WRITING ACCURACY PERCEIVED BY THE LANGUAGE OUTPUT-BASED TASK

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ABSTRACT

This study has a purpose to find out the effectiveness of a task, which was exclusively invented for the study, on the students' writing accuracy. The task, namely Language Output-based Task, is derived from the functions of the language output hypothesis proposed by (Swain, 1985). The three functions of language output are the noticing or triggering function, the hypothesis-testing function, and the metalinguistic or reflective function ((Swain, 1995);(Swain, M., and Lapkin, 1995). In her latest definition, Swain defines language output as an act of producing language either in form of speaking or writing (Swain, 1995). The study chose writing as the productive skill since the existing curriculum as this study conducted emphasized on accuracy in writing. In order to measure the students' accuracy, the narrative text was involved in the study as it has a moderate level of language features. The samples of the study were the 60 first-year students of two different classes consisting of 30 students in each class. Since this is a pre-experimental study, it implemented pre test and post test to the experimental and control group. The pre and post test were created by involving the target text (i. e. narrative text). The result of the study showed that there was a significant difference between the post-test scores of the experimental group and the post-test scores of the control group. From its result, it was concluded that the Language Output-based task was effective to improve the students' accuracy (Castro, C. and Wang, 2010; Izumi, 2002).

Keywords: *Language output, accuracy, narrative text.*

INTRODUCTION

The issue of writing accuracy is highlighted by the current curriculum, Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP) or school-based curriculum which has been initiated since 2006. In the curriculum, accuracy is considered as one of the elements of the curriculum's basic competence. It states that students are required to write a target text accurately, fluently, and properly as well. In addition, the demand for accuracy in English has been sharply increasing because of strong situation of English as a language for international communication. In classroom context, the students' ability to speak and write English fluently and accurately opens up wider opportunities to achieve success in life. It is in line with a study conducted by Beniss, A. R. S. and Bazzaz (2014).

Unfortunately, a study conducted by Castro, C. and Wang (2010) shows that in EFL setting, students have few opportunities to practice English as the target language in the classroom let alone chances outside the classroom where they can't find partner

to practice their English outside their classrooms. On the other hand, in English as a Second Language (ESL) setting, students have more opportunities to get the target language exposure. According to Castro, C. and Wang (2010), the difference between second language acquisition and foreign language learning lies in that the second language acquirers have opportunities to practice the target language outside the classroom, while foreign language learners only have limited opportunities to learn English in the classroom. Based on the above findings, consequently, there should be an effort to explore the efficiency and effectiveness of classroom teaching on learning in EFL setting for the sake of students' future.

To be accurate, students have to master specific forms in a target text. The measurement of certain forms on learners' proficiency levels and development has been attempted by Kawauchi (2005), Wigglesworth (1997), and Crookes, (1989). Related to the study, the form to be measured in this study is one of the language features of the target text (i. e. narrative text) which is the simple past tense.

Other studies show that producing language output has been regarded as a very important process in language acquisition and learning (Beniss, A. R. S. and Bazzaz, 2014; Castro, C. and Wang, 2010). However, it has also been noted that not all language output can promote language acquisition and learning. Based on a notion proposed by Swain (1985) only under certain circumstances does the output contribute to improving the target language acquisition and learning.

Some specific backgrounds urge the study to conduct as well. In Indonesian social context, the society doesn't support English learners to develop their productive skills, speaking and let alone writing as they commonly fail to find interlocutor to practice and demonstrate the target language. Philosophically, teachers have to set up certain classroom circumstances to facilitate students to master the target language. Professionally, the concern of the latest curriculum on skills makes professional teachers have to create an effective way to master certain skills.

