

IMPROVING STUDENTS' ABILITY IN WRITING THROUGH INQUIRY BASED LEARNING

Yuniati Ulfah Milatasari
English Education Study Program
Sebelas Maret University Surakarta

Email: yuniatiulfah_m@yahoo.co.id

Abstract: The objectives of this paper are: (1) to identify whether the implementation of Inquiry Based Learning improves students' writing ability or not and (2) to identify the strengths and weaknesses of Inquiry Based Learning implementation. The research was conducted in SMA Negeri 3 Sukoharjo. The subject of research was 39 students of X3. This research used action research conducted in two cycles. Every cycle consisted of four steps: planning, action, observing and reflecting. In collecting data, the researcher used observation, questionnaire, interview and test. The result of the research showed that Inquiry Based Learning could improve the students' writing ability. Their writing improved in each writing's elements such as content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics. Their improvement can be seen by comparing the pre-test score and the post-test score. Their mean score of the pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2 were 72.04, 75.92, and 79.60. In implementation, there were some strengths of using Inquiry Based Learning such as making the students more confident and active, developing their critical thinking, and understanding the concept. On the other hand, this technique also had some weaknesses. Inquiry Based Learning is not appropriate technique for unmotivated students, not easy to do in limited time, and difficult to implement if the students are familiar with conventional way.

Key word: Inquiry Based Learning, students' writing skill, SMA N 3 Sukoharjo

Language is used to communicate in the society. As an International Language, English is used by the world society to communicate in both oral and written. Revering the importance of English, Education Department in Indonesia determines English as one of subjects taught in Senior High School. The purpose of teaching English for Senior High School is to develop communicative competence in spoken and written forms and to reach literacy levels that can be realized through four skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing.

By learning writing, the students can express their ideas, feeling, and experience in written form to others. Brookes and Grundy (2000: 7) defines writing as an activity that includes several processes, such as thinking what to write and ordering it into sentence and paragraph. Therefore, writing has some steps that need enough

time do finish it. Referring to Gerson and Gerson (2000: 10) the writing processes are: (1) Prewriting, the students determine the purpose of writing, gather data and consider audience. (2) Write, the students determine the purpose of writing, gather data and consider audience. (3) Rewrite, they need to make some revision. To write English well, the students should master the writing abilities. According to Brown (2001: 335), the criteria of good writing are content, organization, vocabulary, grammatical use and mechanics such as spelling and punctuation.

Based on the observation and questionnaire, the students regarded that English was difficult and they got problems in writing. Their main problems were implementing grammar and punctuation. The other problems were developing ideas, organizing paragraph, and limited vocabulary. The students also had low

motivation in writing. They complained to the teacher when the teacher asked them to write a text. Some students did not have enthusiasm to write. The teacher did not use any technique in writing. She focused on the product. She also explained that the students got difficulties in grammar. It indicates that their writing is far from a good writing.

In teaching writing, the teacher can try any technique with attractive activities and media to improve students' writing ability. The one technique is Inquiry Based Learning. Sanjaya (2010: 196) says that Inquiry Based Learning is a series of learning activities based on critical and analytical thinking to look for and find the answer of issue. By using Inquiry Based Learning, students can understand the process of writing. They can learn how to generate ideas and make a good organization by finding the answer of teacher or students question. It also can develop their critical thinking in writing. Ash and Kluger-Bell (2012) state that Inquiry Based Learning gives content and conceptual understanding and development, the skills and the activities of doing discipline, and attitudes and habits of mind. Therefore, the students can develop their understanding about the grammar and mechanics concept. The students can discuss with their friends to complete or find alternative idea. They also can make a good sentence and content, use correct spelling and punctuation by understanding the concept and doing discussion and revision their writing in-group. Therefore, the students are not only as a writer but also as a reader and editor.

From the background above, the problems in this study are as follow: "Does Inquiry Based Learning improve the students' writing ability? If yes, to what extend Inquiry Based Learning improve

students' writing skill." and "What are the strengths and weaknesses of using Inquiry Based Learning to teach writing when it is implemented in this research?"

Silva in Kroll (1997: 14) states that writing is how to arrange, fit sentences and paragraphs into prescribed patterns. In addition, Brookes and Grundy (2000: 7) defines writing as an activity that includes several processes, such as thinking what to write and ordering it into sentence and paragraph. While Berlin in Kroll (1997: 25) says that writing is an ability to show the self discovered and expressed creative act which need a process to discover the product by the writer.

