

The Role of Visual Media to Decrease Vocabulary Acquisition Problems In Foreign Students Writing Skill

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ABSTRACT

Writing is one of the most challenging language skills, especially for international students learning a second language. International students encountered various problems in learning writing skills, one of which was mastery of vocabulary. For this reason, media is needed as a supporting tool in learning. The purpose of writing this article is to describe the types of visual media used to overcome barriers to vocabulary mastery in learning writing skills of a second language for international students at Sebelas Maret University. This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. The data used in this study are data from observations, in-depth interviews, and document tests. The data was obtained through in-depth interviews with foreign lecturers and students at Sebelas Maret University. Data analysis uses interactive techniques by discovering new knowledge from a collection of interviews, observations, and document studies. The data analysis technique used is descriptive qualitative analysis technique using (1) data tabulation, (2) data reduction, (3) data presentation, and (4) concluding. This study shows that foreign teachers and students still experience obstacles in learning writing skills in both languages, such as vocabulary mastery. There is a need for solutions to overcome these obstacles. Therefore, visual media is used as a solution to overcome these obstacles.

Keywords

Media, Visual Media, International Student

Introduction

Writing is a skill. Writing skill is considered the most difficult language skill compared to reading, speaking, and listening. Writing is one of the most frequently used educational activities in ensuring students' critical thinking, structuring new knowledge, and progressing learning. In line with this, Lehman (2007), Tarigan (2008) and Kurnia (2018) also explain that writing skills are the highest skills in language which can only be mastered after students master reading, speaking, and listening skills. Writing skills are very important and useful for students because writing is a must for students (Andayani, 2015). Therefore, every student is expected to be able to master writing skills well. However, international students face some problems when it comes to learning second language writing skills.

One of the obstacles international students face in learning second language writing skills is the low mastery of vocabulary. As a result of this low vocabulary mastery, international students cannot write well because they do not have the right words. Lack of vocabulary mastery can also

result in international students not conveying the meaning of their writing well. For this reason, media is needed as a means of supporting learning.

Meanwhile, the second language is the language learned by someone who already has the first language but learns another language in an environment. Sahasti (2018) explains that a second language implies that the learner is in an environment where the acquired language is used. Learning Indonesian as a second language for international students needs to be supported by adequate media.

Learning media has a role as a tool to facilitate students in associating learning materials, as a source of questions and learning stimuli, and as a source of student learning that contains learning materials (Sudjana, 2009). Teaching media by the conditions of students will increase the interest in learning of international students. The selection of suitable media will undoubtedly support the quality of learning in the classroom. Thomas (in Rivai, 1978:11) explains that the media has a broader meaning. The use of learning media is a unit integrated with the subject

matter and is a unified whole that cannot be separated.

Not all media are suitable for use in learning to write. Teachers need to pay attention to several factors before choosing learning media to support learning writing skills. International students are deemed to need learning media to keep the learning of writing skills. Visual media is here to help support writing skills learning activities for international students because they have. The purpose of this study is to describe the difficulties of international students in learning writing skills and visual media and their use in learning writing skills of international students at Sebelas Maret University.

Literature Review

Indonesian as a Foreign Language and Second Language

There are three language terms, namely first language, second language, and foreign language. The first language is often referred to as the mother tongue. This is the first language used or mastered by someone. This mother tongue is usually learned in one's family environment since infancy. Clark (2003) explains that when children learn their first language, they can build on pre-existing ideas or represent them with language and previous communication ideas.

Meanwhile, the second language is the language learned by someone who already has the first language but learns another language in an environment. Sahasti (2018) explains that a second language implies that the learner is in an environment where the acquired language is used. In research, the term mastery of language is a general term including learning a foreign language and investigating the human ability to learn a language other than the first language they have acquired (Moeller & Catalano, 2015).

While a foreign language is a language that is not used in the origin of a student, learning a foreign language refers to learning a non-native language outside the environment in which it is typically spoken.

Teaching a foreign language begins when a person already has his mother tongue. Panggabean (2015) stated that mastery of foreign languages, including Indonesian, does not hinder and even strengthen the ability of mother tongue.

