to provide explicit instruction that will support students as they become effective writers.

Writing is an interactive process by nature since it evolves out of the symbolic interplay between writer. By making conditions more 'authentic' than the ones in traditional classroom tasks, an awareness of audience, purpose and intentionality is reinforced. While planning a written piece, the writer is constrained to consider the audience and to adopt a reader-oriented approach so as to achieve a persuasive, emotive or objective function. Interactivity can be

promoted in the writing class by implementing some of the suggestions that follow (L. Hamp-Lyons and B. Heasley: 1992);

1. Group-brainstorming on a given topic

(i.e. Students work cooperatively and write down all the ideas that come to mind in connection with a topic).

2. Whole class discussion of how a particular text might need adjustment according to the audience it is addressed to.

3. Collaborative writing

(i.e. Students work together to write a previously agreed text).

4. Whole class text construction and composing on the blackboard.

5. Writing workshop or in-class writing

Students consult each other and co-construct texts while the teacher moves around listening to their comments, providing feedback or answering questions on grammatical patterning, lexical items, the force or validity of an argument, the order of presentation of the information, organizational aspects, use of detail and so on. The teacher keeps track of their progress and works out a record of most frequent questions, doubts and inaccuracies for a future 'error analysis session'.

6. Group research on a text topic

Students divide out the responsibility for different aspects of the information-gathering stage on a certain topic. They then pool their results and work together to plan a text, which may be collective or individual.

7. Peer-editing

Students exchange their first drafts of a text and point out changes which are needed to help the reader (e.g. better organization, paragraph divisions, sentence variety, vocabulary choice). They can also act as each other's editors spotting vocabulary repetitions, grammatical infelicities, spelling mistakes and so on.

8. Whole class examination of texts produced by other students (with names removed, photocopied or displayed on an overhead projector) for the purpose of analysis of specific aspects

(e.g. development of ideas, text structure, cohesion or grammar or adequacy to context).

9. Specification of an audience and purpose of a text by making the situation 'real'

(e.g. exchanging e-mail messages with other English-speaking students, sharing information about a topic another class is actually studying, producing a class newspaper to be read by family or friends, outlining the explanations of a game which will then really be played, among many other possibilities).

Next, writing is a complex and challenging activity for many students, teachers should focus on the grammatical concepts that are essential for the clear communication of meaning. Teachers encourage students to examine grammatical errors in their own writing. They don't overemphasize grammatical terminology to the detriment of students' ability to understand and apply the concepts. Weaver (1998) proposes a similar approach to teaching grammar in the context of writing. She writes, "What all students need is guidance in understanding and applying those aspects of grammar that are most relevant to writing." Weaver proposes five grammatical concepts that enable writers to show improvement in sentence revision, style, and editing.

Kathleen et al. (1996: 2) say that the ability to write involves the components of writing. They are: (1) grammatical ability – the ability to write English in grammatically correct sentence, (2) lexical abilities – the ability to choose words that are correct and used appropriately, (3) mechanical ability – the ability to correctly use punctuation-spelling-capitalization etc, (4) stylistic skills – the ability to use sentences and paragraphs appropriately, (5) organizational skills – the ability to organize written work according to the conventions of English, including the order and selection of materials and (6) judgment appropriacy – the ability to make judgment about what appropriate depending on task, the purpose of the writing, and the audience. So that, presenting writing skills for the students must be done as seriously as possible in order to be successful in handling the writing process.

It's meant that writing is a complex process that allows writers to explore thoughts and ideas, and make them visible and concrete. Writing encourages thinking and learning for it motivates communication and makes thought available for reflection. When thought is written down, ideas can be examined, reconsidered, added to, rearranged, and changed.

Furthermore, a minimum of grammar for maximum benefit; teaching concepts on subject, verb, sentence, clause, phrase, and related concepts for editing, teaching style though sentence combining and sentence generating, teaching sentence sense through the manipulation of syntactic elements, teaching both the power of dialects and the dialects of power, teaching punctuation and mechanics for convention, clarity, and style. Rather than strive to teach all grammatical concepts to all students, teachers should prioritize and provide instruction on the grammatical elements that most affect their students' ability to write effectively. Teachers should also be sensitive to individual students' readiness to learn and apply grammatical concepts.

Being able to write well enables you to consolidate and organize your ideas better, build arguments clearly and logically and actually think better. This makes you more confident about expressing your thoughts and can improve your verbal

communications skills. Good writing is about communicating a message well and this requires focus and an engaging style. A good writer can tailor his message for the intended audience. Writing well is a skill that can complement and enhance all those other skills.