Some definitions presented in this study are comparable from Swain's who initiates the concept to later researchers who proposes the latest definition. The definition of language output proposed by Swain, (1995) is as an act of producing language (speaking or writing). It is a part of the process of second language learning. A later SLA expert, Ellis (2003) defines language output as "output that reflects what learners can produce when they are pushed to use target language accurately and concisely". Meanwhile in a latest study, Mackey (2012) defines output as "process of rephrasing or reformulating one's original utterance in response to feedback or self-monitoring". She further explains that when learners are exposed to feedback, they try to reformulate their utterances and produce more accurate, appropriate, complex and comprehensible target language.

In the 1980s, according to Krashen (1985), a student's success in learning a target language depends merely on the amount of input the student got. Therefore, at that time, many studies deal with language learners' input from the availability to the relevance of input in language learning. The availability issue is studies of modified speech such as caretaker talk, foreigner talk, and teacher talk. The input-relevance issue was in terms of Comprehensible Input Hypothesis proposed by Krashen (1985). To understand the three talks (i. e. caretaker talk, foreigner talk, and teacher talk) discussed

by Ellis (1996) more, the explanation would be explained further in the following paragraphs.

According to Ellis (1996), when caretakers speak to young children who are in the process of acquiring their first language, they typically adjust their speech in a number of ways. The ways are labelled into 'baby-talk', 'motherese', 'child-directed language', and the 'caretaker talk'. Similarly, when native speakers communicate to foreign language learners, they also modify their speech which is known as *foreigner talk.* In classroom context, the adjustment made by teacher which is called teacher talk, based on Chaudron (1988), covers the amount of talk, functional distribution, rate of speech, pauses, phonology, intonation, articulation, stress, modifications in vocabulary, modifications in syntax, and modifications in discourse.

Regarding the notion proposed by Krashen (1985), then he claims that humans learn a language only by receiving enough comprehensible input which is called the Input Hypothesis. The hypothesis put forward what is crucial in language development is i + 1, or the input that contains structures of the learner's next level. That is, the input learners expose to must be a little beyond the learners' existing level to trigger acquisition.

The concept of input hypothesis caused many studies largely focused on input, and little attention is paid to the role of output in promoting language acquisition. However, focused input got criticism from the very beginning by Mclaughlin (1987) and followed by Swain (1985). In an influential article, Swain (1985) argues that comprehensible input may not be sufficient for successful second language acquisition because opportunities for non-native speakers to produce comprehensible output are also necessary. She pointed out and proved that learners also learn from their own output and can be motivated for further improvement from discovering gaps in their interlanguage systems. She proved that learners pay much more attention to input data, when they are desperately searching for a word or a phrase to express meaning. Selective attention and self-directed hypothesis testing become key factors to learning and the retention of target words and phrases.

The context in which the Output Hypothesis is formulated based on two aspects. All of which are the dominant theoretical paradigm of input hypothesis for second language acquisition (SLA) research at that time (1980s) and the widespread growth of French immersion programs in Canada, the evaluations of which were showing some rather unexpected findings Swain (1995). French immersion program is a form of bilingual school in which a child who does not speak French as his or her first language. The children receive instruction in school in French. In most French-immersion schools, children learn to speak French and learn most subjects such as history, music, geography, math, art, physical education and science in French. The programs were introduced into Canadian schools in the 1970s to encourage bilingualism across the country.

Swain (1985), (1995) mentioned that immersion program in Canada proved that comprehensible input alone was insufficient to guarantee that learners achieve accuracy. Her observation revealed that immersion learners did not gain the ability for accurate production while they were fluent.

In addition, Other SLA experts De Bot, K., Lowie, W. and Verspoor (2005) state that the relative lack of sustained talk as productive skill in French in the immersion

classes was an unexpected finding and led to a consideration of how output might be important in target language learning.

As explained earlier, Swain (1985) was unsure that input as an important role for language acquisition. Swain based her conclusions on findings from studies she conducted in immersion schools in Canada. Her observation on immersion program revealed that production was as important as input for acquisition. She found that although immersion students were provided with a rich source of comprehensible input, their interlanguage performance was still not accurate as expected. In particular, Swain found that the expressive performance of these students was much weaker than that of same-aged native speakers of French. For example, they were less control of complex grammar, less precision in their overall use of vocabulary and lower accuracy in pronunciation. Thus, Swain claims that understanding new forms is not sufficient and that learners must be given the opportunity to produce them as well.

