Dicto-Comp: A Technique in Reducing High School Students' Errors in Writing

Rosdiana Rosdiana

STKIP Bina Bangsa Getsempena, Banda Aceh, Indonesia

Corresponding author: rosectz15@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigated the use of dicto-comp in minimizing errors in students' writing. The study concerned the type of errors frequently made by the students after the implementation of dicto-comp and the effectiveness of dicto-comp in reducing the students' errors in writing. The study used the quantitative approach using the quasi-experimental research design. The instrument of the study was writing tests. The study took place at a senior high school in Banda Aceh, Aceh Province, Indonesia. Findings showed that after the implementation of dicto-comp, the students frequently made grammatical errors at 46.42% and mechanical errors at 40.66%. Further, the t-test results showed that t-test = 2.12 and t-table = 1.70. This indicated that t-test score was higher than t-table, and thus, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted and the null hypothesis (H_o) was rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that dicto-comp decreased the errors in the students' writing. It is suggested that teachers of English apply dicto-comp technique and/or combine it with another method/strategy in teaching writing in classroom.

Keywords: *Descriptive Text, Dicto-Comp, Writing Errors, Students' Writing*.

Introduction

Writing is considered as a difficult skill to master for any English language learners since many experience problems when producing a written text (Phonna, 2014; Salima, 2012; Suadah, 2014). Learners also requires a lot of time and process in order to create one product of writing (Isa, Risdaneva, & Alfayed, 2017). According to Boardman & Frydenberg (2002), writing is a process done continuously which involves "thinking and organizing, rethinking and reorganizing" (p. 11). In addition, Meyers (2005, p. 2) describes that "writing is an action – a process of discovering and organizing your ideas, putting them on a paper, and reshaping and revising them." Harmer (2004) adds that writing is also very beneficial as it can become the preparation for another activity, such as writing for the opening of a discussion, since initial writing allows people to think about some ideas before giving their opinions on

a topic. Therefore, in the writing skill, students are required to learn more about how to produce a good and correct writing to be readable and easily understood by readers.

In the context of the 2013 Curriculum of Indonesia, school students are expected to be able to compose several types of writing texts in English. The students are expected to be able to write in English and to understand the meaning contained in the texts (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013, as cited in Nanda & Azmy, 2020). Following the curriculum, the students are expected to improve their writing according to predetermined basic competencies.

In this study, the author focused on the descriptive text to be investigated because this material was in accordance with the syllabus studied by the high school students at Indonesian schools. According to Oshima and Hogue (2007), a descriptive text "tells how something looks, feels, smells, tastes, and/or sounds…. the reader can imagine the object, place, or person in his or her mind" (p. 61). It means that descriptive texts allow those who read the texts to think as if they could feel or see what had been described by the writers.

In the process of writing a text, there are some aspects that the students need to know and understand, such as ideas, word choice, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. Each of these elements has their own roles which can affect a text correct or incorrect. Here, the author only focused on the students' grammar, word choice, and mechanics because the author observed that many students often make errors in those aspects when they write. Errors in writing is a common problem produced by the students while they are composing due to unawareness or lack of knowledge. Brown (2000, p. 170) says that "error is noticeable deviation from adult grammar, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner." To add, Jie (2008) states that "an error is the breaches of rules of code" (p. 37). This indicates that errors often happen to the students probably because they tend to forget or do not realize the errors they make.

A preliminary observation showed that most school students at a school in Banda Aceh often made errors while they were writing, including on grammar, word choice and mechanics. Some students made errors on the use of capitalization and they were often confused with the use of period and comma in writing a sentence. They also made errors on the use of apostrophe when they wanted to identify a noun in the possessive case. Also, the students could not change the irregular verbs of past tense. Some students had less vocabulary, so they did not complete the text that the teacher asked them to do so. Therefore, these writing issues faced by the students should be solved. Here, the author decided to use one of the writing techniques that

might solve the students' problems in writing a text called *dicto-comp*, derived from the words 'dictation' and 'composition' (Nation & Newton, 2009).

In this study, the aims were to investigate the types of errors frequently made by the students after dicto-comp was implemented and to identify whether or not dicto-comp could decrease the students' errors in writing.

LITERATURE REVIEW
ERRORS IN WRITING

Errors in language learning are caused by a lack of learners' knowledge or learners' ignorance of the target language so they do not know and do not realize of what is wrong in their writing (Ellis (1997, as cited in Muhsin, 2016). Thus, when learners are able to identify errors, it means they have proficiency in the target language (Masrizal, 2017). In terms of writing, it requires teachers to explain to students what errors they have made. Therefore, students who make errors will need teachers to teach them so that they can reduce the errors they make when they write (Salima, 2012).

