

EXERCISE ITEMS: HOW IT IMPROVES STUDENTS' ENGLISH PERFORMANCE IN CLASSROOM SITUATION

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ABSTRAK

Pemahaman siswa dapat diukur dengan beberapa cara. Salah satu cara untuk mengukur pemahaman adalah melalui *portfolio* dan penilaian alternatif. Penilaian formatif, di lain pihak, bertujuan untuk membentuk kompetensi siswa melalui proses. Untuk para siswa sekolah menengah pertama, keberadaan buku latihan dapat menjadi lebih penting daripada penjelasan guru itu sendiri. Di sisi lain, guru bahasa Inggris akan melakukan berbagai upaya untuk membuat para siswa dapat mencapai Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (*Passing Grade*). Berdasarkan observasi dan hasil dari item-item latihan, dapat dilihat bahwa jumlah siswa yang lulus *passing grade* mengalami peningkatan. Melalui kuesioner, para siswa juga mengungkapkan bahwa motivasi mereka mungkin distimulasi oleh isi dari buku latihan dan penampilan dari buku tersebut. Meskipun begitu, latihan diakui oleh siswa sebagai salah satu cara bagi mereka untuk lebih mudah dalam memahami materi dan penjelasan dari guru.

Keywords: *item-item latihan, penampilan bahasa Inggris, situasi kelas*

INTRODUCTION

For some reasons, English teacher in junior high school level concern more on the result of the study in the end of the semester, rather than the process. The passing grade or KKM (Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal) become the main objective that should be gained. However, in a classroom situation, teachers face various conditions in their schools. One of the facts is that the students do not have the same competence and knowledge.

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Different background and schemata will obviously impact on their learning strategies. On the other hand, the English teachers are demanded to make their students passed the passing grade. The passing grade is believed as the minimum quality or competence for the students in comprehending the material and deserve to be said succeed, as a result that the process of teaching and learning has run well.

As the consequences for the demand of being English teacher, he will execute various efforts in making his students understanding and mastering the materials. One of those strategies is by choosing the activity or source that will be used in the teaching process. One of the simplest ways is by giving book for doing the exercise based on the topic that is discussed. However, a good English teachers should be selective in choosing the textbook to lead their teaching learning process (Fatmawati, 2013:viii). It can be said that the teacher should concern about the content of the book to support his teaching process.

The book that is chosen should also be compatible with the curriculum to avoid the misperception and misinterpretation in achieving the basic and main competence as stated in the curriculum. Basic competence and main competence are the guidelines for the teacher to bring the students gain the succeed in achieving English competence.

One of basic competencies for junior high school students stated in 2013 curriculum is creating and spoken and written text to identifying themselves appropriately (Kompetensi Inti dan Kompetensi Dasar Bahasa Inggris Kelas VII SMP/MTs). However, the demand might be simple, but in the process, the English teacher may have different restraints because of many factors.

Most of classroom assessment is formative assessment because it evaluates students in the process of “forming” their competencies and skills with the goal of helping them to continue in the growing process.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive qualitative study was done to analyze the data, through the questionnaire; the respondents’ opinion and perception were noted about the relationship between doing the exercise with their performance in English subject. The study was done in natural setting without intervention from the researcher to have the data naturally.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Findings

From the observation on the result of exercise, 6, 6 per cent of the respondents were not being able to gain the expected score on the passing grade. Seen from the exercise sheet, the major mistakes were on the form of writing style. From the questionnaire sheet, almost all of the respondents delivered argued that the exercise items were familiar for them, but have different variation in each term. Grammar is part that sometimes made them become confused and uncertain in doing the exercise due to the principles and form of the tenses, especially if the exercise is in the form of essay.

On the reading part, all respondents argued that it was easy to understand because the texts were narrated in the form of story. From the questionnaire, it was also known that the respondents were motivated because they have various tasks in doing assignment, not only individual, but also in pairs and groups. They also argued that their enthusiasm was increasing because some assignments asked them to do conversation practice, and it made them speak up with their friends. However, they admitted that because of the conversation assignment, their bravery in creating their own sentences is improving.