She proposed a hypothesis relating to the second language learner's production comparable to Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis. It is labeled the language output hypothesis for SLA. Swain (1985) argues that language output is the output that extends the linguistic repertoire of the learner as he or she attempts to create precisely and appropriately the meaning desired. In short, Swain's (1985) Language Output hypothesis predicts that we acquire target language when there is a communicative breakdown and we are "pushed to use alternative means to get across the message precisely, coherently, and appropriately" Krashen, (1998).

According to Beniss, A. R. S. and Bazzaz (2014) what is meant by the basic concept of Language Output Hypothesis is that learners are “pushed” or “stretched” in their production as a necessary part of making themselves understood. It is needed to develop certain grammatical features that do not appear to be acquired purely on the basis of comprehending input. In conclusion, the pushed output certainly helps students to internalize a new construction.

Swain (1985) argues that learners need the opportunity to produce for meaningful use of their linguistic resources to achieve full grammatical competence. She argues that when a learner experience communicative failure, he or she is pushed into making their output more precise, coherent, and appropriate. Production forces learners to pay attention to the means of expression. Before they produce an expression, they have to know its meaning in advance. It is important to recognize that Swain’s claim is that production aids acquisition only when the learner is pushed to produce.

Swain, M., and Lapkin (1998) proposes that output forces learners to move from semantic understanding of the target language to a more syntactic comprehension. In support of this notion, (Nation, I.S.P., and Newton (2009) claim that “comprehension processes involve semantic decoding and production involves syntactic processing”. After proposing output hypothesis, Swain refined output hypothesis and suggested functions of pushed output hypothesis (Swain, 1993, 1995, 1998) that becomes the central point of this study. Achard, M., and Niemeier (2004) suggest that ‘pushed output’ can develop learners’ consciousness to notice the gap between what they want to say and what they are able to say. So, pushed output may assist the learners in acquiring a target language. Scholars seem agreed that a language learner can obtain comprehensible output by pushing his production in a language interaction in form of

second language conversation or classroom interaction (Pica, T., Lincoln-Porter, F., Paninos, D., & Linnell, 1996; Swain, 1995).

The basic notion of Language Output Hypothesis is grounded in Swain' data collection from a Canadian-French immersion program in Canadian schools. Swain proposes that the language output hypothesis has its best function if it is only under certain circumstances which can be set in classrooms. The concept is supported by Ellis (1996) that adds the comprehensible output hypothesis stating that learners need opportunities for 'pushed output' (i. e. speech or writing that makes demands on them for correct and appropriate use of the L2). Ellis (2003) also defines language output as "output that reflects what learners can produce when they are pushed to use target language accurately and concisely".

A criticism put forward by Ellis (2003) suggesting that humans can develop extremely high levels of language and literacy proficiency without any language output or production at all. His studies show that acquirers usually acquire small but significant amounts of new vocabulary through single exposure to a new word found in a comprehensible text as the input. Krashen (2003) stated that providing more comprehensible input seems to be a more reasonable strategy than increasing output. He concluded this idea after being given the consistent evidence for comprehensible input, and the failure of other means of developing language competence.

It is stated that there are three functions of language output, namely the noticing or triggering function, the hypothesis-testing function, and the metalinguistic or reflective function (Swain, 1995; Swain, M., and Lapkin, 1995).

The noticing or triggering function refers to the function that enables learners to notice what they do not know to say or write exactly the idea or messages they want to send to the interlocutors. Learners may notice that they do not know how to say or write precisely the meaning they wish to convey while attempting to produce the target language vocally or silently (i. e. subvocally). De Bot, K., Lowie, W. and Verspoor (2005) say that noticing or triggering function is to make learners aware (i. e. notice) of gaps a linguistic problem. Noticing a problem (i. e. gap) 'pushes' the learner to modify his or her output. In doing so, the learner has to do a more syntactic processing mode than might occur in comprehension.

