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**“Questioning What Works Best:
Implementing Pedagogic Innovations for
Creating Teacher & Learner
Autonomy in TEFL”**



PREFACE



First of all I'd like to start by saying *Alhamdulillah* 'alamin, thanks to Allah for allowing us to have The 7th International Conference on Teaching English as A Foreign Language (7th COTEFL). I wish to thank the Rector, the University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto: DR. H. Syamsuhadi Irsyad S.H.,M.H. and the vice rectors for supporting us to have this conference. I wish to thank and congratulate the committee who has worked hard to prepare this annual activity. I'd like to thank all the keynote speakers: Bapak Anis Baswedan, Ph. D. (The Minister of Indonesian Education and Culture), Prof. James Chapman, Prof. Dr. Lindsay Miller, Assoc. Prof. Lidia Alsagoff, Prof. Helena I.R. Agustien, Shanty Hawanty, Ph.D., Handoyo Puji Widodo, Ph.D., and our Dean Ibu Sulasih Nurhayati. My gratitude also comes to our reviewers: Prof. Retna Rina Agustina, M.App.Ling. TESOL, Handoyo, Ph.D., Michelle Kohler, Hameed Hameed, Prof. Amporn Sa-ngiamwibool, Vineet Kaul, and Johana Woods for reading and sorting out lots of abstracts, to refine the best ones. I wish to thank the presenters, as you are the chosen. I wish to thank all the participants for spending your time at this COTEFL, without you all this conference will never be.

We have passed a long journey to survive. It was seven years ago we started this conference with the spirit of *Hari Pendidikan Nasional*. We realize that education, in which the day we celebrate every May 2nd, is one of principal elements we have to pay attention to make this country a mounted one. COTEFL is meant to be parts of the endeavors to achieve the goal.

Finally, the people behind the education are the essence to drive the ideal education, then in their hands, we rely on the future of our beloved country. I know I address to most of those people, the teachers who will shape the face of the world. You are here now because you care, you want to promote your excellence, especially in English Language Teaching.

The papers we received have shown us that promoting good standards need good practices. Some of you show us you have done well. Some practice humanitarian touch in which varieties strategies done. Some prepare themselves by implementing high technology as well as creating new methods. The ultimate goal is to create an 'autonomous atmosphere' in the teaching and learning process of English in all education levels among the students and the teachers.

Your ideas are the seed of higher success tree that, I believe, can protect us from the hot sunburn. They will grow up into big trees that give us fresh atmosphere to breathe, to live our life. I do hope our sharing ideas will exist, as we have passed it into the 7th COTEFL.

Finally, with the souls of *Hari Pendidikan Nasional*, let's color the education on earth. I wish you a fruitful and flying color conference. Thank you.

Wassalamu 'alaikum Wr.Wb.

Christianto, S.S., M.Hum.

Chairperson

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UNDERSTANDING STUDENTS' WRITING PROFICIENCY THROUGH DIAGNOSTIC TEST

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Abstract

This study was conducted to describe students' initial writing proficiency prior to the start of the even semester writing program. The primary focus from conducting this was to gather comprehensible basic information from the students through diagnostic test held in the first meeting. Sample of this study was forty second semester students in the Faculty of Language Sultan Agung Islamic University. After the completion of the test, the result of which would be evaluated and described in detail in number by referring to the students' learning components to provide better understanding about students' current writing proficiencies in the future learning materials. Last but not least, the most important, this was an early steppingstone for further researches and became an attempt to give picture that benefited the researcher from designing the teaching material as well as the teaching models for success of his teaching.

Keywords: diagnostic test, writing ability, second semester students, lesson planning

Introduction

English as the first foreign language learned almost everywhere has become a fashion in this modern era. This is due to the fact that people already realizes this language has played such an important role that supports in most section of life apart from being a language mostly spoken by people all over the world. One of which is to build mutual understanding among people from different countries and different cultural background (for example, Sakhyya, 2012).

In these recent years, English in Indonesia has been thought for over decades throughout the levels start from elementary to university level. However, this will still not guarantee that ability of English language learners will automatically increase due to the great amount of time spent for learning English. Rather, we need to have a look at some factors that may affect the learners' learning achievement in their attempt to master this language. Learning environment, teaching method, classroom management, learners or teachers themselves personally problematic or maybe the lesson planning itself can be the source why learners fail to meet the learning goals.

