

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research background, the research questions, the research purpose, the research significance, the scope of the study, the definition of key terms, and the organization of the paper.

1.1 Background of the Study

As a demanded skill, writing plays an important role in student's academic success at the tertiary level. Through writing, students will be able to convey feelings, ideas, and information (Chalish & Masitowarni, 2013). Writing is regarded as a medium for the students in the learning of the knowledge base of their disciplines (Maguire et al., 2013), in which they are also learning to develop and organize their arguments (Quitadamo & Kurtz, 2007; Spiller & Ferguson, 2011).

Taking into account the importance of writing, however, in reality, writing is not an easy task for many EFL college students, including those from Indonesia. This is because writing demands adequate knowledge of content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics (Oshima & Hogue, 2007; Toba et al., 2019). It is also strengthened by the fact that the rhetorical conventions of English texts; the structure, style, and organization often differ from conventions in students' first language (Akbar et al., 2018; Almubark, 2016; J. Hasan & Marzuki, 2017; Belkhir & Benyelles, 2017). In addition, Nunan (1999) also states that writing skills possess an enormous challenge to produce a coherent, fluent, extended piece of writing in one's second language. Therefore, to be proficient in writing, EFL college students need to have good knowledge of how to recognize, manage and overcome such things as complexities at the level of a clause, grammatical form, and unfamiliarity with the use of language since in writing they not only learn how to write but also reinforce several aspects of language that they have not completely mastered.

Some studies report that most of the EFL/ESL students still encounter difficulties in writing (Ahmed, 2010; Akbar et al., 2018; Almubark, 2016; Ariyanti, 2016; Ariyanti & Fitriana, 2017; Belkhir & Benyelles, 2017; Fareed et al., 2016; Hasan & Marzuki, 2017; Hidayati, 2018; Rahmatunisa, 2014; Toba et al., 2019; Younes & Albalawi, 2015). The challenges lie in writing aspects including content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. Students were also barely exposed to the practice of writing, writing dislike, low writing motivation, and teachers lacked information and knowledge on what they should do regarding their students' composition. Nik et al. (2010) state that the acquisition of grammar, vocabulary and other language structures makes it even more difficult for students to write.

For EFL learners, grammar becomes one of the problems in English writing (Nasser, 2019; Toba et al., 2019), and this may result in low writing skills. As in the case in Pakistan, the major problems of learners in writing are insufficient linguistic proficiency (including grammar, syntax, and vocabulary), writing anxiety, lack of ideas, and weak structure organization (Fareed et al., 2016). Other aspects of writing, including the content, the organization, word choice, and mechanics, are common problems found in students' EFL writing. In terms of content, students often find difficulties in exploring and developing relevant ideas. In the aspect of the organization, the difficulties located on the sentence organization, lack of transition word, the unstated topic sentence for each body paragraph, undeveloped supporting ideas, and repetition of ideas of concluding paragraph. In the aspect of vocabulary, the students' problems are selecting the choice of the appropriate word and registers based on situation and context. Meanwhile, in the aspect of mechanics, the problems are about writing errors in punctuation, capitalization, and spellings (Toba et al., 2019). Regarding this, due to its complexity, writing is often regarded as the most difficult skill among the four language skills.

To diminish students' writing difficulties, some researchers applied various learning models focusing on different learning activities. For instance, task-based language teaching is echoed by Ellis (2009). According to Ellis (2009), students are provided much freedom and natural context to use the target language in the class. At

the same time, this learning model guides students to learn language by communicating interactively while engaging in meaningful tasks, and it offers a focus both on form and on communication (Abraham, 2015; Ellis, 2009; Freeman & Anderson, 2011). However, students are still faced difficulties in how they compose their ideas in the form of texts. Therefore, this study utilizes the concepts of genre-based learning to facilitate students to understand the generic structure of texts being written.