Mackey (2012) adds that noticing function as the first function suggests that foreign language learners consciously comprehend their linguistic problems through 'pushed output' activities. In addition, according to Swain, noticing gaps "may trigger cognitive processes which might generate linguistic knowledge that is new for the learner, or that consolidates their existing knowledge" (Swain, 1995).

The hypothesis-testing function refers to the function that enables learners to try whether what they have said or written is correct in terms of form. According to Beniss, A. R. S. and Bazzaz (2014), the second function (i.e., hypothesis testing) claims that language acquisition is developed when foreign language learners consciously use target form and reformulate it upon receiving feedback from interlocutors. The role of the feedback givers (e. g. teacher) is vital in this occasion. Thus, students correct their accuracy based on their teacher's correction.

Producing output is one way testing a learner's hypothesis about the target language. Learners can judge whether their comprehensibility and linguistic are correct by observing their interlanguage utterances against feedback obtained from their

interlocutors (i. e. teacher or classmates). This phenomenon explained by Ellis, R., and Takashima (1999) stating that whenever a learner produces an utterance that is not understood, the listener might answer with a clarification request, which cause the learner to subsequently modify the problematic utterance.

The metalinguistic or reflective function refers to the function that enables learners to reflect onlanguage produced by others or thelearners themselves which can facilitate second languagelearning. Metalinguistic function highlights the role of 'pushed output' and defines metalinguistic as "using language to reflect on language produced by others or the self, mediates second language learning" (Swain, 1985). Having exchanges with others, we see learning taking place (Lantolf, 2002). Swain (1995) claims that as learners reflect upon their own target language use, their output has a role as meta-linguistic function, enabling them to control and internalize linguistic knowledge (Izumi, S., and Bigelow, 2000). In other words, at the same time, output processes enable learners not only to reveal their hypotheses, but also to reflect on them using language. Reflection on language may enhance the learners' awareness of forms and rules.

METHOD

The quantitative design, which is experimental, in the study used the quasi-experimental study. This is a type of research design which includes experimental and control groups without random sampling (Hatch, E., and Lazaraton, 1991). The quasi-experimental study is chosen as it suggests not selecting the participants randomly which is less likely to conduct at the site of this study compared to the true-experimental design.

The quasi-experimental design has five basic characteristics. The characteristics are:

1. It has two groups involved in the study namely the experimental and control group.
2. The two groups are compared by measuring the dependent variable.
3. Both groups are measured twice; the first measurement is conducted by applying the pretest while the second measurement done by giving posttest to the students.
4. The measurement for both groups is conducted with the same test and within their course schedule at college.
5. The experimental group is manipulated with particular treatment (Hatch, E., and Lazaraton, 1991).

Samples and Population

The two groups involved in the study consist of the first-year students of a private college in Cimahi. One group received the experimental treatment (i. e. the experimental group) while the other (i. e. the control group) did not (Fraenkle, J. R., 2007 and Hatch, E., and Farhady, 1982).

Instruments

The pre-test & post-test designs of this quasi-experimental study were drawn from Castro, C. and Wang (2010). The design of this study was formulated as follows:

E T1 X T2

C T1 T2 (Hatch, E., and Lazaraton, 1991)

Explanation:
E : Experimental group
T1 : Pretest
X : Experimental treatments (teaching passive clauses using the language-output-based tasks)
C : Control group
T2 : Posttest

Procedures

During the treatment activities, the students of the experimental group were taught by using the language-output-based tasks which were designed from the functions of the language output hypothesis. The tasks were planned in line with the relevant curriculum (i. e. the school-based curriculum) when the study conducted. The tasks were planned to meet the required competences in the curriculum which were the standard competence and the basic competence.