Let's take a look at the very simple issue related to planning. Planning is not something new in the world of teaching & learning; this is believed that every single teacher in this earth knows its importance and knows that this steps need to pass before going to class. Knowing but ignoring, this is what happens to the classroom education in general around this area of Semarang municipality. They know what to do, but they do not really do. Ideally, preparation needs to be settled far away before the class starts. This is not without a reason why teachers need to do so. Lesson is the product of an interaction happening systematically where it is extremely complex (Mallows, 2002). As the lesson is running, students are trying to communicate with their teachers using the language they are studying, beginning from this point, things are evolving and developing unpredictably depending on what has happened and what is going on second by second (Harmer, 2007). In the real teaching, anything is possible; lack of preparation can potentially bring teachers disaster. Common example frequently happens during the teaching process is that students sometimes address unpredictable questions where teachers cannot provide the answer real time (Harmer, 2007) or maybe things go unexpectedly beyond teachers' expectation due to being lack of preparation they do prior the class. Shortly, teaching methods as well as teachers' ability in organizing the class fail to provoke the students' interest in joining the class as they think that the activity is too boring. In addition, students may possibly think that the materials are too easy or on the other hands, it is too difficult, what makes them hardly find meaningful lesson they expect to get after the class.

Of reading the elaboration, planning has obviously taken important part in succeeding the teaching process. Planning is not about what teachers are going to do in the classroom, rather, it is about how teachers can provide students meaningful lesson and bring them into success in achieving the goal of learning. Therefore, doing things carefully & systematically is indeed essential to do. Including but not limited to conducting diagnostic test to get better understanding about students' current language proficiency and use the data as reference to plan the lesson and teaching strategies for sake of providing better, effective and efficient way of teaching to students.

What is a Test?

Test in education is obviously important, to which it is commonly served as an instrument to measure participants' ability, knowledge or performance in a particular domain.

Further, this has become a common way of stimulating participants to elicit responses towards a set of questions proposed ((Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh & Sorensen, 2010; Brown, 2004). To qualify as a test, the applied testing method must be explicit and well structured as well as meeting these criteria; test must measure; test measures individual's ability, knowledge and performance; test measures performance and measure a given domain. The sentence of a test must measure, here, explains two kinds of testing models, first, tests designed to gauge general ability, while, others designed to focus on very specific competencies or objectives. Next, a test must measure individual's ability, knowledge or performance. Testers need to understand who the test takers are, what previous experience and knowledge background they have, whether the test has appropriately matched to the test takers' abilities or not, and how the test takers are able to define their testing result. Then, test measures performance, it explains that result of which is used to see the test taker's ability in performing a language that may include the use of common concept in the field of linguistics, and language competence. In general, language tests are mostly dedicated to measure ones' ability to perform language skills. Finally, test must measure a given domain. This part suggests that set of language tested to the test takers must reflect the test takers' previous learning experience and language background or at least general competence in all skills of a language (Brown, 2007).

What is Diagnostic Test?

Diagnostic tests have been popular for decades among classical and modern education across countries in this universe. The primary purpose from administering this test is to help teachers and learners identify the weak points they may have related to language. It is commonly held by the classroom teachers to their learners at the beginning of the course to see what areas of language need to be in the syllabus. (Teaching English | British Council | BBC, 2015). A test in writing, for example, may help recognize weakest learning areas of writing skill that are difficult for learners and should therefore become part of curriculum or at least as a reference for classroom teachers to design appropriate teaching material (Brown, 2004). Further, he also articulates that this test aims at gaining information on what students need to work in the near future what makes it different from achievement test to which it focuses more on analyzing students' proficiency after receiving particular treatment. This test does not require students to be placed in certain class where they are grouped with people at the same level (Brown, 2004). Progress test given during the course can also act as diagnostic test as they help the teacher and

learners identify what areas will be looked at the next on the course (Teaching English | British Council | BBC, 2015).

In order to avoid misleading, the term of diagnostic test in this paper is again confirmed to be referred to internal assessment conducted at a narrow scope by classroom teachers in order to recognize students' initial skill and knowledge related to subjects they are going to learn throughout semester. Result gained from the test is consequently useful as a recommendation for classroom teachers to map and design more effective, efficient and practical teaching learning process. However, success of conducting this test also strongly depends on the quality & type of assessment being used whether or not this has reflected the learning goals teachers expect the students to achieve. Quality means that questions must reflect the level that the students are going to take. This should be neither too easy nor too difficult. Numbers of questions must be relevant to the time allocated, instruction provided on the question sheet must be clear. While type, in this case, refers to compatibility of questions to the skills assessed. For instance, it is rather not acceptable when some teachers claim to assess their students' language ability, but they are using invalid assessing instruments such as multiple choice questions used to test writing, filling blank questions aimed at testing students' speaking ability etc.