Based on these theories, it can be concluded that writing is an activity how to express idea in written form which need process such as thinking to discover and clarify idea, facts, and experience, arranging it into sentences and paragraph, revising it and editing it into developed paragraph.

In writing, the students not only write based on the topic but also should pay attention the criteria of good writing. According to Brown (2001: 335), the criteria of good writing are content, organization, vocabulary, grammatical use and mechanics such as spelling and punctuation.

Sanjaya (2010: 196) defines that Inquiry Based Learning is a series of learning activities based on critical and analytical thinking to look for and find the answer of issue. In addition, Gulo in Trianto (2011: 166) states that Inquiry strategy is a series of teaching and learning process which involves all students' ability to search and investigate systematically, critically, logically and analytically. Inquiry-Based Learning is a student-centered technique that permits students to discover something and use their own

questions to guide their learning (Bush, 2011).

Based on the theories above, it can be concluded that Inquiry Based Learning is a student centered strategy which involves activities such as searching, discovering, and analyzing an issue or questions by using critical and analytical thinking to get information.

The inquiry process is started by one's own curiosity, interest, or passion to understand an observation or solve a problem. Schneider (2012) says that the cycles of Inquiry are (1) Ask, this step focuses on a problem or a question that students begin to define. It begins with students' curiosity about the topic, ideally with their own questions. Open-ended questions allow the students to explore the topic, (2) Investigate, the students or groups of students collect information, study, collect and exploit resources, experiment, look, interview, draw, (3) Create, the students start making links the information. They write them down in some kind of report, (4) Discuss, the students share their ideas with each other, and ask others about their own experiences and investigations, (5) Reflect, This step consists in taking time to look back. Think again about the initial question, the path taken, and the actual conclusions.

According to Joyce and Weil (1996: 200) during Inquiry process, the teacher's role is to select the problem situation, to help the students in inquiry procedures, to respond to students' idea with the necessary information, to help beginning inquirers establish a focus in their investigation, and to facilitate discussion of the problem situation among the students.

Every technique has advantages and disadvantages. Similarly, Inquiry Based Learning has them too. Roestiyah (2001: 76-77) states that Inquiry Based Learning

has some advantages. They are (1) creating and developing self-concept of students; (2) helping to remind something and transfer the knowledge; (3) motivating the students to think and work by themselves and have objective, honest, and open minded behavior; (4) motivating the students to think intuitively and determining hypothesis; (5) giving intrinsic satisfaction; (6) stimulating the students in teaching and learning process; (7) developing the students' talent; (8) giving freedom to the students to study by themselves; (9) avoiding the used of the traditional way in studying; (10) giving enough time to the students to assimilate and accommodate the information.

Besides Inquiry Based Learning has some advantages, it also has some disadvantages. They are (1) the teacher will be difficult to control students' activities effectively; (2) the teacher is not able to give the individual encouragement and guidance; (3) in implementation, it needs long time.

RESEARCH METHODS

The researcher used action research as method in this research. Carr and Kemmis in Suyadi (2011: 21-22) say that action research is a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants (teachers, students) in social situation in order to improve their reasonable understanding of these practices, and the situation in which the practices are carried out. According to Cohen and Manion in Nunan (1992: 18), action research is being concerned with the identification and solution of problems in a specific context.

From the theories above, it can be concluded that action research is a study of social situational in educational context using self-reflective to identify the problem and find the solution.

The action research has some steps that must be followed by the researcher. Referring to Arikunto in Suyadi (2011: 50), action research steps are (1) planning, the researcher identifies the problem, determines the research problem, and finds the solution; (2) acting, the researcher does action in class based on planning; (3) observation, the researcher should break down the kind of data collection, how to get the data and the kind of data instrument; (4) reflection, the researcher retells what he/she have done to know the strength and weakness.

The subject of the research was 39 students of X3 in SMA N 3 Sukoharjo. This class as a research subject because the students had low writing ability and motivation in writing. Therefore, they had low achievement in writing.

In this classroom action research, the researcher collected the data using qualitative and quantitative method. The quantitative data were collected by the pre-test and post-test, while qualitative data were collected by observation, questionnaire, and interview.

