

THE IMPACT OF TASK-BASED INSTRUCTION IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' AUTONOMOUS IN WRITING AT MECHANICAL ENGINEERING PROGRAM IN UKI TORAJA, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This study is qualitative research which employs case study on Task-Based Instruction (TBI) impact on students' autonomous learning at Mechanical Engineering in Teaching English at UKI utilized online questionnaire and interview student's journal reflection as well as documentation. The research was carried out at Mechanical Engineering Department UKI Toraja, which located in Tanah Toraja, South Sulawesi. The research used purposive sampling method which involved 12 lecturers; 3 English lectures who were currently implementing Task-Based Instruction (TBI) in teaching English for Mechanical Engineering, 35 students of Mechanical Engineering, at UKI Toraja as the participants of this research. The data was analyzed by thematic analysis, content analysis, and document analysis. The findings reveal that different types of tasks and digital tools promote learner autonomy in different ways. Writing assignments allow students to work independently to choose a topic, create their written content, and choose online application software that allows them more freedom in exploring the understanding of a particular topic. Learning outcomes are characterized as Autonomous Task-Based Instruction in Teaching Writing because this strategy contributes to the degree of learning independence.

Keywords: *Task Based Instruction, Mechanical Engineering, Autonomous Task Based Instruction*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a cognitive activity that requires a person to consider ideas and select acceptable words to express those ideas in writing. Through writing activities, teachers may help students improve their ability to use the correct tenses, choose appropriate vocabulary with proper spelling, and communicate their ideas clearly and correctly.

Teachers face numerous problems in assisting students in English writing. As a result, teachers must consider ways to make it easier for students to acquire and apply that knowledge. To assist their students in accomplishing their learning objectives, they must consider a variety of approaches or methods. They should select ways that are appropriate for their students' backgrounds. Related to those point views, task- based learning is viewed as an alternative to standard language teaching methods since it emphasizes a methodology in which functional communicative language use is targeted at and sought for. TBI is thought to be an

effective method for creating a learning environment in which students are free to choose and employ the target language forms they believe would best help them achieve their communicative goals (Ellis, 2017).

Students play central roles in Task-based Instruction (TBI). They have the amount of opportunity and duty to negotiate course content, select language forms from his / her linguistic repertoire, and explore different options for task performance and task results (M.P.Breen & C.N.Candlin, 1980). According to (Lackman, 2016) one of the advantages of applying TBI is it can encourage autonomous learning. In addition to this (Hattani, 2020) stated that in TBI learners are the ones taking the leading role in their learning process. They autonomously negotiate their course content and reinterpret its framework to achieve an outcome.

Writing is its clear and logical organization, which makes it ideal as a self-study and reference guide for students needing to work independently (Bailey, 2015). The goal is to allow learners to navigate their own paths and routes to learning (Ellis, 2009). Understanding how learners perceive and perform their roles in TBI therefore, this study aims to explore the effectiveness of task-based instruction (TBI) mediated in improving learner autonomy.

METHOD

This study is a qualitative research method. Theoretically, according to Bogdan and Biklen (1998) in (Banfield & Cayago-Gicain, 2006) a qualitative research is characterized by five features namely taking place in a naturalistic setting, having a descriptive data, considering processes, using inductive data analysis, and taking meaning of the study based on the subjects' perspectives. The researcher employed case study design. Through this method, it is expected that more comprehensive and intensive information is obtained from the natural settings. Case study as qualitative research is useful to investigate the behavior patterns of lecturers and students.

Qualitative research definitions are various. The main difference is on the focus. According to (Gillham, 2005) qualitative methods focus primarily on the kind of evidence (what people tell you, what they do) that will enable you to understand the meaning of what is going on. Their great strength is that they can illuminate issues and turn up possible explanations.

