IDEA LISTING TECHNIQUE IN TEACHING EFL WRITING

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the implementation of Idea Listing Technique (ILT) as an alternative way in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing. ILT is considered as a prewriting technique focusing on idea generation. Based on my personal experience as an English teacher, particularly in teaching EFL writing, ILT can be as a sharp weapon in teaching writing focusing on solving the problem of how to generate innovative ideas for writing. This technique can assist students explore and share ideas of the general topic to be smaller ones (sub topics), decide a sub topic based on the categorization, and generate ideas of the sub topic in forms of words or phrases before running of a drafting and next writing processes. Hence, by providing them with prewriting activities through ILT, it is a great wish that students can produce creative and interesting writings.

Keywords: Idea Listing Technique, Generating Idea, Writing

A. INTRODUCTION

Writing is mostly difficult for student-writers since they are required to write on their own writing, struggling by themselves to refine their writings without any interaction or feedback from either other friends or teacher (Byrne, 1984:3). However, students have to compose their writings using their own choice of sentence structure and organize their own ideas in such a way that readers can understand their writings.

In accordance with students' difficulties in writing, Mukminatien (1991:13) points out that the difficulties are not merely caused by students' themselves but they can also be caused by the unvaried and uninteresting techniques of teachers in teaching writing. As a result, students are bored and have less motivation in learning writing. Hence,

learning writing through varied and interesting strategies or techniques must be experienced by students.

In addition, regarding the barrier of students in writing, Gebhard (2000:235) suggests that in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing teachers should find an effective way, teaching strategy or technique, of building students' self-confidence in the writing activities. By so doing, their students feel comfortable in writing since most of students tend to use ineffective writing strategies when writing. Therefore, teacher should show students how to write effectively.

Similarly, dealing with the need of building students' writing, Harmer (2007:113) suggests that it is encouraged to build students' writing habit. Many students either think or say that they cannot, or do not want to write. This may be because of their lack of confidence. They think that writing is boring. Hence, the teacher needs to engage them, from early levels, with easy and enjoyable activities as their habit so that writing activities not only become a normal part of the classroom but also present opportunities for students to achieve almost instant success.

From my personal teaching experience, particularly in the writing class, it shows that there is a problem to solve as early as possible. Most of students do not know how to begin to write a paragraph for the target topic. It took them a long time before they started to write so that they felt difficult to get ideas to write. It felt hard to bring their little idea they got into paper. In fact, how to get started to write is the starting point students should experience before the next process of writing. Hence, students' problem of how to get ideas becomes a great problem to solve in the writing activity.

To solve the problem faced by students in the writing class, it is of paramount importance to find the way to generate or explore ideas in order that they will produce creative and interesting writings. Therefore, I would like to show that the Idea Listing Technique (ILT) is an alternative way to generate innovative ideas in teaching EFL writing. As Gebhard

(2000:225) states that developing workable strategies for getting started to generate writing ideas is suggested to encourage students actively write.

B. WHAT IS ILT?

Idea Listing Technique (ILT) is a fastest way to collect the ideas of their various discussions (Kaner *et al.*, 2007). Through the activity of this technique, writers have more time to go into depth on topics of interest. It will draw out a wide range of thoughts on given topic and help writers to rapidly identify many aspects the topic even when they are just beginning to think about it. By listing ideas, the writers can see the breadth of their thinking. They are likely encouraged to create or discover as many as they can. That is why it is very helpful when they want to generate the ideas for the target topic.

Kaner *et al.* (2007) add that generating ideas through listing is to generate a list of innovative solutions or ideas to a difficult problems or topics. When a problem or topic is more complicated than it generally appeared, using idea listing is an alternative way to solve it. Students can start sorting out the topics, and prioritizing the elements they want to tackle first. Thus, idea listing is often an important first step in reducing the complexity of a difficult task.

According to Oshima & Hogue (2007:16), idea listing is a prewriting technique. It, one of the prewriting techniques, is a way to get ideas in which writers write the topic at the top of a piece of paper and they quickly make a list of the words or phrases coming into their mind. Through this activity the writers collect ideas to explain the topic they have. Additionally, this technique is a way to narrow general topic to a smaller one by listing every word or phrase coming into their mind (Oshima & Hogue, 2007:43).

Furthermore, Kaner in Rebori & Havercamp (2007:3) indicates that ILT is a technique students may use to facilitate discussions for generating

innovative ideas for writing. This technique helps them search for a better understanding of a topic by eliciting diverse smaller topics and ideas on the given topic (Rebori & Havercamp, 2007:3). Moreover, idea listing can be useful to help students either generate topics or create main points and key details (Faigley, 2005).