The qualitative data including observation, interview, and questionnaire could be analyzed using constant comparative method. Glaser and Strauss (1967) say that a constant comparative method as a means of analyzing sociological data which is applied in the same study to any kind of qualitative information including observations, documents, interviews, books, articles, etc. They describe the stage of constant comparative method are comparing

incidents applicable to each category, integrating categories and their properties, delimiting the theory, and writing the theory.

In quantitative data, the researcher compared the mean score of each test to know there was improvement in students' writing ability or not.

DISCUSSION

The implementation of Inquiry Based Learning could improve the students' writing ability. It has natural steps like writing processes. Schneider (2012) says the Inquiry Based Learning steps are asking, investigating, creating, discussing and reflecting. Asking and investigating are prewriting step in writing. Then, creating is write step in writing. Discussing is rewrite steps in writing. Reflecting as final step in Inquiry Based Learning can be used to evaluate the students' problems in writing and the cause of them. These steps are easy to follow but challenging. The challenging activities can motivate the students to learn something. The researcher also use picture as media that can attract the students' interest and help the students in generating ideas.

After doing Inquiry Based Learning implementation in cycle 1 and 2, the students in X3 can improve their writing ability. Their mean score increased from 72.04 in the pre-test to 79.60 in the post-test 2 that can be seen in table 4.5. The number of students who reached the passing grade also increases. There were increasing in the number of students score above 80.

Table 1. The Mean Score of Students' Writing from two Correctors

Test	The mean score
Pre-test	72.04
Post-test 1	75.92
Post-test 2	79.60

The students' improvement; strengths and weaknesses of Inquiry Based Learning are explained as follows:

Before doing Inquiry Based Learning implementation, the students could write descriptive text based on the topic, but their writing lacked detail. The students were good enough in organization. Moreover, some students' writings were loosely organized. The students could choose the appropriate words in writing. Moreover, their writing was lack detail that made their vocabulary were limited. Most of students could not implement grammar in writing. Their writing was many ungrammatical sentences. There were some confused meanings in their sentences. The students got difficulties in punctuation, especially coma. Some students got difficulty in spelling. Any student made error in capitalization because of their handwriting style or their careless.

According to Sanjaya (2010: 196) Inquiry Based Learning is a series of learning activities based on critical and analytical thinking to look for and find the answer of issue. In addition, Worksheet Library states that Inquiry Based Learning is a processing model of information that allows pupils to discover meaning and relevant information through a series of steps that lead to a conclusion or reflection on the newly attained knowledge. It means that the students use critical and analytical thinking to create questions so they can answer the questions to get much information based on the topic. They also

can enrich vocabulary because they get much information.

Gulo in Trianto (2011: 166) states that Inquiry strategy is a series of teaching and learning process which involves all students' ability to search and investigate systematically, critically, logically and analytically. It can be concluded that the students should think systematically, critically, logically and analytically in organizing paragraph. The students can make an outline before writing that can help them to organize their writing. They should think their writing organization has been logic and systematic or not. If it is not logic and systematic, they should think to correct it into logical and systematic organization.

Inquiry Based Learning has three main aspects that can be developed. Ash and Kluger-Bell (2012) state that Inquiry Based Learning gives content and conceptual understanding and development, the skills and the activities of doing discipline, and attitudes and habits of mind. Therefore, the students can develop their understanding about the grammar concept by analyzing the example of sentences individually or in pairs or in-group.

While thirteen (2012) argues Inquiry Based Learning supports the habits of mind; for English, it includes literary ideas and ideals. It means the students can understand the concept of mechanics. It also can change their habits of mind that they should use the right rule in literature and use acceptable handwriting style in English or Indonesian subject.

After the research implementation, Inquiry Based Learning made the students could create their own question using

critical thinking in collecting information, so they could develop idea. Although they were difficult enough to think critically, they did it slowly and tried seriously. Therefore, they could develop the idea and their writing had detail information and knowledgeable support sentences. Most of students could think how to organize systematically their writing. Therefore, their writing had good organization. Most of students could create critical questions by

themselves and collect much relevant information so their writing is more detail. Consequently, it influences the increasing of their vocabulary. Most of students could create grammatical sentences in writing. Their errors were decreased. Almost their sentences were clear meaning. Their errors in mechanics decreased. They could spell words and use appropriate punctuation and capitalization. The students' writing improvement can be seen in table 2.