(Minichiello et al., 2008) differentiated qualitative research from quantitative research. They argued that qualitative research attempts to capture people's meanings, definitions, and descriptions of events. In contrast, quantitative research aims to count and measure things. Whereas, (Yin, 2003) asserted that case study is the method of choice when the phenomenon under study is not readily distinguishable from its context. Such a phenomenon may be a project or program in an evaluation study. Sometimes, the definition of this project or program may be problematic, as in determining when the activity started or ended- an example of a complex interaction between a phenomenon and its (temporal) context. Other examples of such complex interactions abound, including varied situations such as community organization and its neighborhood (p. 5).

A case study approach is suitable for exploring specific issues concerning classroom interaction. This is consistent with the objective of this research, namely to explore the implementation of Task Based-Instruction in teaching English. Gillham further elaborates the possibilities of a case study approach. A case can be individual: it can be a group- such as a family, or a class, or an office, or a hospital ward; it can be an institution- such as a school or a children's home or a factory; it can be a large scale community- a town, an industry, a profession. All of these are single cases; but you can also study multiple cases: a member of single parents; several schools; two different professions (Gillham, 2005). Using this definition, the cases for this study could be categorized as group because explore the classroom interaction including students and the lecturers, but only conducted in three classes in UKI Toraja.

Descriptive case explorations require that the investigator present a descriptive theory, which establishes the overall framework for the investigator to follow throughout the study (Schensul, Jean N and Berg, 2004). A case study is chosen because it is believed that understanding the case will lead to better understanding, perhaps better theorizing about the case (Stake, 2005). The strength of the case study is that it can provide a rich description of the cases being studied.

Before going further on data analysis, the researcher collected data using three instruments, i.e. interview, observation, and documentation. The data were recorded using a video recorder, transcribe the data by using transcription convention adapted from (Wooffitt, 2005). Then the data coded and selected

referring to the purpose of this research. In terms of the approach, the research used Thematic Analysis (Dawson, 2002) in which the data were analyzed by coding the themes or topics of the research; interpreted and related to the previous findings; and elaborated descriptively. Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing data to locate trends or themes in data obtained by the researcher (Braun & Clarke, n.d.). According to (Holloway & Todres, 2003), thematic analysis is the basis or base for qualitative research analysis. They recommend that the researcher study and re-read interview transcripts, as well as listen to the interview again that was conducted during the data collection process, in order to better understand the qualitative data they collected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In gaining the data about the impact of Task Based-Instruction to the students' autonomous learning, the researcher conducted interview with three lecturers and distributed online questionnaire to 35 students and the result are elaborated below.

LR1 stated that in teaching writing, he organized a variety of texts that are relevant to students' needs, and provided practice in a number of texts until the students were able to write texts independently of the teacher's support and guidance.

LR1 stated that in teaching writing, he organized a variety of texts that are relevant to students' needs, and provided practice in a number of texts until the students were able to write texts independently without the teacher's support and guidance.

“Learning is organized using a variety of texts related to the needs of students, and students are given practice in a variety of texts until they are able to produce texts without the help and guidance of the teacher” (LR1)

LR 2 described that at the beginning, he usually encouraged students to choose their own topic to write about. After choosing the topic, the students were assigned to work on their writing independently. Then the lecturer checked student's draft and gave feedback and assigned student to write their final project. The independent activities were aim facilitating students become more self-sufficient, inventive, and creative in writing.

“Usually, at the early stage, I give students the freedom to choose a topic to be written by the student themselves. Next, they work on the task until they are independently able to complete it. When students independently work on writing assignments, I give students the flexibility and freedom to independently complete assignments. But I still check their project and give them some feedback and finally they will finish their project” (LR2)

LR3 stated that he used TBI in the classroom because it was an effective way for assisting students in becoming self-sufficient in writing, students had strong motivation to study, and they might learn a lot about the subjects presented by the lecturer by doing some of the lecturer's assignments with their peers

“I applied TBI in teaching process because the method is good to help the students to be independent in learning writing, students have high motivation to learn, and doing their exercises with their friends and the students can know much about the topics that presented by the lecturer by using some exercises given by the lecturer” (LR3)

He argued that TBI were extremely valuable to students since they provided students with tiered tasks that allow them to study independently.