To facilitate students in understanding text types, task-based learning is operated by giving students various learning tasks to practice writing inside the classroom. In addition, task-based learning is emphasized in meaning form and learning form (Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Mcdonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007). In practice, the learning activities are designed to help students to have a rich input of the target language. This learning creates a dynamic learning atmosphere with students' high motivation (Jeon & Hahn, 2006). In the end, some researchers inform that this learning can contribute to the improvement of communicative fluency while not neglecting accuracy, and it can be used together with a more traditional approach in the teaching of writing skills (Ellis, 2009); (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011); (Mcdonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007).

In this study, various tasks are beneficial because students can learn language by communicating interactively while engaging in meaningful tasks (Carless, 2002; Littlewood, 2004; Nunan, 2004). Besides, giving various tasks for students is flexible enough to fit into different teaching contexts (Ellis, 2003). In the current study, the use of task-based learning activities is considered an effective approach for teaching four language skills including grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary (Willis & Willis, 2007; Willis, 1996). According to (Douglas & Kim, 2014), task-based learning support students with meaningful classroom tasks and help them complete those tasks through modelling, experiencing, practising, participating, cooperating, and communicating (Nunan, 2004), (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Task-based learning activities can involve students in group work (Jeon & Hahn, 2006). Because of this, students became more independent in learning and gained an academic skill that they could use in other

courses (McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2007), and task-based learning is regarded as appropriate for EAP instruction (Douglas & Kim, 2014).

There are several reasons that task-based language teaching remains attractive, challenging, and worthy to be researched. First, the use of tasks provides better context for activating learners' acquisition processes and promoting L2 learning (Shehadeh, 2005). In addition, the use of language learning tasks remains a challenge for many teachers because the real tasks of using tasks are not always straightforward. Textbook-provided activities do not always meet the criteria of a task, and readily available tasks may not be appropriate to meet the learners' goals and needs (Megan, 2014). Second, the use of real communication activities in language learning, target language to carry out meaningful tasks (Ellis, 2003; Kumaravadivelu, 2006), and the use of useful language to support the learning process (Willis, 1996). Third, Task-Based Language Teaching which focuses on meaning-based learning and students-centered teaching approach would make learners have a sense of accomplishment when they perform the task successfully (Prabhu, 1987).

Pertaining to the issue of task-based language teaching, the number of studies conducted on the topic of task-based language teaching is increasing simultaneously, such as the application of the TBL framework to teach writing (Ahmed & Bidin, 2016; Bantis, 2009; Birjandi & Malmir, 2009; Cao, 2012; Derakhshan, 2018; Esmail, 2016; Hai-yan, 2014; Johari, 2018; Sunthara, 2016; Kafipour et al., 2018; Marashi & Dadari, 2012; McDonough & Fuentes, 2015; Mehwish, 2017; Min, 2014; Parvizi et al., 2016; Payman & Gorjian, 2014; Reza, 2015; Tabar & Alavi, 2013; Zhaochun, 2015). The work is undertaken by Ahmed & Bidin (2016), for example, had discovered the beneficial impact of implementing task-based language teaching in writing in that TBLT was the most interesting and learner-centered approach enabling learners to use their existing linguistic resources.

In the context of English language teaching in Indonesia, several studies on the implementation of task-based language teaching to teach writing skills have also been acknowledged. These studies were conducted in the diverse level of schooling including secondary level (Karim et al, 2014; Puspitaloka & Hariyani, 2016; Sari et al,

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2018), and in tertiary level (Akil et al, 2018; Dirgeyasa, 2018; Purwanto, 2016; Sholihah, 2013; Sundari et al, 2018; Widayanti, 2011). In secondary level of schooling, Karim et al, (2014), for example, had investigated the implementation of task-based language teaching to improve students' abilities in writing narrative text. The result of this study suggested that appropriate utilization of task-based language teaching can improve students' ability in writing, the teacher has to design interesting activities for the task, and the teacher also has to recreate students' coursebooks to match the students' needs and context.