On the other hand, the students of the control group were taught without using the tasks. Instead of being taught using the tasks, the students were taught with the three Ps (i. e. presentation, practice, and production) phases, a methodology that organises the teaching of a linguistic item in three distinct stages: Presentation of the item, Practice of the item, and finally Production of the item (Tomlinson, 1998). On one hand, the simplicity and straightforwardness of this approach, determined by the logical sequence of clearly defined steps that seem to lead successfully to language acquisition, make it popular. On the other hand, the simplicity becomes the methodology's limits and deficiencies as many researchers have pointed out that this model does not account for the complexity of the process of language learning. To have a fair teaching-learning activity, the lesson was planned with the similar way to the experimental class in terms of its competencies, theme, and objective.

Data Analysis

The treatment for the control group would comprise three tasks which are called the language-output-based tasks each session and conducted within three sessions, each lasted 80 minutes. The treatment would be begun immediately after the formation of the two groups. To deal with the issue of the fairness balance in terms of the amount of input, both experimental and control group got the same amount of input in form of the target texts.

The curriculum at the time was the *KTSP* curriculum, the school-based curriculum. According to the curriculum, the standard competence was to be able to express the meaning in a short and simple functional written text (i. e. narrative text) to interact with the surrounding environment while the basic competence was to be able to express meaningful idea in a short and simple functional written text by using the target written language accurately, fluently, and properly to interact with the surrounding environment.

FINDINGS

The data from the test scores described the differences amongst the test results in finding out the effect of the use of language-output-based tasks. This section presents the data derived from the tests quantitatively.

Initially, the pre test was conducted to the experimental and control groups before they got the treatment. From the 30 students of experimental group, 9 students (30%) scored between 3.00 – 3.99, 7 students (23%) scored between 4.00 – 4.99, 11 students (37%) scored between 5.00 – 5.99, 2 students (7%) scored between 6.00 – 6.99, and 1 student (3%) scored between 7.00 – 7.99 .From the 30 students of control group, 4 students (13%) scored between 2.00 – 2.99, 6 students (20%) scored between 3.00 – 3.99, 8 students (27%) scored between 4.00 – 4.99, 9students (30%) scored between 5.00 – 5.99, and 3 students (10%) scored between 5.00 – 5.99. The lowest score of the experimental group was 3.30 and the highest score was 7.50. The lowest score of the control group was 2.00 and the highest score was 6.30. The mean of the experimental group was 4.80 or 48% of the maximum score and the mean of control group was 4.36 or 43.6% of the maximum sore. The data can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. Mean, Standard Deviation, Lowest and Highest Score of Pre Test

Group	Mean	Std Dev	Lowest Score	Highest Score
Experimental	4.80	1.04	3.30	7.50
Control	4.13	1.48	2.00	6.30

The table above shows that the pre-test mean score of experimental group (4.80) is higher than the pre-test mean score of control group (4.13). Quantitatively, the normal distribution scores are needed to fulfill the requirement, in this case, *t*-test (Hatch & Lazaraton, 1991: 164). Hatch & Farhady (1982: 64) state that if the *N* (number of cases) is 30 or more, the distribution of scores of that random sample is close enough to a normal distribution.

The table showed that the calculation results of independent *t*-test revealed the $t_{observed}$ was 1.433, while t_{table} with alpha 0.01 and *df* 58 is 2.704. Thus t_{table} was greater than $t_{observed}$ which indicated that there was no significance difference between the pre-test mean scores of experimental group and pre-test mean scores of control group. H_0 was accepted which could be intepreted that between the experimental and control groups, there was no any significance difference in their pre-test scores of passive clause test. In conclusion, the treatments using language-output-based tasks were started from the similar level of passive clause understanding.

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation, Lowest and Highest Score of Post Test

Group	Mean	Std Dev	Lowest Score	Highest Score
Experimental	6.00	1.14	4.00	8.90
Control	4.78	1.35	2.00	6.80

Compared to their initial level as indicated in pre test, both experimental and control groups scored better in their post test. The experimental group average score

increase 12% from 4.80 in the pre test to 6.00 in the post test while the control group average score increased from 4.13 in the pre test to 4.78 in the post test or the improvement was 6.5%. In conclusion, the scores of the experimental group students improved better than those of the control group students.