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the errors are something that can be done by students in every teaching and learning process. This is because they are still influenced by the first language during their second language learning and also by the environment (Watcharapunyawong, & Usaha, 2013). In addition, errors will always happen in students when they write a paragraph or essay because English is their second language, so it is difficult for them to write without making errors. Errors are usually done by students depending on the aspects they do not know or understand. Some examples of errors made by students include: grammatical errors related to parts of speech; errors in word choice related to adjectives, nouns, and verbs; and mechanical errors involving spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, among others (Salima, 2012).

DICTO-COMP TECHNIQUE

Dicto-comp (dictation-composition) is a variation of dictation that teachers can use in teaching writing. This is a simple technique that requires the students to listen to a text read by the teacher which can be repeated for a few times (Nation & Newton, 2009). Before the teacher finished reading the text, the students are not allowed to write the text. In dicto-comp, the students need to "remember the ideas in a text of more than one hundred words long and express them in the words of the original or in their own words" (Nation & Newton, 2009, p. 70). It also suggests that this technique can help the teacher teach writing for the students by developing their ideas and their critical thinking in writing.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used the quantitative approach with quasi-experimental research design. Experimental research aims to find out whether there are any changes or improvements of an effort made in the research. According to Sudjana (2009), experimental research is a study to know whether or not there is any effect to the subject who is given a treatment. In other words, experimental research is a type of method used to find how the effect of independent variables on the manipulated dependent variable.

This study took two classes of the first year students at a senior high school in Banda Aceh, Aceh Province, Indonesia. One class were given treatment by using dicto-comp technique and one class was the control class which had no dicto-comp. Before the application of this technique, the students took a pretest, and after the use of dicto-comp, the students had a posttest.

The hypotheses of the study was tested under the following assumptions. If the t-test is higher than the t-table, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted and the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. This infers that the use of dicto-comp can decrease the students' errors in writing. On the other hand, if the t-test is lower than t-table, the alternative (H_a) is rejected and the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted. This implies that the use of dicto-comp is not effective to decrease the students' errors in writing.

The procedures in applying the dicto-comp technique were as follows: the teacher read a text to the students at the experimental class, and then the students had to write down what they understood and remembered from the text, trying to be close to the original and using their own words if needed. The students had to understand the main ideas of the text read by the teacher first because the word choice of the students or their vocabulary was also important in this technique. The students could write with synonyms or words of their own if they forgot a few words in order to finish the text. They had to write it at least a hundred words.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The first aim of this study was to figure out the type of errors mostly made by the students after the implementation of dicto-comp. In the *pre-test*, the study found the total of students' grammatical errors in each category as follows, ranked from the highest to lowest errors: 1) Errors in tenses were 97 at 31.70%, 2) Errors in word-order were 89 at 10.60%, 3) Errors in pronouns were 30 at 4.20%, 4) Errors in prepositions were 15 at 2.10%, and 5) Errors in articles were 8 at 1.13%. Further, in the aspect of

errors in word choice, the study found the errors as follows: 1) errors in adjectives were 39 at 5.50%, 2) Errors in nouns were 11 at 1.45%, and 3) Errors in verbs were 5 at 0.60%. Then, the results of mechanical errors showed that: 1) Errors in capitalization were 203 at 27.70%, 2) Errors in spelling were 137 at 19.45%, and 3) Errors in punctuation were 100 at 14.20.

In regard to the *post-test*, the study revealed that the students' grammatical errors, ranked from the highest to lowest errors, in each category were: 1) Errors in tenses were 113 at 31.04%, 2) Errors in word-order were 26 at 7.14%, 3) Errors in articles were 15 at 4.12%, 4) Errors in pronouns were 13 at 3.57%, and 5) Errors in prepositions were 2 at 0.55%. Then, in the aspect of word choice, the results showed that: 1) Errors in verbs were 25 at 6.87%, 2) Errors in adjectives were 20 errors at 5.50%, and 3) Errors in nouns were 2 at 0.55%. Further, the mechanical errors made by the students included: 1) Errors in capitalization were 54 at 14.83%, 2) Errors in spelling were 48 at 13.19%, and 3) Errors in punctuation were 46 at 12.64.

Based on the post-test, the findings indicate that the commonly made errors by the students after the use of dicto-comp relate to the grammatical errors with a total percentage of errors of 46.42%. The second common type is the mechanical errors, with a total percentage of errors of 40.66%. And, the third common errors are related to word choice, with a total percentage of errors of 12.92%.