Why Diagnostic Tests?

The main characteristic of diagnostic language test is that It seeks for an examinees' specific linguistic strengths and weaknesses (Alderson, 2005; Bachman & Palmer, 1996 in Yin and Sims, 2006). It helps examinees better understand their own linguistic strengths and weaknesses so as to aid language learning (Yin and Sims, 2006). Departing from the statement, it is believed, by conducting diagnostic test, classroom teachers will likely take benefit from being able, first, to avoid learning duplication where students are not supposed to learn the same things, as they are already good at. Teachers in this case may better design learning priority suits best to their students' current language proficiency, including, increasing or decreasing level of difficulty of the prearranged learning materials. Second, to promote self-esteem and self-confidence. By referring back to the result of diagnostic test analysis, teachers are enabled to set on and enrich student's learning performance through promotion of self-esteem and self-confidence by appropriately adjusting the learning materials for their students. From doing this, it is expected that those students will be more facilitated in achieving their learning comprehension. Third, to recognize aspects need further study. Students are not always conscious of what knowledge they have and have not gained by far. By identifying

strong and weak aspects, teachers are expected to be aware of and be able to articulate strong and weak points to their students effectively through different kinds of strategies which are not just limited to personalizing learning task and homework and conducting personal approach to students if necessary. Fourth, to gain an understanding of personal strengths and interests. Through result of this test, students are encouraged to do self-reflection and self-identification of interest and abilities through the tasks provided by teachers. Of this, they can be more focused on improving the learning area they are weak and can possibly begin from parts they are interested in. This helps them clarify where they want to go and how to get there.

Method

This study was conducted to the second semester students in the Faculty of Language Unissula. Purpose of this study was to seek for current writing proficiency of the students in the Faculty. The program was scheduled to hold in March 2 and 3, 2015 at the beginning of their second semester. There were two kinds of classes consisted of forty students taken as sample, Education 1 and Education 2. The testing instrument was designed by referring to the language testing principles and the students' learning components. There were about five writing sections to test; sentence structure, vocabulary & mechanics, organization, and content. All of which were manifested in the form of scoring rubric. This study was important as it was later used as a reference for designing a lesson plan and teaching strategies. In order to provide a comprehensible input, result of the test would be presented in detail based on the sections tested in order to describe their current writing proficiency and explain their strengths and weaknesses in the subject of writing. This study would also present number of students who met or did not meet the passing grade. Further, this study would also try to give picture on proficiency level of the students based on the following qualification table.

Table 1
Level of Proficiency

No.	Qualification	Range of Score
1	Excellent	91 to 100
2	Above the average	81 to 90
3	Fair	71 to 80
4	Bellow the Average	61 to 70
5	Poor	< 60

Finding

Description about the Overall Assessment in the Class of Education 1

This session describes the result of the test conducted in March 2 and 3, 2015 to the second semester students registered in the writing program. The scoring was done using the scoring rubric of writing covering the sections of sentence structure, vocabulary & mechanics, organization and content. The following table shows the result of the writing test administered to the class of education 1 on Monday, March 2, 2015.

Table 2
Average Testing Result by Test Section in the Class of Education 1

No.	Sections of Assessment	Maximum Score	Passing Grade	Average Score	Meet the Passing Grade	Didnot Meet the Passing Grade
1	Sentence Structure	25	18.75	14.70	4	15
2	Vocabulary & Mechanics	25	18.75	19.20	12	7
3	Organization	25	18.75	17.80	8	11
4	Content	25	18.75	18.80	12	7
	Writing	100	75	70.60		

Based on the data presented in the table above. It was informed that only two out of the four sections of the writing test had met the passing grade while the rests, sentence structure and orgranization, were still below the average and not yet able to satisfy the passing grade. In the section of sentence structure, the maximum score students might get was 25 and the passing grade of this section was 18.75. By referring to the result by test section, the average score gained by students in the class was 14.70, it means the average students' score in this section was proven to be still under the predetermined score, 4.05 below the passing grade. Only were there 4 students out of 19 in this class who were able to meet the qualification. In the section of vocabulary and mechanics, the maximum score students could achieve was 25, while the passing grade of this was 18.75. With reference to the assessment result, it was understandable that the average score of the students in this section was better than sentence structure. In addition, it complied the qualification stated in the passing grade where the average score gained by students was 19.20, 0.45 exceeding the passing grade. Of looking at the table above, there were 12 students out of 19 in this class who were able to meet the qualification. In the section of organization, the maximum score students could gain was 25, while the pasing grade of this section was 18.75. By referring to the assessment result of this study, the average score of students in this section was 17.80, 0.95 below the passing grade. Moreover, by looking back at

the data on table 2, there were 8 out of 19 students able to satisfy the passing grade. In the section of content, the maximum score students might achieve was 25, while the average score of passing grade was 18.75. Based on the assessment result of this study, it was understandable that the average score of students in this section was 18.80, 0.05 exceeding the passing grade. In addition, there were 12 students out of 19 were able to meet the passing grade.