To check the significant difference, *t*-test was used to test the means of post-test scores to both of the groups.The significance criterias were obtained by calculating the $t_{obseved}$ with the assumption that H_0 is accepted if $t_{observe} < t_{table}$ while H_0 is rejected if $t_{observe} \geq t_{table}$.

The calculation results of independent *t*-test (see appendix 3.3) revealed that the $t_{observed}$ was 3.731, while t_{table} with alpha 0.01 and *df* 58 was 2.704. Thus, $t_{observed}$ was greater than t_{table} which indicated that there was a significant difference between the post-test mean scores to both experimental and control group meaning that H_0 was rejected. In conclusion, teaching a target form by using the language-output-based tasksis better than using the three-phase-based tasks. The calculation results of independent *t*-test (see appendix 3.3) revealed that the $t_{observed}$ was 3.731, while t_{table} with alpha 0.01 and *df* 58 was 2.704. Thus, $t_{observed}$ was greater than t_{table} which indicated that there was a significant difference between the post-test mean scores to both experimental and control group meaning that H_0 was rejected. In conclusion, teaching a target form by using the language-output-based tasksis better than using the three-phase-based tasks.

DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this study is to find out the effect of the use of language-output-based tasks on the students' accuracy in the narrative text. The score data which has resulted in assumption that the process of teaching writing using language-output-based tasks is effective. The assumption can be proven by the present conducted research.

As mentioned in the previous chapter that there were two groups (one experimental group and one control group) compared in this study to examine whether using language-output-based tasks influence the students' accuracy in narrative text or not. The treatments were conducted to both of the groups. The experimental group got language-output-based tasks while control group got the three-phase tasks. Pre test and post test were carried out to gain the data.

The result showed that the pre-test mean score of the experimental was 4.80 and the mean score of control group was 4.13 while the post-test mean score of the experimental was 6.00 and the mean score of control group was 4.78. It means that the mean score of both groups (compared between the pre test and post test) in accuracy increased. There was significant difference between the post-test score of both the groups. It could be proven from the independent *t*-test which revealed that the $t_{observed}$ was 3.731, while t_{table} with alpha 0.01 and *df* 58 was 2.704. Thus, $t_{observed}$ was greater than t_{table} which indicated that there was significant difference between the post-test mean score of experimental group and post-test mean score of control group. It means that H_0 was rejected. As the post-test score of experimental group increased better than the control group. Therefore, the use of language-output-based tasks had a significantly greater effect on the students' accuracy score than the effect of the use of the three-phase tasks. This is in line with the results of some previous study (Castro, C. and Wang, 2010; Izumi, 2002) that the principle of language output hypothesis can be

implemented in classrooms to master a target language. To sum up, the use of language-output-based tasks improved the students' accuracy better than the treatment using the three-phase tasks.

As stated above, the students' accuracy of experimental group who were treated by language-output-based tasks increased significantly. One of the factors which could influence the outcomes of the study was the students' attitude that would be discussed in the following sections.

CONCLUSIONS

The study attempted to find out the effect of the Language Output-based task on the first-year students' writing accuracy of a private college in Cimahi. The result of this study suggests that the Language Output-based task has a positive effect on the students' writing accuracy as the data shows that there is a significant difference between the pre-test mean of experimental group and post-test mean of control group. In other words, it means that the use of language-output-based tasks can be considered effective in mastering a target form in teaching writing. This finding implies the need for EFL classroom pedagogy that is student-centered and offers more opportunities for language learners to produce the target language in meaningful contexts.

Since language output has been shown to have a facilitative impact on language learning, EFL teachers should stimulate learners' interests and provide as many opportunities as possible for language learners to produce the target language by implementing various classroom interaction tasks. Classroom teaching that is learner-centered can provide more opportunities for EFL learners to produce and learn the target language.

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