Referring to the advantage of ILT, Rebori & Havercamp (2007:3) then state that this is a helpful technique for a wide range of learners challenge. For example, it can be used when a learner is discussing new topic, or has polarized ideas on a topic. The ILT may also be employed when learner feels that a topic appears to be overwhelming. Thus, it produces a wide range of ideas and is particularly helpful when a learner needs to break down a complex or general topic into easily understood smaller components of the topic.

To sum up, ILT means a process of exploring ideas, knowledge, or information in the form of conceptual or a long list. The ILT refers to a way of generating ideas for the target topic in writing in which this technique is implemented in prewriting stage. Prewriting stage encourages the generation of ideas (Brown, 2001:348), and it is a way of organizing students' thoughts and beginning to put the information they have (English Works Online, 2002). In addition, as indicated by Graves in Widiati & Widayati (1997:14), students can produce creative and interesting texts when teachers allow them time and opportunity. Among other things, it is for generating ideas. In fact, the generation of ideas is very necessarily conducted before students are going to write.

C. HOW TO EXPLORE INNOVATIVE IDEA USING ILT?

The following is an example of how to explore innovative idea through the process of listing idea shown by Oshima & Hogue (2007:16). The writing assignment is to write a paragraph a person who has made difference in the world, in the community, or in the writer's life. He showed an example of ideas listed which is produced through ILT.

First, the writer made a list of people who have made a difference. Then he decided which person to write about and circled his choice.

A Person Who Has Made a Difference	
Albert Einstein	Bill Gates
Mother Teresa	Aunt Sarah
Martin Luther King, Jr.	Mr. Jakobsen (high school counselor)
Cesar Chavez	Grandfather

Next the writer started e new list. He wrote his chosen topic, Grandfather, at the top of new piece of paper and started writing words and phrases that came into mind about his grandfather.

Grandfather	
uneducated (high school? eighth grade?	started hospital in town – only hospital in big area
farmer	
worked hard	first farmer to terrace his land – now every one does it
helped his community	improved farming techniques in his area
started community hospital	smart
respected in community	read about new things
went to church every week	terracing helps prevent soil erosion
got up early	listened to experts
worked late	thought things over
was the first person in town to buy a car	made me laugh when i was little
forward-thinking	

The writer then looked at his second list and decided to write about how his grandfather helped his community. He circled that idea. Then he thought about *how* his grandfather helped his community. He circled two ideas and marked them A and B. The writer also crossed out anything that did not belong to these two ideas.

Grandfather

~~uneducated (high school? eighth grade?~~
~~farmer~~
~~worked hard~~

started hospital in town – only
hospital in big area
first farmer to terrace his land – now
every one does it

| helped his community |
B

A | improved farming techniques in his area |

started community hospital

smart

~~respected in community~~
~~went to church every week~~
~~got up early~~
~~worked late~~
~~was the first person in town to buy a car~~
forward-thinking

~~read about new things~~
terracing helps prevent soil erosion
~~listened to experts~~
~~thought things over~~
~~made me laugh when i was little~~

D. HOW ILT CAN BE IMPLEMENTED IN TEACHING EFL WRITING

In relation to the teaching of EFL writing through ILT, the utilization of ILT can be through the teaching procedure. The procedures of the implementation of ILT for writing activities involves the application of the writing stages adapted from Gebhard (2000:235), those are, prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. The focus of ILT implementation is particularly on prewriting stage. The prewriting activities focuse on implementing ILT in generating ideas. Prewriting is a preparation to write and the getting-ready-to-write stage which is like a warming-up for the athletes (Tompkins & Hoskisson, 1995:211).

The following is the development of teaching procedures of the ILT implementation I have effectively practiced in teaching EFL writing, focused on writing an expository paragraph (Miftah, 2012). The process steps are as follows.

First, teacher leads students to a topic by showing pictures through LCD followed by some questions as brainstorming. Then he introduces the issue or topic and tells the instructional objectives. Students are given an allotted time to respond to the question; however, when necessary, it is important that they remain flexible in taking additional time. They should be able to complete steps one through seven within 15 to 30 minutes (Rebori & Havercamp, 2007:3).

Second, teacher asks students to participate in generating ideas through ILT. To do so, he distributes a model of an expository paragraph, asks them to sit in groups of three, and asks a group member to be facilitator to lead the process. Then he assigned them to analyze the paragraph for focusing on the writing task of writing an expository paragraph. The use of ILT in prewriting stage enables students to get ideas because it is similar to the techniques – ways to get started – used in prewriting stage such as brainstorming, clustering, strategic questioning, sketching, free writing, exploring the senses, interviewing, and information gathering (Gebhard, 2000:227).