Table 2. The Students' Writing Improvement

Writing Aspects	The Mean Score of The Two Scorers			The Students' Achievement		
	Pre-test	Post-test 1	Post-test 2	Pre-test	Post-test 1	Post-test 2
Content	22.40	22.65	24.12	74.66%	75.51%	80.38%
Organization	15.88	16.36	16.60	79.42%	81.79%	83.38%
Vocabulary	15.41	15.92	16.28	77.05%	79.62%	81.41%
Language Use	14.92	17.17	18.60	59.69%	59.69%	74.41%
Mechanics	3.42	3.82	4.00	68.46%	76.41%	80%

Based on pre-observation and questionnaire, the students did not interest with English subject, especially writing. They had low motivation in teaching writing. Sanjaya (2010: 196-197) says that the main characteristics of Inquiry Based Learning are students do their activities maximally, especially in looking for and finding, all students' activities are directed to look for and find the answer of questions by themselves, and the purpose of Inquiry Based Learning is improving the thinking ability. It means Inquiry Based Learning has challenging activities that can motivate the students to learn something.

The researcher also used picture as media that help and attract them to do exercises in teaching writing. Harmer (2007: 67) argues that pictures do not only present situations for grammar and vocabulary work but also motivate students to creative imagination. Using picture in Inquiry Based Learning process, the students were motivated to do the exercise because pictures could attract their attention

and curiosity. They could imagine something and gave comment.

After the implementation, the students were motivated to discuss with their friends because they could share their ideas, experience, knowledge, and information. Therefore, they understood deeply about something and got new knowledge. Collaborative also increased the students' social development (Dyasi, 2012). They could learn tolerance, teamwork, and responsibility. They also paid attention when the teacher explained the material and discussed their work.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings in Inquiry Based Learning implementation, the researcher presents conclusion as follows: students' writing ability, teaching and learning process, students' responses in implementation of Inquiry Based Learning and the strengths and weaknesses of Inquiry Based Learning. The explanation is as follows:

First, Inquiry Based Learning can improve the students' writing ability. Most of students can create good writing such as developing ideas that make their writing more detail and knowledgeable, using correct grammatical sentences, creating logical and systematic organization, using appropriate vocabulary, increasing vocabulary range, and using correct mechanics. Their improvement can be seen from cycle to cycle. The students who reached the passing grade also increase.

Second, Inquiry Based Learning can be implemented in teaching writing by using its step. The teacher can use picture as media which can help the students to think creatively and remind their experience in the past. Picture also can attract the students' attention to the lesson. In asking and investigating steps, the teacher gives some questions about the topic to collect information. It helps the students to create creative and appropriate question about the topic to collect information and develop the idea. The students can discuss with their friend. Then, the next step is creating. The students start to write based on the information that they get. In implementation, the teacher helps and guides the students who get difficulties in writing process. The next step is discussing that allow the students to discuss and revise their writing with their friends. They give suggestion about the idea and incorrect sentences. The last step is reflection that allows the students to think again about their writing is relevant or not with their questions.

Third, the students had good response in teaching writing using Inquiry Based Learning. They paid attention when the teacher explain the material and discuss their work. They always try to do every exercise seriously. They also did not feel ashamed again to ask their difficulties and

show their work to the teacher or to their friends. They also felt enjoyable and more creative than before. They also have high motivation than before. They are more confident and active.

Forth, the implementation of Inquiry Based Learning in X3 has some strengths such as (1) making the students more confident and active. During the implementation, the students were more confident and active. They were not afraid again to ask and show their work, (2) developing their critical thinking. By doing Inquiry Based Learning, the students can create question using critical thinking to develop ideas and think how to organize well their writing, (3) understanding the concept. The students know the writing processes. They also understand the concept of the present tense and mechanics and implement them in their writing.

Fifth, Inquiry Based Learning also has some weaknesses. They are (1) Inquiry Based Learning is not appropriate technique for unmotivated students. They are still lazy to do some exercises and often cheat their friend's work. In this case, the teacher has to give attractive media in learning process, (2) Inquiry Based learning is not easy to do in limited time. It needs long time in implementation especially in discussing the topic, collecting information, and revising their writing. (3) Inquiry Based Learning is difficult to implement if the students are familiar with conventional way. It is not easy to change their mind set and habit. They tend to write in the way experienced before.

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