In line with what was explained by Suyono and Basuki (1994) students must stay together with native Indonesian speakers to increase proficiency. Because they are not in a native Indonesian environment, they need a long time to master the Indonesian language actively.

Indonesian as a Foreign Language or Second Language

Indonesian for foreign speakers is a program for learning Indonesian language skills, speaking, writing, listening, and reading for foreign speakers. Foreign language learning is a system consisting of several components, namely instructional and non-instructional components. The functional relationships and interactions between these components will create teaching and learning processes and learning outcomes (Winkel, 1987; Richards and Rodger, 1986).

Heaton (1991:135) argues that writing is a complex skill because it requires sentence structure, rhetorical skills, and conceptual and judgmental elements. Meanwhile, Mueller (1985: 567) states that writing is a system of symbols poured through written language so that the signs can be read.

Power and Hubbard (1991:68-69) define writing as a medium of communication between a person and other people at different places and times. When someone writes, he tries to express his intentions/wants in writing at a different place and time from the reader of his writing. This means, when someone writes, he tries to express his intention/desire in writing at a different home and time from the reader of his writing. In line with this, Nunan (1995:86) argues that an essential difference between oral and written communication is that written communication is often decontextual. This is because the writer spans the distance and time from the person or reader of his writing, so he must conclude the background knowledge of his reader, which requires him to add or subtract words or messages in the text he writes.

Writing skills are essential and helpful for students because writing is a must for students (Andayani, 2015). Learning to write is considered to have more complexity than the other three skills. Furthermore, Brown (in Harmer, 2002: 323) argues that writing is a process consisting of thinking (gathering ideas), compiling writing,

revising again, which requires special skills. Heaton (1991:135) argues that writing is a complex skill because it involves sentence structure, rhetorical skills, and conceptual and judgmental elements. Based on some of the opinions above, it can be concluded that writing is an activity carried out to express ideas or opinions through language to be understood by the reader.

Vocabulary Mastery Barriers Encountered in Learning Writing Skills for International students

International students have a different language and cultural backgrounds from the culture of the language they are studying. These language and cultural differences have consequences on the choice of Indonesian language material to be taught to them because the acquisition of a second language, including Indonesian for foreign speakers, is strongly influenced by the first language (Ellis, 1986:19). Furthermore, Lee said that the only cause of difficulties and errors in learning a second or foreign language is the learner's first language (Ellis, 1986:23).

Hegelhud and Kock (2003: 75) found that the low writing ability of students is not only caused by learning factors at school but also by internal and environmental factors. Interest and readiness factors in students have a significant effect in determining writing success. If students are interested in learning writing skills, students will more easily master these skills.

Vocabulary is an essential part of learning a language. Both teachers, students, and researchers agree with this opinion. Words are the building blocks and initial foundations of knowledge for language (Celce-Murcia, 1991). Vocabulary is the main building element in language learning. This is in line with McCarthy (in Fan, 2003:222) stating that vocabulary is the most significant part of the meaning of any language, and it is the biggest problem for most learners. At the same time, in every language skill, no one can handle or communicate without words because Hunt and Belglar (2005: 2) state that words are the essence of language understanding, and their use is a lexicon. In other words, vocabulary is essential where it appears in every language skill. Schmitt (2010: 4) notes that "students bring vocabulary/dictionaries and not grammar books."

This situation makes vocabulary mastery a challenge for both teachers and language learners themselves. Including foreign language students, vocabulary is the principal capital in learning a language; the more vocabulary mastered will provide a higher level of confidence for international students in learning a foreign language. Therefore, vocabulary learning is the real key to second language learning.

Learning Media for Indonesian Writing Skills for Foreign Speakers

Media is considered very useful in learning. Heinich, Molenda, Russell, and Smaldino (2005:9) argue that the media is a means of communication and a source of information. Gerlach and Ely (in Arsyad, 2011: 3) say that the media, if understood in broad terms, are humans, materials, or events that build conditions that enable students to acquire knowledge, skills, or attitudes. Learning media are tools or intermediaries needed to deliver material or information in learning (Kurniawan, Trientermana: 2020). The purpose of using media is to facilitate instructional purposes. Olson (1974: 12) defines media as a technology for presenting, recording, sharing, and distributing symbols through certain sensory stimuli accompanied by structuring information. The term media comes from the Latin meaning between or 'between,' which refers to anything that carries communication between a source and a receiver.