Task-based language teaching is developed to create an authentic, innovative, and immersive language learning environment that complements existing English classes in the Asian EFL context, including the Indonesian context. However, due to the constraints of traditional approaches to English education, the development of TBLT still faces many challenges and problems. Within the Asian context, a number of task-based approaches have often proven problematic, such as in Hongkong (D. Carless, 2007) task-based teaching may prove to conflict with Confucian-heritage culture context. Furthermore, other problems are large size class (Jeon & Hahn, 2006), competitive examination systems, teachers' uncertainty concerning their understanding of a task and/or a task-based approach to language teaching (Carless, 2004; Ellis & Shintani, 2013; Hu, 2013; Jeon & Hahn, 2006; Littlewood, 2004; Zheng & Borg, 2013), grammar focused instruction, teacher-centered, didactic, and non-interactive, lack of empirical research on task-based, heavy focus on preparation for college entrance exams, rigid national curricula, traditional teaching methods, and lack of students' motivation (D. Carless, 2007; D. R. Carless, 2003; R. Hu, 2013).

The implementation of task-based learning activities in the Indonesian EFL setting has faced difficulties as well, but only a few studies (Puspitaloka & Haryani, 2016; Sari et al, 2018; Purwanto, 2016; Akil et al, 2018) have examined the possibilities for task-based learning activities in an Indonesian EFL setting. The majority of the studies on the actual practice of task-based approaches have been conducted at the college level in ESP context than in EAP context like writing skills. Thus, there is a

need for more research focusing on the implementation and evaluation of task-based learning in writing subjects at the college level.

To a certain extent, this current study is different from the existing study. First, most of the previous studies are conducted at primary and secondary education levels, only several of them were conducted at EFL tertiary education level. Most of them are implemented in non-EFL college students. In addition, the use of genre-based learning activities in the current study makes it different from the existing task-based learning. The core of genre-based learning is the use of text types to train students to compose sentences into a complete paragraph. Therefore, the present study is trying to develop a new learning model based on task-based learning activities. This model is then called task-based language learning (TBLL) model. This model is combined with communicative competences in each step of the TBLL model. Also, this model is implemented at the EFL college student classrooms in the Indonesian context. As a consideration, the phase model is modified from the existing TBLT model proposed by Willis (1996). The developed model is built up of five teaching steps to facilitate students to teach the subject of academic writing by engaging them in a variety of tasks using text types. The previous sequence of the learning activities covers pre-task, while-tasks, and post-tasks. In the context of this study, the modified model includes the introduction stage, habit-formation stage, construction stage, reflection stage, and presentation stage.

Above all, this study is focused on developing a task-based language learning model in the teaching of writing skills for English department students. It covers the English department students' need for English writing proficiency, the instructional model of Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) in teaching writing skills, and the students' progress on the writing skills.

1.2 Research Questions

From those have been stated above, this study formulates research questions as follows:

1. What needs do students have in terms of writing skills as the task is assessed using the Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) model?
2. What is the instructional model of Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) designed in the teaching of writing skills like?
3. How does TBLL model help students enhance their writing skills better?

1.3 Objectives of the study

The specific purposes of the study are as follows:

1. Identifying the needs of the students in writing skills as they assessed using the Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) model.
2. Developing the instructional model of Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) in teaching writing skills.
3. Exploring the degree to which Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) can help students enhance their writing skills.

1.4 Significances of the study

The result of the study is expected to contribute worthily to the theory, the educational practice of empirical evidence on the implementation of TBLL and policy, especially in EFL teaching writing skills. Concerning the theoretical significance, this study is expected to be useful theoretically to the literature of the development of task-based language teaching and can be utilized as a reference for various purposes dealing with language instructional approach in the teaching of writing skills.

Regarding educational practice, this study is expected to have a big contribution to the institution, lecturers, and students. For the institution, the finding of this study is expected to contribute as the reference of the institution which intends to research concerning English writing skills such as replicating the study dealing with the teaching-learning model of English writing. This research could become the reference for the institution when the objective of the study is to modify the TBLL model as one of the learning-teaching approaches in the language curriculum for teaching writing skills. For lecturers, it is expected that the finding of this study would be beneficial for

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the lecturer as knowledge and practical teaching experience for the teaching of writing skills. This study is also beneficial for the teachers as a reference for further development and researches in the instructional model in teaching writing skills. Thus, it is also expected that the product of this research facilitates the students of the English language department to enhance their writing skills.