“TBI are very beneficial for students because with the tiered task given to students, so students can study independently” (LR3)

In relation with the impact of TBI on student's independence learning, the researcher also distributed online questionnaire to explore students' responses. The data from online questionnaire showed that 6 (17%) students strongly agreed, 25 (71%) agreed, 4 (11 %) were neutral and, none of students disagreed nor extremely disagreed that Task Based-Instruction impact their independence in learning on their own preferences

According to the students, Task Based Instruction influenced their autonomous learning in a variety of ways. S1 reported that his lecturer used a variety of techniques to encourage students to study, practice, and complete the task independently. S10 felt that autonomous learning and assignments had a positive impact on his writing performance in TBI. S15 gave an example of how her lecture promotes student autonomy by allowing students to choose their own writing themes. The data are displayed on the extract below:

“My lecturers always motivate me to learn, train and do the assigned tasks independently” (S1)

“In TBI, I feel that independent study and assignments have a positive effect on my writing results” (S10)

“In TBI, the Lecturer gives us the freedom to choose topics to write about, based on everyday life” (S15)

The findings above revealed the student recognition of the TBI method applied by lecturers, the task or assignments given have been proven to increase student learning independence.

Furthermore, the researcher explored the integration of online technology in developing students' autonomous learning and the results are as follows:

“I'm looking for an interesting topic on the internet to help me complete a task” (S11)

“The material from the internet really helps me to practice my writing skills” (S30)

“Many things from the internet that can be taken to be developed into writing” (S35)

The students explained that they searched the materials from internet to get some ideas than can be developed into their writing because they believed that the materials facilitated them to complete their tasks.

According to LR3 that students searched independently for the topics assigned to them through the internet and other sources to complete the assignment of material assigned to them without being provided instructions

“Students without being given instructions, they search independently for the topics given to them through the internet and other places to complete the assignment of material given to them” (LR3)

L3 added that he strongly advised that students use their mobile devices to complete activities assigned by lecturers, as online data is quite useful for students in finding references to support their work independently.

“It is highly recommended that students can be mobile in carrying out activities given by lecturers because online data is very helpful for students to find references to support their work independently” (LR3)

Moreover, according to the students to develop their independent learning, their lecturers suggested the online applications from the internet and other devices to check their spelling and grammar.

“Lecturers have trained me to develop my writing skills by using several applications on the internet” (S11)

“I have tried some of the apps suggested by my professors and they have trained my independence in writing” (S17)

“I often use the spelling checker to check my writing so that I can write the correct words in English” (S24)

To find out about the types of application recommended by the lecturers to enhance students' autonomous learning, the researcher interviewed the lecturers.

“I recommend students to use software to check and correct English writing, using cellphones or applications on the internet such as Spellcheck Plus online dictionary, Grammarly and other spelling checkers” (LR1)

“There are a lot of free online applications to check English text for many types of mistakes: grammar, spelling, punctuation, those are Google Online dictionary, Spellcheck Plus, Ginger” (LR2)

From the interview it was found that the lecturers recommended their students different kinds of application which are available online that be used by the student without any charges.

The use of digital technologies had a particularly significant impact on English learning to the students, and confirmed that students did not just socialize

online, but they also improved their English language knowledge. Consequently, it is believed that Task Based-Instruction boosts learning effectiveness, the transfer and share of knowledge and learners' autonomy.

The findings of the study showed that the integration of Task Based-Instruction had positive impacts in enhancing students' autonomous learning. In terms of students' autonomy Liu (2015 in (Sidupa, 2016) explained that autonomy is regarded as the capacity to "take control of one's own learning". Until now, there are some reasons why autonomous learning plays significant role in the process of learning. First, assisting students to become more effective and independent learners it is an educational goal for teachers.