The selection of learning media must be following the needs of students. Hamalik (1989: 130) states that the essential criterion in selecting learning media is that the media must be adapted to the learning objectives or competencies to be achieved. Geutierrez and Tyner (2012) revealed that the media greatly influences the development of students. This is due to the dominance of various media in informal education in children and adolescents. Sahasti (2019) explained that several factors need to be considered in the selection of international students' writing skills learning media 1) level of condition of international students; 2) taught skills; 3) learned materials; 4) achieved objectives from the learning process; and 5) place of the learning process. From some of the opinions above, it can be concluded that teachers need to choose and use appropriate learning media so that international

students easily understand them. This is because international students have different

Methods

This research is descriptive qualitative research with a case study strategy approach that is naturalistic. The researcher explores a limited system or several limited systems from time to time through in-depth and detailed data collection involving many sources of information (e.g. observations, interviews, materials, documents, and reports). The results are reported descriptively (Creswell, 2007:73). This is following the explanation of Campbell (2005: 178-193); Hamilton (2008: 76-92); and Yin (2003: 122), Berg (2004: 251), that case studies are methods that can be used to study complex problems. This research involves a variety of data sources, which can generate large amounts of data for analysis.

The data in this study consisted of primary data and secondary data. Preliminary data were obtained directly from observations on learning, video recordings on writing lessons, and interviews with informants, namely Indonesian language teachers for international students, managers/coordinators of BIPA Sebelas Maret University, and international students learning Indonesian. While secondary data in the form of documents, namely syllabus, and photos of writing learning activities. Sources of data in this study are informants and events. Informants in this study were selected using purposive sampling, Indonesian language teachers for international students and international students. Data collection techniques used in this study were observation, interviews, and document studies. To find out how valid the data that the writer got, the writer used triangulation technique. Data validity was carried out by method triangulation and data source triangulation.

This research is based on the object of research obtained, namely the media used in learning to write for international students of Sebelas Maret University. The study was conducted for two months, from October-November 2020. The data in this study were obtained in two ways, namely observation and interviews. The data sources in this study are the object (the media used) and the Indonesian language teacher for international students at the Language Unit of the Sebelas Maret University. The instruments in this research

characteristics from students from Indonesia.

are field notes and supporting documents. To determine the validity of the data in this study, the researchers used triangulation techniques. The data analysis technique used by the researcher is a qualitative descriptive analysis technique using (1) data tabulation, (2) data reduction, (3) data presentation, and (4) concluding.

Results

Obstacles Experienced by International students

The obstacles faced by international students in learning writing skills are their heterogeneous abilities. As a result, teachers also have to deal with student difficulties in vocabulary and grammar before dealing with student difficulties in writing. The results of interviews with international students themselves showed several obstacles they encountered in learning to write. The obstacle is vocabulary and grammatical mastery.

According to international students, Indonesian vocabulary is quite challenging to understand for those who have not known Indonesia for a long time. Vocabulary is needed in the process of writing activities. Mrs. Dian Kusuma Suci M. Pd conveyed this. This explains that the obstacles in writing learning activities are in the vocabulary that has not been mastered by students. Lack of vocabulary mastery makes international students hampered in learning to write. Students who have not mastered vocabulary well will be less fluent when writing work or text.

Visual Media Used in Overcoming Barriers to Mastery of International students' Vocabulary at Sebelas Maret University

The media used by the teachers were chosen based on several factors including, 1) student background, 2) international student level, 3) learning objectives, 4) learning materials, and 5) study time. This study shows that teachers choose the suitable learning media in BIPA learning, especially for learning writing skills.