The idea that learning writing is a need for students is agreeable. There are some reasons that make the ability of writing important as what Barras (2005) says: 1) Writing helps to remember Writing is an aid to remembering. By taking notes, people can make information safe and semi-permanent or even permanent so that they can access the information anytime without being afraid of being lost. 2) Writing helps to think Writing could be an aid to thinking. People can make a note of useful thoughts as they come to mind, for example, when they are planning or in the middle of writing a composition because thoughts could come anytime. 3) Writing helps to communicate In the past, writing was the only possible way to communicate with anyone out of earshot. Although, now there have been devices (telephone, radio, internet, etc.) that make it possible to communicate orally with people in distance, the importance of writing is still there. There is a limit in which the use of such devices is impossible, particularly when two people communicating are removed, not only, by distance, but also by time.

While there are a number of activities that an English teacher can apply in the classroom in teaching writing, the number of writing performance is generally limited in types. There are five types of performance in writing (Brown, 2000). 1) Imitative This type of writing performance is intended for students to learn the conventions of the orthographic code. In intensive writing, students write down English letters, words or sentences. 2) Intensive, Intensive writing focuses on exposing students with grammatical concepts. Students typically work on controlled grammatical exercises. 3) Self-writing In this writing performance, the activities no longer focuses on specific grammatical features and orthographic code. Students begin to write information for themselves, they themselves are the audience of their writing. 4) Display writing. Display writing is a type of writing performance which is commonly found in the school curricula context. Activities in this performance include short answer exercises, essay examinations and research reports. 5) Real writing Real writing reflects the genuine communication of messages to audiences in need of the messages. In this writing, students write for fulfilling the need of information from the audiences. The types of writing performance, to some extent, lie in a continuum of student levels of literacy. Intensive writing is a simple activity which is best given for beginners and so forth. Furthermore, each type of the performances must have its own focus and goal for student learning for themselves, they themselves are the audience of their writing.

Writing especially in the English writing competence of the students. Writing itself is a communicative, productive, and expressive activity by using written material as its medium. The activity is meant to deliver a message from writer to the reader. In writing activity, a student should be able to utilize graphology, grammatical structure, and vocabulary. Jarvis (2000) emphasizes that many students do not enjoy writing because they feel that if they cannot do it correctly at the first time then they will never get it.

GRAMMAR ABILITY

We all use language to think and communicate. Language is systematically organized by its grammar which is inextricably linked to meaning and communication, we cannot make sense without shaping grammatical and linguistic structures. All students have extensive grammatical knowledge. Much of this is implicit, but they are able to generalize and improvise from this knowledge. Teaching which focuses on grammar helps to make this knowledge explicit, extend children's range and develop more confident and versatile language use.

Good grammar can contribute to good writing, but grammar is only one part of writing, not the whole. As it is traditionally viewed and taught, grammar can contribute most in the area of style but very little in the areas of content and organization, areas that have far more influence in improving overall writing quality. Grammar has a place in writing instruction, but, at the same time, we need to rethink our teaching of grammar. We need language instruction that connects more directly and significantly with writing improvement or, as I have been arguing, principles rather than just rules.

Grammar is one of the most difficult aspects of a foreign language to master. It is defined as "the rules that govern how a language's sentences are formed" (Thornbury, 2000). English grammar has been traditionally viewed as "a system of syntax that decides the order and patterns in which words are arranged in sentences" (Close, 1982). It is argued that mastering grammar is a complex process that requires "making a series of decisions about when and why to use one form rather than the other" (Celce-Murcia, 2002). Making the right decisions when writing in foreign language requires grammatical proficiency.

Grammar knowledge is the elemental foundation for writing (Fearn & Farnan, 2007). The learning of grammar in writing rather than for writing should be taught so learners understand better how the language works, and function. Grammar in writing allows learners to understand about language when they write (Hillocks & Smith, 2006). Grammar instruction is most naturally integrated during the revising, editing, and proofreading phases of the writing process. After students have written their first drafts and feel comfortable with the ideas and

organization of their writing, teachers may wish to employ various strategies to help students see grammatical concepts as language choices that can enhance their writing purpose. Students will soon grow more receptive to revising, editing, and proofreading their writing. In writing conferences, for example, teachers can help students revise for effective word choices. As the teacher and student discuss the real audience(s) for the writing, the teacher can ask the student to consider how formal or informal the writing should be, and remind the student that all people adjust the level of formality in oral conversation, depending on their listeners and the speaking context. The teacher can help the student identify words in his or her writing that change the level of formality of the writing.