Description about the Overall Assessment in the Class of Education 2

This session describes another result of the test conducted next day, March 3, 2015 after completion of the first test. The scoring was done using the same rubric of writing covering the sections of sentence structure, vocabulary & mechanics, organization, and content. The following table shows the result of writing test administered to the class of education 2.

Table 3
Average Score by Test Section in the Class of Education 2

No.	Sections of Assessment	Maximum Score	Passing Grade	Average Score	Meet the Passing Grade	Did not Meet the Passing Grade
1	Sentence Structure	25	18.75	14.90	7	14
2	Vocabulary & Mechanics	25	18.75	19.90	15	6
3	Organization	25	18.75	17.20	8	13
4	Content	25	18.75	19.50	15	6
	Writing	100	75	71.60		

Based on the data presented in the table above, it was informed that only two out of the four sections of the writing test had met the passing grade while the rests, sentence structure and organization, were still below the average and not yet able to satisfy the passing grade. In the section of sentence structure, the maximum score students might get was 25 and the passing grade of this was 18.75. By referring to the average testing result by the test section, the average score was 14.90 still under the predetermined score, 3.85 below the passing grade. Further, there were only 7 students out of 21 in this class who were able to meet the qualification. In the section of vocabulary and mechanics, the maximum score of this was 25, while the passing grade was 18.75. From the assessment result, it was found that the average score of the students in this section, 19.90 had satisfied the qualification stated in the passing grade, 1.15 exceeding the passing grade. In the section of organization, the maximum score students might achieve in this part was 25, the average score of passing grade was 18.75. By referring to the assessment result of

this study, it was understandable that the average score of students in this part was just 17.20, 1.55 below the passing grade. With reference to the data on table 3, there were 8 students out of 21 able to meet the passing grade. In the section of content, the maximum score students might achieve was 25, the average score of passing grade was 18.75. Based on the assessment result of this study, it was found that the average score of students in this section was 19.50, 0.75 exceeding the passing grade. In addition, there were 15 students out of 21 able to meet the passing grade.

Discussion

With reference to the data presented below, discussion of this study would cover three parts: overview by test section, students' writing proficiency based on qualification, overall assessment by percentage.

Table 4
Overall Assessment in the Class of Education 1 and Education 2

No.	Sections of Assessment	Maximum Score	Passing Grade	Average Score		
				Education 1	Education 2	Education 1 & 2
1	Sentence Structure	25	18.75	14.70	14.90	14.85
2	Vocabulary & Mechanics	25	18.75	19.20	19.90	19.57
3	Organization	25	18.75	17.80	17.20	17.52
4	Content	25	18.75	18.80	19.50	19.20
	Writing	100	75	70.60	71.60	71.14

Overview by Test Section

Based on the data in the table above, the overall average score in the sentence structure was 14.85, 3.90 below the passing grade. This explained us that proficiency of the students in the section was still under the predetermined standard. By contrast to the Sentence Structure, in the section of vocabulary and mechanics, the overall average score of the students in this section was 19.57, higher 0.82 from the indicated passing grade. With reference to the result of this investigation it could be summed up that students were slightly better in proficiency compared to the first section. In the aspect of organization, this section was telling us that the overall average score in this part was 17.52, lower 1.23 from the passing grade and it means that students' proficiency in this section was not yet satisfying the passing grade. In the section of content, the overall average score of the students in this section was 19.20, higher 0.45 from the passing

grade. By referring to the result of this investigation, we can understand that students were slightly better in proficiency compared to the first and the third test sections. From the overall analysis above, the writing proficiency of the students in general was still below the passing grade, 71.14, 3.86 under the predetermined standard.

