

Writing Workbook as Scaffolding Aid for Junior High School Students

Ima Melati Dewi

Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris-Universitas Negeri Malang
Jl. Semarang 5 Malang. Email: jph.pascaum@gmail.com

Abstract: This study was conducted to develop a writing workbook as a supplementary material for the eighth graders of SMPN 3 Jember. The result of the preliminary study showed that there was only small portion of writing activities in the existing textbook. As a result, students got many difficulties in writing skills. The research and development (R&D) procedure was employed in this study. The design used in developing the workbook was the adaptation model of development by Borg and Gall (1983). The procedures employed in this study were needs analysis, instructional goal, material development, expert validation, try-out, and final product. The information from teachers and students in needs analysis served as a basis for developing the materials. To evaluate the developed materials, expert validation by a material development expert and a subject matter expert was carried out. The information from the experts was used to improve the quality of the materials. After trying out the materials, the teacher was given observation form and the students were given checklists to examine the acceptability and the utility of the product in the field. Based on the result of the data analysis, it can be concluded that the developed materials were categorized good and can be used as supplementary writing materials for the eighth graders of SMPN 3 Jember.

Key Words: developing, writing workbook, supplementary material, SMPN 3 Jember

In junior high school context in Indonesia, writing is taught to enable students to express and respond to meaningful ideas in the forms of recount texts, narrative texts, procedure texts, descriptive texts, report texts, exposition texts, news items, poems, songs, and short functional texts (advertisements, notices, announcements, letters, etc.) in everyday context related to mathematics, science, and technology (Dikdasmen, 2011:17-18). By mastering writing skills, students are expected to be able to use English to acquire, to develop, and to deliver knowledge, technology, and art, to communicate in international context based on cultural understanding, and to introduce and promote national treasure in international community.

However, writing is frequently considered to be the last language skill to be acquired (Nunan, 1991:91). It is true that in SMPN 3 Jember, students usually tend to find a writing class quite challenging. This is because writing requires an entirely different set of competencies and is fundamentally different from the other skills such as speaking (Brown, 2007:390). Writing as a skill involves a number of complex rhetorical and linguistic operations which must be taught,

while speaking can rely on a number of situational factors to help convey meaning and intention, the act of writing is deprived of an immediate context of communication. Thus, for effective writing, the writer has to use a large number of formal features in order to help his/her readers infer the intended meaning. Failure to use these features correctly causes vagueness, ellipsis which shows that the sentence has been left unfinished or unstated, and ambiguity in some writings (Msanjila, 2005:3).

Moreover, written products are often the result of thinking, drafting, and revising procedures that require specialized skills, skills that cannot be developed naturally by every writer. Teaching writing needs long steps which start with a first draft that can be through several revisions before finally end with a final product. Without passing these steps students may have experienced a 'writer's cramp' (mental blocks) that severely hampers any progress. Writing is indeed a 'thinking process' (Brown, 2007:391-392).

The inadequacy of writing materials on the textbook seems to be the problem in writing. The

eighth graders are those who suffer the worst since they do not have the latest textbook related to SMP curriculum. Unlike the seventh and the ninth graders which have the revised edition of the textbook, the textbook used by the eighth graders was not the revised one. Based on the preliminary study on the current English textbook used by grade eighth of SMPN 3 Jember which was conducted on 14th of January 2012, it was found that the textbook is published in 2008. The result shows that the book is still relevant with the latest curriculum. However, the textbook gives small portions on writing activities. The writing activities are insufficient in scaffolding students to write correctly in different genres. It merely discusses models of texts and individual writing activities based on the given situations. As the result, students get many difficulties in writing skill.

Thus, it is necessary to develop interesting, authentic and practical writing materials for the first semester of grade eight of SMPN 3 Jember. The materials are developed in the form of workbook based on the consideration that a workbook provides more exercises for the mastery of specific skills and provides activities to suit learners' need. Moreover, a workbook is more practical since it contains problems and exercises that a student may work directly on the pages.

METHOD

The purpose of this study is to develop a writing workbook as a supplementary material for the eighth graders of SMPN 3 Jember. Therefore, the appropriate design is research and development (Borg and Gall 1983:772). The steps of this process consist of research and information collecting, planning, developing preliminary form of product, preliminary field-testing, main product revision, main field-testing, operational product revision, operational field-testing, final product revision, dissemination and implementation. The activities in the proposed model which were good in terms of developing materials were simplified into need assessment, instructional goal, workbook development, expert validation, tryout and final product.