Third, teacher distributes a large sheet of paper (A4). It is suggested to arrange a large sheet of paper (i.e., wall paper, A4 paper, flip chart). Students often produce more ideas than they expect, thus a sufficient amount of larger paper is required (Rebori & Havercamp, 2007:3). He next informs students to be involved in their group activities and to follow the rules include – all ideas count even the "crazy" ones and no side conversations during the activities.

Fourth, teacher asks students to explore and share ideas of a general topic to be smaller ones or sub topics (in words and phrases), and list them on the paper as the first list. If students begin to discuss ideas while they are still being listed, the facilitator should remain them of the ground rule that side conversations are not allowed (Rebori & Havercamp, 2007:3). In addition, teacher reminds students that the time will be up, so they might produce additional ideas. It is suggested that near completion of generating ideas, the teacher announces to students that "Approximately two minutes remain for generating ideas." Sometimes this announcement may produce additional ideas (Rebori & Havercamp, 2007:3). After that, he asks them to read the ideas listed and discuss them for clarity and grouping in categories, and then rearrange the ideas based on the categories. Next he asks them to choose one of the items

listed in the categories to be a smaller topic to write an expository paragraph.

Fifth, students are asked to generate ideas of the sub topic that have been decided in words or phrases, and list them on the paper as the second list. It is to lead students to easily write suitable topic sentence for an expository paragraph. Any of these ideas can be the controlling idea in their topic sentence, while some others can be supporting sentences. Teacher also reminds students that the time will be up, so they might produce additional ideas. After that, to organize their ideas generated using ILT, he assigns students to make a paragraph outline for an expository paragraph.

Sixth, teacher assigns students to write first draft in drafting stage. Drafting stage centers on providing students chances to start writing based on a paragraph outline idea they have made in the previous stage. Drafting is a stage designed to allow the writers to put their ideas on paper without worrying about mechanics or neatness (Roe *et. al.*, 1995:110). This statement is in line with Christenson (2002:41) asserting that drafting is the process of getting ideas on paper. In addition, Brown (2001:347) points out that drafting is viewed as an important and complex set of strategies, the mastery of which takes time, patience and trained instruction. In this stage, students are assigned to write rough draft as their first draft. For so doing, students are assigned to write a title and start writing their first draft individually based on the outline they have made.

Seventh, teacher asks students to revise their first draft in revising stage. The revising stage focuses on providing students chances to revise their first draft they have made in the drafting stage with emphasis on the content and organization rather than on the mechanics. Revising is to make the writing clearer and more interesting to the readers (Glencoe, 2001:58). Both drafting and revising stages are the core of the writing process (Brown, 2001:348). In revising stage students rethink and rewrite

the first draft to form the second draft. To do so, teacher guides students to revise their writing in terms of content and organization through peer revising and self revising. To do peer revising, students are asked to make a group of three. They are suggested to use Peer Review Checklist for Expository Paragraph taken from book, Refining Composition Skills: Rhetoric and Grammar (Smalley, *et. al.*, 2001:382). They respond to each other's drafts by answering the questions of the checklist in their task book. Meanwhile, for self revising, students are assigned to revise their own draft by using Revision Checklist for Expository Paragraph taken from book, Refining Composition Skills: Rhetoric and Grammar (Smalley, *et. al.*, 2001:101). Students answer the questions of the checklist in their task book, and then write second draft based on the suggestion from peer and self revising.

Finally, teacher assigns students to edit their second draft in editing stage. The editing stage centers on providing students chances to edit the drafts, and proofread the drafts for accuracy and correctness in spelling, punctuation, capitalization and grammar. Editing is putting the piece of writing into its final form. It is the process in which students begin to look at correctness (Stone, 1990:18). Tompkins & Hoskisson (1995:211) assert that editing stage primarily focuses on the content of students' writing. Students need to edit their draft to make sure their sentences are clear (Glencoe, 2001:71). To do so, teacher guides students to edit their second draft through self editing. They are suggested to use Self Editing Worksheet taken from book, Introduction to Academic Writing (Oshima & Hogue, 2007:203). They respond their own draft by answering the questions of the worksheet. After that, they are asked to write final version of their writing, and then to submit.

E. CONCLUSION

Based on the preceding discussion, the following conclusion can be drawn. Since writing as one of the productive skills, teacher should

provide a great attention so that students are encouraged to get involved in writing with fun activities. The enjoyable activities can be started through prewriting activities in which the innovative ideas are explored. For so doing, I would like to provide insights by showing the way to generate innovative ideas through ILT for writing the target topic. I also greatly suggest the English teacher to apply ILT in teaching English, particularly writing skill, by considering the effectiveness of it in the writing instruction. Indeed, all efforts can hopefully develop student-writers' proficiency – proficiency to write in EFL as the basic requirement to involve them in occupational or academic purposes and in international life as well.

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