Students' Writing Proficiency Based on Qualification

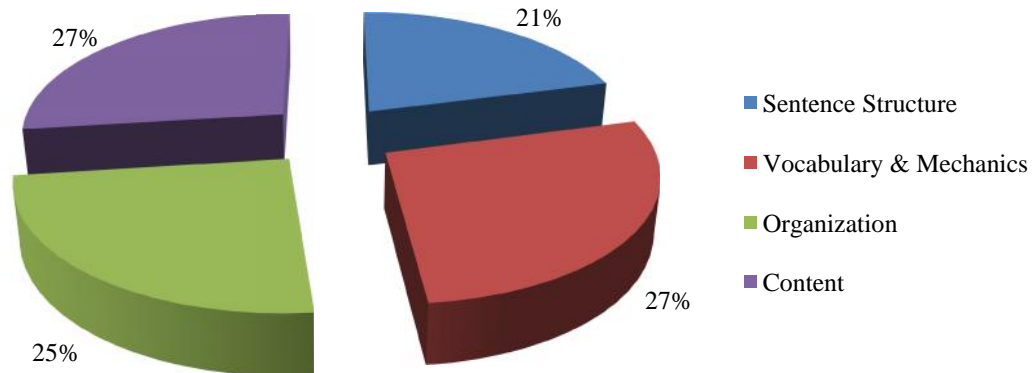
Table 5
Classification of Students' Writing Proficiency Based on Qualification

No.	Qualification	Range of Score	Number of Students		
			Education 1	Education 2	Education 1 & 2
1	Excellent	91 to 100	0	0	0
2	Above the average	81 to 90	1	1	2
3	Fair	71 to 80	9	11	20
4	Below the Average	61 to 70	8	9	17
5	Poor	< 60	1	0	1

From table 4, it is understandable that nobody, either from the class of education 1 and the class of education 2, was able to achieve the range of score (91 to 100) in the first qualification "Excellent". While at the second qualification "Above the average" with the range score between 81 to 90, there were only 2 students who were able to meet the qualification, 1 student from the class of education 1 and 1 student from education 2. In the third qualification "Fair" with the range of score between 71 to 80, there were 20 students who were able to be in this category, 9 students from education 1 and 11 students from education 2. In the fourth qualification "Below the average" with range of score between 61 to 70, there were 17 students in this category, 8 students from education 1 and 9 students from education 2. In the last qualification "Poor" ≤ 60 , there were 1 students in the category, 1 from education 1 and 0 from education 2. In addition to this, after reviewing the result gained from the final data analysis, the overall average score in writing proficiency of the second semester students 71.14, in this case, belongs to "Fair".

Overall Assessment by Percentage

Figure 1
Students' Writing Proficiency



Result of the study presented in table 3 gave us description that sentence structure in this case became the lowest proficiency among the four which was only 21% (14.85). Organization became the second lowest proficiency after sentence structure which was 25% (17.52). As we could refer back to figure 1 and table 4, content, 27% (19.20) was by contrast to the section of sentence structure and organization where it was slightly higher and better in percentage than those two sections, 6% (4.35) higher than sentence structure and 2% (1.68) higher than organization. Overviewing all sections tested, vocabulary and mechanics seemed to be the highest among all, 6% (4.72) higher than sentence structure, 2% (2.05) higher than organization and 0% (0.37) higher than content.

Conclusion

From the result of the analysis above, the writer may conclude that writing proficiency of the second semester students in the Faculty of Language Sultan Agung Islamic University was still below the predetermined passing grade. However, by referring to the score classification, the overall average score, 71.14 in this case belonged to "Fair". In addition to this, the result of the analysis above also described us that the lowest part among the four was indicated to be in the sentence structure where the overall average score was 14.85 (21%), 3.90 below the passing grade. Although organization was also low in percentage, however it was better than the sentence structure. The overall average score in this section was 7.52 (25%) where this was slightly higher

2.67 than that of the previous section. In the part of content, the average score gained in this section was 19.20 (27%), 4.35 (6%) higher than sentence structure and 1.68 (2%) higher than organization while in the vocabulary and mechanics, the average score is 19.57 (27%) that it was the highest among others, 4.72 (6%) higher than sentence structure, 2.05 (2%) higher than organization and 0.37 (0%) higher than content.

Suggestion

This is a simple activity conducted as an effort to enhance quality of classroom teaching learning process, especially to those taught by the writer. By looking back at the finding and discussion, the result of the analysis might benefit at least to the writer in term of broadening his understanding about his students' current writing proficiency. Moreover, it is also suggested that this be a starting point for him to design better lesson plan and teaching strategies. With respect to the narrow scope of the study focusing only on relatively small subject. The result of which is not yet able to be generalized back into a wider scale. Therefore, further research in a wider scope related to the issue is suggested to be conducted in the near future.

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