Needs analysis is the first step of the development which serves as the basic foundation in developing the writing workbook. A need analysis was made in order to obtain information related to the proposition of the product. Hutchinson (1988) states that needs analysis are held to gather information about the

nature and the content of the learner' target language needs. The next stage of this study is deciding the instructional goal which is taken from the standard of competence and basic competences of writing for the eighth graders of junior high school of the first semester as listed in the technical guideline for SMP 2011. Then, based on the need analysis the workbook is developed. When the draft of the product was ready, it was necessary to be validated. There were two kinds of validation: expert validation and empirical validation (material tryout). The final product is the improved supplementary writing materials. It is a set of supplementary writing materials containing of three text types: descriptive, recount and exposition and two functional texts; personal letter and advertisement which are based on the SMP curriculum grade eight first semester.

RESULTS

Based on teachers and students responses on the needs analysis, the existing textbook was still in line with the competence standard and basic competence as stated in the SMP curriculum. However, they stated that the textbook was not interesting in terms of the illustration and the layout. The teachers also stated that exposition texts also need to be discussed more in the workbook as it is considered difficult for SMP level.

Regarding the writing materials, they claimed that the existing textbook only gave a small portion for writing skills. So, they suggested developing supplementary writing materials focused on topics related to science and technology. Those topics which would be developed should be adjusted to the students' interest and to enrich their experiences and to support the students' daily life activities. Moreover, the teachers argued that grammar and vocabulary activities would be useful to be given preceding writing tasks.

Related to the illustration, the teachers stated the usage of pictures, graphs, table or other kinds of illustration could draw the students' interest to study the materials. Moreover, colorful illustrations will help the students in understanding the materials.

Related to techniques and strategies used in writing activities, the teachers stated that students tended to be more interested in materials which have fun activities. They also suggested the researcher to consider creating a group work activities which deal with students' creativities.

Based on the needs analysis, the writing workbook was developed. The next step was validating the product to the experts to get input whether the materials had already met the criteria of good materials in terms of the design and layout, material, task and illustration. The experts were a material development expert and a subject matter expert. Based on the validation by the experts, it was found some good points and suggestions on the draft of the workbook which had been developed. Based on the suggestions given by the material development expert and the subject matter expert the draft of the workbook was revised.

After the writing workbook was revised based on the experts validation, the workbook was tried out to the eighth graders of SMPN 3 Jember. It was carried out to see whether the materials were applicable or they should be revised. The result of the students' responses on the checklist after the try-out can be seen in Table 1.

Statistic descriptive analysis was employed to calculate the items given in checklist by using the following formula (Sugiyono, 2008):

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{(\text{response} \times \text{weighting on each response})}{(N \times \text{weighting the highest response})} \times 100\%$$

After the score was converted to a validity level, the attractiveness of the illustration and layout (90%) and the thematic content appropriateness (90%) were categorized on very good criteria. While the difficulty level (85%), the appropriateness of learning steps (88%), the usefulness of the material (86%), and the thematic content difficulty (88%) were categorized on good criteria. The total value of those six criteria which represent the value of the whole workbook was 88% which was categorized good. Therefore, no revision was needed meaning that the developed materials are eligible to be used.

DISCUSSION

In brief, the materials of this current study were designed by providing the followings. First, in term of lay-out, task and activities presentation, the workbook was attractive. The workbook developed could attract the students' curiosity, interest and attention. Second, the content of the text book was authentic material. What was discussed in the workbook was relevant and useful to what the students need to learn and what they want to learn. So, it was more motivating and challenging. Thirds,

tasks and activities are varied and can accommodate for a range of learning styles that all students can benefit. Finally, workbook maximized learning potential by encouraging intellectual, aesthetic and emotional involvement which stimulates both right and left brain activities.

The above qualifications were similar to Tomlinson's conception of effective language teaching materials (Tomlinson, 2011:5). Good teaching materials should have attractive layout, authentic content, facilitate different learning styles and encouraging intellectual, aesthetic and emotional involvement which stimulates both right and left brain activities.