The observation was not administered to the students only, but also to the English teacher as the party who instructed the exercise, to see their opinion about the exercise itself. The exercise items were taken from the book that was being used in the teaching process. The book was used to ease the teacher in managing activities for their students in understanding the materials and also arranging the students to participate in the teaching process.

B. Discussion

(1) The Students' Performance in Doing the Exercises

Several exercises were delivered to the students in the process of teaching, and its result shown different performance of students' English skill. The exercise items were in the form of short essay that need to fill in sort answer consisting from one or two words. For some parts, it needed answer in the form of simple sentences, such as "I have a pencil

case". For answer that needed simple sentences, most of the students were not writing the articles, such as a, some, the, and an.

The students thought that the meaning was the same without the existence of the articles, however, in bahasa Indonesia, they do not need to deliver a sentence in detail, as far as the listener understand the meaning, it is enough. For another exercise, when they have to greet someone when they meet people, all of the students wrote the answer correctly, it because in greeting, there is a platform before the exercise, and they imitate the utterances in the exercise items, and then they have to actualize it in the spoken form in pairs with their friend using their answer depends on the situation. Most of the students had no difficulty in answering and practicing this part. Another form of exercise that could be described about was whenever the students were asked to state about the time or date about an event.

The result showed that the students almost never use the preposition in front of the day; for instance whenever they answer the question" what day you go to the church?", and the answer was it's Sunday, that should be answered it's on Sunday. The argument was still the same with the previous activities on the making short answer, that the use of preposition is thought to be insignificant in the meaning, they said that their partners understood what they intended, so it would not change the meaning for their needs in having communication.

However, there was another exercise that in fact ask the students to show direction based on a picture given, and the students were asked to show a place and explain to the their groups. About the result, showing direction is not quite simple for some students who have to distinguish the direction and giving instruction to the listener, as the result, in their exercise, they wrote the main words, the places and direction, but not the instruction.

(2) The Students' Perception about the Exercise and Their Performance

From the questionnaire, it can be drawn that most of the students thought the exercise were easy, simple, and familiar for them. The material were also been discussed during the teaching process, and only few words and instruction that need to be clarified or confirmed by the teacher. Working in pairs or group is believed to help the students to

overcome their difficulties, because their friends shared the difference sentences and words that could give them new insight.

However, the students need to be more careful in practicing or executing the items in the process of teaching and learning. Their teachers sometimes remind the students to complete or revise the use of utterances and sentences even though the students understand what is being discussed or intended by the speakers. By writing the simple answer or content word, it would not give significant impact on the meaning and it was not part of mistake, because the listener and the speaker are understand what is being intended, and they considered that they are successful learners.

(3) The teacher's perception about the exercise items and the students' performance.

Setting up the students in many activities to do activities such as answering questions and practicing with their friends will help the teacher to observe the students' improvement. The improvement might be indicated by many things; participation, result of the exercise, and also motivation.

Those indicators can be seen from the process of teaching, the result of the exercise might not give the real competence of the students, but through discussion or the practicing in the process, the teacher could have another point from their students. The teacher could not only concern on the right or wrong answer, but also on how the students translate it into communicative ideas and ways in understanding English materials. Some students might not be good in writing, but very enthusiastic in creating dialogue with their friends or giving comments to their friends' performance.

The exercises that were done by the students could give an insight for the teacher about how their students' competence be represented in kind of simple utterances and sentences. The simple instruction might also depict the deep understanding about the material through his writing, and so as the competence in explaining can also be seen from the dialogue and working in pairs. On the other hand, there were still some students who did not show the significant improvement, both in the writing or in the spoken activities because of personal problems.

CONCLUSION

The exercise items helped the teacher in investigating the students' competence in various ways. The assessment can be judged from its form that in the form of interactive practice, open ended questions and invite various answers that could lead intrinsic motivation because the teacher could give feedback that formed washback in long term to support the goal of learning English. Though, the better performance of English competence need to be strengthens not only in the form of simple communicative means, but also in the sophisticated ones as intended in the curriculum.

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