To help students revise boring, monotonous sentences, teachers might ask students to read their writing aloud to partners. This strategy helps both the partner and the writer to recognize when, for example, too many sentences begin with "It is" or "There are." Both the partner and the writer can discuss ways to vary the sentence beginnings. After the writer revises the sentences, the partner can read the sentences aloud. Then both can discuss the effectiveness of the revision.

Teachers can help students edit from passive voice to active voice by presenting a mini lesson. In editing groups, students can exchange papers and look for verbs that often signal the passive voice, such as was and been. When students find these verbs, they read the sentence aloud to their partners and discuss whether the voice is passive and, if so, whether an active voice verb might strengthen the sentence. The student writer can then decide which voice is most effective and appropriate for the writing purpose and audience.

Teachers can help students become better proofreaders through peer editing groups. Based on the writing abilities of their students, teachers can assign different proofreading tasks to specific individuals in each group. For example, one person in the group might proofread for spelling errors, another person for agreement errors, another person for fragments and run-ons, and another person for punctuation errors. As students develop increasing skill in proofreading, they become responsible for more proofreading areas. Collaborating with classmates in peer editing groups helps students improve their own grammar skills as well as understand the importance of grammar as a tool for effective communication.

As teachers integrate grammar instruction with writing instruction, they should use the grammar terms that make sense to the students. By incorporating grammar terms naturally into the processes of revising, editing, and proofreading, teachers help students understand and apply grammar purposefully to their own writing. Strategies such as writing conferences, partnership writing, grammar minilessons, and peer response groups are all valuable methods for integrating grammar into writing instruction.

BIG BOOK PROJECT

Big-Book is a book which has a big size as well as the font (Suyanto, 2007). Due to the size which is different from ordinary books, Big-Book can be seen easily from all part of the class. Besides, it has also colorful series pictures inside to help students became more understand about the content of the story or even stimulate students' imagination. Lynch (2008) found that Big-Book creates secure and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom and attracts students' attention in teaching and learning process.

Furthermore, Big-Book is a valuable tool in the teaching of English. Teachers agree that using Big-Book can improve the development of the four language skills. They usually respond to the best of their abilities and clearly display a very high degree of interest in the lessons (Fan, 2007). Wadlington and Hicks (1995, cited in Colville-Hall & O'Connor, 2006) stated that students can observe letter-sound relationships, sentence and paragraph structure, and story grammar in the Big-Book.

Lynch (2008): Big-Book can also be powerful motivators for learning. You might, for instance, use the Big-Book to explore letter-sound associations, compound words, verb endings, punctuation, contractions, rhyming words, etc. Familiarity with the story helps build sight vocabulary as well. This state also showed that Big-Book is effective in improving students' language skill, particularly writing, for some reasons. Firstly, the visual of Big-Book is a sure hook to make good teaching sense in the classroom. Big- Book is considered to be one of the most effective ways of getting students involved with print (Strickland & Morrow, 1990 cited in Nambiar, 1993). Enlarged texts allow all the children in the classroom to see and react to the words. In a study carried out with the Big-Book, it was found that having the print enlarged served as a concrete focus (Combs, 1987 in cited Nambiar, 1993). If the teacher uses a normal-sized story book, it would be more difficult to get all the children to focus on the same part of the text at the same time.

As for illustration in the big book, the graphics are created to match the characters, settings, and props of the text (unclear) in the big book. An illustration is a visual such as drawing, painting, photograph or other work of art that stresses subject more than form. According to Walton (2008), illustrations can be used to display a wide range of subject matter and serve a variety of functions, such as: giving faces to characters in a story, displaying a number of examples of an item described in an academic textbook (e.g. A typology) , visualizing step-wise sets of instructions in a technical manual, communicating subtle thematic tone in a narrative, linking brands to the ideas of human expression, individuality and creativity, making a reader laugh or smile, for fun (to make laugh) funny.

Based on illustration in the big book, the students should be easier to know the correct grammar in writing. Photograph can growth the students' motivation in writing process. If the big book is presented in text, grammar will be presented with different color and bold typing. As visual way, the teacher can present the material in every meeting with various forms. The teacher can show; drawing, painting, photograph, story, and so on. This way can interest the students' motivation in writing. By writing, the students will include in grammar. Basic grammar should be mastered by students in order to present a good writing.