The developed writing materials were presented in the form of workbook. The form of workbook was chosen because it provided more exercises for the mastery of specific skills and provided activities to suit learners' need. Workbook was more practical since it containing problems and exercises that a student may work directly on the pages. Flanagan (1981:14) states that workbook is designed to accompany a specific textbook or course of instruction, provide exercise for the mastery of specific skills and contents, frequently follow a format that includes statement of behavioral objectives, instructions, experiences, and activities to facilitate mastery of certain skills, and evaluative mechanisms. So, workbook is an appropriate form for writing material development.

Moreover, the developed writing material covers an evaluation checklist, assessment and reflection. The checklist was designed to evaluate students' writing draft. The evaluation process can be carried out by peer evaluation or give the evaluation form to the teacher. Assessment was designed to measure student achievement in the material and reflection was used to self evaluate students' competence on a certain material.

Finally, the developed writing materials consist of more contextual activity such as writing to the mayor of Jember, eye witness story and writing to an idol. The activity in the workbook was also designed to accommodate students' interest since it has word puzzle games, poem, song and drawing activity. This is in line with Howard and Major idea that teachers developed materials were more contextual since teachers could take into account their particular learning environment. Teacher - designed material was also responsive to the heterogeneity inherent in the classroom, incorporate

Table 1. The Result of Checklist for Students Who Have Been Involved in the Try-out

No	Criteria	f	v	Score	Total score	%
1.	The illustration and lay out were interesting.	82	5	410	673	90
		62	4	248		
		5	3	15		
		-	-	-		
2.	The materials were understandable.	60	5	300	636	85
		69	4	276		
		20	3	60		
		-	-	-		
3.	The teaching steps were good.	77	5	385	655	88
		54	4	216		
		18	3	54		
		-	-	-		
4.	The materials were useful toward their English skill.	70	5	350	644	86
		57	4	228		
		22	3	66		
		-	-	-		
5.	The themes were understandable.	80	5	400	656	88
		49	4	196		
		20	3	60		
		-	-	-		
6.	The themes were interesting	84	5	420	670	90
		55	4	220		
		10	3	30		
		-	-	-		

elements of the learners' first language and culture, provide the opportunity to select texts and activities at exactly the right level for particular learners. Teachers had a greater choice, freedom and a scope for spontaneity when teachers develop their own materials. Furthermore, teacher-designed materials could respond to local and international events with up-to-date, relevant and high interest topics and task (Howard and Major, 2011:101-102).

CONCLUSION

The writing workbook as a supplementary material that has been developed in this study was considered appropriate to students' needs and interests as they are attractive in the design, appropriate in the content and appropriate in the level of difficulty. The developed materials also provided students with an appropriate knowledge of English across the curriculum. Moreover, it can scaffold the students to be able to write different types of genres gradually.

REFERENCES

- Borg, W.R., Gall. M.D., & Gall, J.P. 1983. *Educational Research, An Introduction. (4th ed.)*. New York: Pearson Education.
- Brown, H.D. 2007. *Teaching by Principles*. New York: Pearson Education.
- Dikdasmen. 2011. *Materi Bimbingan Teknis Pembelajaran Bagi Guru Rintisan SMP BI Tahun 2011*. Kementerian Pendidikan Nasional, Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Dasar, Direktorat Pembinaan Sekolah Menengah Pertama.
- Flanagan, C.C. 1981. *The Instructional Media Library: Books and Other Print Materials*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.
- Howard, J. & Major, J. 2011. *Guidelines for Developing Effective English Language Teaching Materials*. (Online), <http://www.paaljapan.org/resources/proceedings/PAAL9/pdf/Howard.pdf>, retrieved on January 31st, 2011.
- Hutchinson, T. & Waters, A. 1987. *English for Specific Purpose: A learning-centered Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Msanjila, Y.P. 2005. *Problems of Writing in Kiswahili: A Case Study of Kigurunyembe and Morogoro Secondary Schools in Tanzania*. Nordic Journal of African Studies (online), <http://www.njas.helsinki.fi/pdf-files/vol14num1/msanjila.pdf>, retrieved on January 1st, 2012.
- Nunan, D. 1991. *Language Teaching Methodology*. Norwich: Prentice Hall International (UK) Ltd.
- Sugiyono. 2008. *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Tomlinson, B. 1998. *Materials Development in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.