In terms of policy, the result of this study can be great contribution in providing insight as to whether or not this developed model needs to be adopted in broader contexts of English language teaching practices in Indonesian tertiary level education and what practical requirements are necessary to make this model possible to be conducted.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study is the research and development of the undergraduate English study program in two private universities in Mataram. The present study focuses on investigating the product of the model, namely instructional goal, teaching stages, instructional materials, and syllabus. These components are designed to support the model developed to improve the linguistically accurate and acceptable writing skills of students.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

The definition of the key terms of the study is needed to have a clear view of what it is going to deal with before starting research. Thus, the key terms that are highly related to this study are going to be defined in their specific meaning. The definition of each key term is elaborated below:

- a. **Model** is a pattern that is used to design an instructional system that includes instructional components which are syntax, social systems, principles of reaction, and support system (Joyce et al., 2000). Therefore, the instructional model in this study means the instructional design that consists of teaching steps, the interaction between lecturer and students, the way teacher treats students, syllabus, and material and impact of the developed model to the students writing skill.

- b. **Task-based Language Teaching** is an approach to language education in which students are given functional tasks that invite them to focus primarily on meaning exchange and to use language for real-world, non-linguistic purposes (Branden, 2006). In this research task-based language teaching is adopted as supporting theories of Task-Based Language Learning model.
- c. **Writing Skill** is the skill to produce written text. Writing skill is the ability to use some strategies to manage the writing process such as planning goals, generating ideas, organizing information, selecting appropriate words, making a draft, reviewing, editing, and revising it (Hedge, 2007); (Brown & Lee, 2015).
- d. **Tasks** are workplan that requires learners to process language pragmatically to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed, which require them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their linguistic resources (Ellis, 2003); (Willis, 1996)
- e. **The task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) model** is an instructional model which is modified from the framework of task-based language teaching proposed by Willis (1996). Task-based language learning (TBLL) is created by a collaboration of communicative language teaching and genre-based writing approach and Task-Based Language teaching (TBLT).
- f. **Materials** are anything that is used by teachers and learners to facilitate the learning of language (Tomlinson, 2011). The instructional materials in this study define as instructional tasks or activities that are designed systematically and properly to facilitate students' writing.

1.7 Organization of the Paper

This study is organized into five chapters. Each chapter is subdivided into subtopics that further the investigated issues. The writing of each chapter is based on the guidance on dissertation writing issued by Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, the university where the researcher is studying.

Chapter I is the introduction of the paper. This chapter highlights the nature of the study, including the background of the study, the research questions, the aims of the study, the significance of the study, the limitation of the study, and the organization of the paper.

Chapter II reviews the theoretical foundation. It covers task-based language learning definition, the principle of task-based language teaching, task design of task-based language teaching classroom, components of TBLT, and advantages of TBLT, and challenges of TBLT implementation. In addition, the chapter also discusses communicative language teaching ideas, including its conceptual definition, the evolution, the objective and syllabus, communicative activities, learner and teacher roles, and instructional materials in CLT. It is also elaborate genre-based approach ideas that contain definition, principles, and classroom steps of GBA. Besides, models of TBLT and teaching writing from a task-based perspective are also discussed in this section. Then, it explains previous studies undertaken by the previous researcher on TBLT and the proposed model of TBLL in teaching writing skills.

Chapter III discusses the research methodology. It describes the research design embracing the research procedure of developing the TBLL model, the site and participant involved in this study, the data collection techniques, the research instruments, and the data analysis.

Chapter IV displays data findings and data analysis results. The display is outlined based on the research questions of this study, as stated in Section 1.2 of Chapter I.

Chapter V provides the conclusions derived from chapter IV, implications taken from the study, and recommendations that may benefit teachers or researchers who concern about TBLL and TEFL.