The types of visual media used in learning writing skills at Sebelas Maret University are pictures,

flashcards, comics, and maps. Visual media is considered very helpful in the process of learning writing skills. Teachers usually use media photos to show family tree. The teacher will show examples of family photos and explain the family tree. After that, students were asked to write about their family tree to be presented in front of the class. BIPA teachers will examine the work of BIPA students to see how far the development of international students' writing skills is. In other visual media used in learning using flashcards, teachers can explain abstract concepts more accurately. One of the factors that need to be considered in selecting flashcard media is learning materials, such as daily activities. The purpose of learning is to explain various kinds of daily activities in Indonesian.

The use of flashcards can be done in various ways, such as quizzes or discussions between international students. International students are paired to do questions and answers on daily activities with flashcards. A student is asked to show a picture and another is asked to guess the action depicted on the flashcard in writing and then ask the student to make a series of sentences based on the activity. The instructor also made flashcards to introduce the types of clothes and signs. For example, the teacher gives pictures of various clothes, and students are asked to guess in writing. In addition to flashcards, BIPA teachers at Sebelas Maret University also use maps as a medium for learning writing skills. This media is used to understand directions in Indonesian. The map used in learning writing skills is, of course, a map that is described.

Teachers use simple maps to show different directions or signs to show the way from one area to another. Students are asked to write down directions from one location to another. The teacher will assess how students explain in providing direction to a place and check how their writing skills are developing. The next visual media is comics. UNS BIPA teachers use simple comics to show everyday conversations when they are in an environment. With the examples provided, students can write down daily discussions. In addition, comics can increase students' vocabulary that they can use in certain situations. By looking at everyday conversations written in comics and the expressions formed, students can rewrite the vocabulary they have

acquired and then develop it into a sentence. The teacher will ask the students to write a simple conversation in a condition using a simple comic. After that, the teacher will correct the sentences written by the students to see the progress of students in writing skills.

Discussions

Mastery of vocabulary is essential in learning a language. This is in line with Celce-Murcia (1991) opinion which said that words are the building blocks and initial foundation of knowledge for language. The limited vocabulary mastery will make it difficult for students to follow the learning of writing skills. This is because international students are not able to choose the right words to convey their meaning. For that, the use of visual media is needed in this case. Visual media such as photos, pictures, maps, and comics are considered to help international students in adding insight and mastering Indonesian vocabulary.

Based on the research results, visual media are widely used in learning writing skills for international students. This is because visual media has several important roles in overcoming the problem of vocabulary mastery faced by international students when studying Indonesian. This is in line with the opinion of Smaldino, Lowther, & Russel (2008), which states that the role of visual media in the learning process is 1) providing concrete ideas as a reference, 2) creating abstract ideas into concrete, (3) motivating students, 4) directing attention, 5) repeating information in a different format, 6) remembering previous lessons, and 7) reducing learning effort. The results of this study are also following Aziz's research (2020) which states that visual media is very effective to be used as a medium to improve vocabulary mastery of international students.

The use of media in learning is considered very important to support the course of a learning process. Especially in learning writing skills for international students, learning media is very much needed. The success of international students in capturing learning materials is influenced by the use of media in learning. Seeing different abilities and from other countries, teachers must choose the suitable media to be accepted by international students. There are

various types of media that can be used in language learning. However, not all media can be used in learning writing skills. The media used must be appropriate and must transmit all information, provide the necessary instructional stimuli in learning, and help students engage in relevant learning activities.

Conclusion

Lack of vocabulary mastery is one of the obstacles that international students often encounter in learning writing skills. Therefore, teachers need to use appropriate learning media to support international students' vocabulary mastery. There are various types of visual media used in learning BIPA writing skills at the Language Unit of Sebelas Maret University. Visual media seems to help several problems faced by international students in learning Indonesian, such as cultural differences, grammatical systems, and difficulties in understanding vocabulary. The visual media used at the Sebelas Maret University include pictures, maps, comics, and flashcards. To choose the suitable learning media, teachers must pay attention to several factors such as; 1) Student background, 2) international student level, 3) learning objectives, 4) learning materials, and 5) study time.

The use of visual media in learning BIPA writing skills at Sebelas Maret University is considered capable of overcoming the obstacles encountered by international students. For example, flashcards, photos, simple maps, and comics can help increase the Indonesian vocabulary for students.

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