According to the students, Task Based Instruction influenced their autonomous learning in a variety of ways. They reported that their lecturers used a variety of techniques in TBI to encourage them to study, practice, and complete the task independently by allowing students to choose their own writing themes. Besides, the students explained that they searched the materials about writing task related to mechanical engineering from internet to get some ideas than can be developed into their writing because they believed that the materials facilitated them to complete their tasks. Authentic and non-authentic materials from internet are both possible. Texts, poetry, songs, movies, commercials, and photographs are examples of actual internet items that are not designed for instruction. Non-authentic products, such as ESL downloadable sheets, commercial podcasts, e-books, audio audios, and language testing, are items that are specifically developed for education. Depending on the proprietors of the resources, there are both free and paid versions of the sources (Anas, Amansyah, Musdariah, & Irmawati, 2020). Moreover, according to the students to develop their independent learning, their lecturers suggested the online applications from the internet and other devices to check their spelling and grammar. Therefore, it can be inferred that students believed that autonomous learning and assignments had a positive impact on his writing performance in Task-Based Instruction.

From this finding it can be seen that TBI shifting toward a learner-centered approach (Benson, 2006), particularly when there is easy access to multimedia resources to help learners learn independently outside the classroom. Due to the students' involvement in real-world situations, this methodology provides them

with more opportunity to improve their language learning and writing skills. Students are also encouraged to acquire confidence and autonomy in their learning processes. Students gain a better understanding of the lessons when they work in pairs or teams since they can learn from their classmates. Furthermore, they sense the support of their peers. Not only do the students share ideas, but they also share materials. Because they interact and share ideas, they are more productive and have an easier time developing communication skills.

As mentioned by (Schwienhorst, 2007) that learner autonomy emphasizes a learner-centered method of learning, where learners are motivated to analyze and reflect on their learning process by developing a personally meaningful relationship with it," utilizing computers and the Internet in the classroom is one of the most common and widely used methods. Computers are seen to offer the ability to assist students in becoming more autonomous in their learning (Lai & Li, 2011). Learners have recognized computer-mediated communication as the most extensively used learning environment because it allows them to expand their connection and learning beyond the restrictions of place and time (Kelly & Anita, 2002). We've noticed an increase in the amount of people accessing the internet for a myriad of purposes recently. Many of these online users are students looking for information at their own pace, in their own location, and with their own materials. Learners have been shown to gain autonomy in their learning by having the freedom to choose when, where, and what they learn. Furthermore, a rich learning environment that allows and supports learners to acquire information collaboratively and independently, regardless of their preferred learning styles, is the productive learning environment for digital learners (Maesin, 2009).

According to (Chapelle, 2010), online language learners have unrestricted access to helpful resources such as Wiktionary, word processing, and Online material; as a result, they acquire learner interdependence and are encouraged to control their own learning to some extent. Additionally, (Tschirhart & Elina, 2009) highlight that Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) plays an important role in developing learner autonomy. They further said how fundamental it is to use appropriate learning resources and create a conducive learning environment in the CALL context, where learners may speak and interact with other target language learners. The goal of instruction in a student-centered approach is to help students

learn what they need to know in order to succeed in life, as well as to develop individuals' ability to learn autonomously, love learning, and continue to learn throughout their lives (Margaret, 1988) in (Sidupa, 2016). As a result, using a student-centered approach to teaching is critical in order to generate independent, competent, and practice-oriented graduates. Students who are provided the freedom to pursue areas depending on the personal preferences and are supported in their quest for solutions by a supportive understanding facilitator not only achieve high academic results, but also experience and grow in personal values such as adaptability, self-confidence, interpersonal skills, and problem-solving capabilities.

CONCLUSION

This study determines the effect of writing strategies through TBI approach on an EFL classroom. It reports valuable experiences in teaching writing. In addition, the pedagogical implications of the present study are significant for students, teachers, institutions, and educational policy makers since TBI approach is useful for teachers and students to plan, carry out tasks, assess and achieve goals when learning a language. TBI approach can be used to engage learners in learning, promote real-life communicative situations and students' autonomy since they are the center of the learning process.

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