The second aim of the study was to examine the effectiveness of dicto-comp in reducing the students' errors in writing. The results showed that the mean score of the students' pre-test was 38.80. The score obtained was very low and did not reach the standard of the average score. Meanwhile, the mean score of the students' post-test was 40.61.

Although the post-test scores did not reach the standard of the average score, it can be seen that dicto-comp had decreased the students' errors in writing. In the pre-test, the students' did not have the treatment when learning to write the descriptive text. Therefore, they found it difficult to write with the correct grammar to complete their sentences. The most errors made by the students related to using the simple tense and also word order. This is perhaps because they only write the sentences with the words that they have learned beforehand without realized the wrong structure in their writing.

In the post-test, there was an improvement in the students' descriptive text writing. This finding is in line with that in a study by Widiastuti, Sukamerta, and Arsana

(2020) which found that after the implementation of dicto-comp, about 72% of the students achieved adequate achievement in composing descriptive texts.

In this present study, the students mostly used varied words and tried to write with the correct and complete sentences. The students tried to write the text with the correct grammar although some of the students were still confused in using the correct tense. Some also had the difficulty in using the correct mechanics, such as spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. However, the students paid more attention for their writing and tried to write the text clearly that could make the readers imagine what they have described in their writing.

In regard to the *t*-test, it was found that the *t*-test score was 2.12 and the *t*-table was 1.70. It can be inferred that H_a was accepted and H_0 was rejected. Thus, it can be concluded that teaching writing using dicto-comp for the first year students at an Acehnese senior high school is effective to minimize the students' errors in writing.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes the students made most errors in terms of grammar and mechanics. Further, the use of dicto-comp technique is effective to decrease the errors of the students in writing. It is suggested that teachers of English apply dicto-comp technique and/or combine it with another method/ strategy in teaching writing in classroom.

REFERENCES

Boardman, C. A., & Frydenberg, J. (2002). *Writing to communicate: Paragraphs and essays.* White Plains, NY: Longman.

Brown, H. D. 2000. *Principles of language learning and teaching* (4th Ed.). White Plains, NY: Longman.

Harmer, J. (*2004). How to teach writing*. Harlow, UK: Longman.

Isa, Q. N. M., Risdaneva, R., & Alfayed, A. (2017). An analysis of Acehnese EFL students' grammatical errors in writing recount texts. *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities*, *5*(1), 41-50.

Jie, X. (2008). Error theories and second language acquisition. *US-China Foreign Language, 6*(1), 35-42.

Masrizal, M. (2017). Correlation between ability to recognize sentence errors and ability to produce grammatically correct utterances. *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities*, *5*(1), 17-28.

Meyers, A. (2005). *Gateways* to *academic writing*: *Effective sentences*, *paragraphs*, and *essays*. White Plains, NY: Longman.

Muhsin, M. A. (2016). Analysing the students errors in using simple present (A case study at junior high school in Makassar). *Pacific Science Review B: Humanities and Social Sciences*, *2*(3), 81-87.

Nanda, D. W., & Azmy, K. (2020). Poor reading comprehension issue in EFL classroom among Indonesian secondary school students: Scrutinizing the causes, impacts and possible solutions. *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities*, *8*(1), 12-24.

Nation, I. S. P., & Newton, J. (2009). *Teaching ESL/EFL listening and speaking*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Oshima, A., & Hogue, A. (2007). *Introduction to academic writing* (3rd Ed). White Plains, NY: Longman.

Phonna, R. (2014). An analysis of students' free writing. *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities*, *1*(2).

Salima, R. (2012). Measures of eliminating EFL students' errors in writing. *Procedia – Social and Behavioural Sciences, 69*, 318-327.

Suadah, L. (2014). Enhancing EFL learners' writing skills through blogging. *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities*, *2*(1), 20-29.

Sudjana. (2009). *Metoda statistika* (6th Ed.). Bandung, Indonesia: Tarsito.

Watcharapunyawong, S., & Usaha, S. (2013). Thai EFL students' writing errors in different text types: The interference of the first language. *English Language Teaching*, *6*(1), 67-78.

Widiastuti, N. P. S., Sukamerta, I. M., & Arsana, A. A. P. (2020). Assessing descriptive paragraph writing ability of the eighth grade students of SMPN 2 Denpasar through dicto-comp. *Journal on Studies in English Language Teaching (JOSELT)*, *1*(1), 41-48.