According to Karges-Bone (1992), there are several essential characteristics to a successful big book learning experience. Big books are short stories (10–15 pages) that immediately engage learners' interest, contain a rhyme pattern that children notice and learn, big books are “big on pictures” which assists in the construction of meaning, big books have repetitive phrases and a controlled vocabulary that help with vocabulary learning, big books have a simple, but interesting storyline, and contain elements of humor. Books in which (partial) texts are easily learned from the repetitions and that access student prior knowledge are preferred. Curtain and Dahlberg (2004) state that using big books enables early language learners to learn to read first by “reciting and memorizing, recognizing sight words, and decoding the text . . . and to begin matching oral language with the written word”. Nambiar (1991) recommends texts for big books that are a rich source of activities to activate prior knowledge, model the thinking process, encourage predictive skills, and provide creative linguistic activities for all major curriculum objectives.

Teachers are able to describe the holistic learning approach to the interpretive mode of communication (or writing) and justify its use in the foreign language classroom, as well as identify the procedure and techniques for using the shared writing/big books approach. Inherent in the lessons are elements of the interpersonal and/or presentational modes, as well as goals of culture, connection, comparison, and communities. Teachers are engaged in materials development as they actually create a big book and an integrated teaching unit based on standards-based instruction, shared reading instruction, and the interest and developmental level of early language learners. In the process, they acquire the ability to apply theory to practice by teaching several lessons using the big book and parts of the unit to elementary school children in a language enrichment field assignment with the goal of communication in the interpretive mode, and reflect on the degree of success of student learning based on set objectives of each lesson.

After creating the story, teacher may use poster board or heavy paper for the covers and pages of the big book. The use of clip art has given new meaning to authors as the non-artists learn to illustrate text with technology. Gifted sketchers create big, uncluttered pages to illustrate their texts. Teachers share their

stories in draft form with one another to obtain feedback for error correction. The final product is laminated and attached with large rings so that turning the pages is easy. Teacher may choose to use an easel for presenting the text to the students. Finally, they design their units following guidelines for the following three step approach to shared writing.

Teaching writing by using big books are designed to help the teacher model the conventions of written language in whole class and small group sessions. The books provide the initial introduction to each text type, presenting and deconstructing exemplars of kinds of text taught across the primary grades. The exemplars for teaching writing form the start of suggested teaching pathways. The material presented in the big books are reinforced though use of the interactive writing and students assessment and activity pages located in the back of each teacher resource. Each of the exemplars texts is presented over three double page spreads. First spread; text presentation, second spread; the text structure of the text type is deconstructed using color coding. Teacher focus notes are provided at the top right- hand side of the spread, highlighting key teaching points and questions. The third spread; selected the language feature of the text types are highlighted. Teacher focus notes are provided at the top right-hand side of the spread, highlighting key teaching points and questions.

The use of Big Book motivates students to write. Students no longer think that writing is hard task since it makes the enjoyment in the class. The big-colorful pictures in the Big Book also attract students' attention and stimulate imagination to write a text. The Big Book will ease students to come up with the idea to write sentences and also text. By using motivating big books in a shared writing experience, older learners can observe letter-sound relationships, sentence and paragraph structure, and story grammar. The teacher models writing strategies and decoding strategies. Interestingly, some of our own teacher have reported successful use of big books in teaching process.

Teachers develop effective skills in teaching writing that include the development and use of a big book and the thematic unit that accompanied it. Teachers create context and standards based instruction and implemented their lessons in a real world instructional setting. To do this effectively they had to understand emergent literacy theory, literacy in a foreign language, language acquisition, and characteristics of big books. The task of designing and implementing a big book and teaching unit afforded them experiences that had additional benefits. The value of their learning experiences and opportunities was expressed in their own words. As such, teachers become well aware of the importance of learners' acquisition of interpretive skills.

CONCLUSION

Big-Book project can create good atmosphere in the class environment so that students can learn with less pressure or boredom. The students who be taught by using big book can attract students' interest and attention. Moreover, the application of the media eases students to comprehend the materials and generate the idea in writing. In short, the big book is considered as the effective media in teaching writing. For the English teachers, this article can be used as the information dealing with media in teaching writing as the investigations related to the application of Big-Book carried out in this present study show positive result. English teachers can use the Big-Book in their teaching and learning process, not only in writing but also in other skills.

To conclude, the big book project ensures that teachers make progress toward achievement in a foreign language education program. Teachers are not only able to discuss the process of getting learners to communicate using the interpretive mode, they are able to develop instruction, applying theory to practice in a class setting, and reflecting on student learning. Additionally, the teaching experience with big books in the urban school helps them build confidence and a sense of self efficacy for the student-teaching phase of their program.

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