

THE USE OF P.O.W.E.R. LEARNING AS A LEARNING STRATEGY TO IMPROVE STUDENTS WRITING COMPETENCY

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Abstract

This research is one of the recipients of Research Grants for Beginner Lecturers (Hibah Penelitian Dosen Pemula) organized by Kemenristek Dikti with the year of implementation of 2017. This study aims to: (1) examine the influence of P.O.W.E.R. learning on the effectiveness of students' learning; and (2) analyze students' writing skills after applying the P.O.W.E.R strategy learning. It is a qualitative descriptive research where the primary data analyzed is the development of student writing before, during, and after the implementation of P.O.W.E.R. Learning. In addition, as secondary data, the analysis of questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations were tabulated as supporting primary data. Participants selected by using Purposive Participant technique. A total of 80 regular students of the 2016 English Study Program at STKIP Siliwangi were involved. The results of the study showed an increase in students writing skill form before the implementation, during, and after the implementation of P.O.W.E.R. Learning. Based on questionnaire and observation, student also responses positively to the lessons learned. This implies that the students were motivated by the learning process. Thus it can be concluded that P.O.W.E.R. Learning affects the effectiveness of students learning through the realization of learning styles as well as increased learning motivation.

Keywords:

P.O.W.E.R. Learning, Learning Style, Motivation, Writing Skill

A. Introduction

In general, students in the first year of college (freshmen) have difficulty in adapting to the life of the campus. Some college students just want to graduate but most others have a desire to succeed in college and gain a very useful knowledge in their career. There have been cases that potential students face difficulty in completing the course

because of lack of motivation in learning that affects their achievement. On the contrary, there are some students who are not very smart but always try to focus, concentrate, study hard, always do the task, manage the time, which eventually become more successful than the potential students stated earlier.

Based on the above explanation it can be said that students who succeed

in college are not always smart; motivation plays a role in determining their success. This condition can be prepared. Successful students can be conditioned, not born as successful people. Therefore, it is very important to form students' awareness to become successful person by using strategies in learning.

Furthermore, academic and non-academic success of the students of education programs is the key to the success of the nation's generation. This is because education is an absolute requirement for the advancement of a nation. Thus future educators need to be well-prepared that they are able to build a generation of quality nations. One example is English education major, where the main goal is to build qualified English educators.

English, which is one of the international languages, is a source of communication for massive information and knowledge throughout the world. The rapidity of such information and knowledge will mean nothing if one does not understand it so that the individual will be left behind further and further. Therefore, language as an introduction to the window of information and knowledge is an important thing to learn.

Nevertheless, it was stated that in terms of quality, English teachers in this country also have a number of problems, including inappropriate academic backgrounds, lack of

academic qualifications, and inadequate English proficiency¹. It is the responsibility of institutions or educational institutions to produce a generation of qualified educator candidates. Qualified English educators are not only proficient in English but also have good knowledge of the science of education; such as the nature of learning, the nature of language, curriculum, educational psychology, child psychology and much more. Therefore, a person who is proficient in English does not necessarily make him a skilled English educator. Educators, in this case English educators, need and can be prepared optimally with various strategies.

P.O.W.E.R. learning is as a learning strategy that can help students in learning and solving problems² The strategies are: Prepare, Organize, Work, Evaluate, and Rethink. Using this strategy, applied in a book of the same title, students can learn more effectively, and they will also have an effect on academic or non-academic achievement. Furthermore, it will affect the quality of English³ education.

¹ Bachrudin Musthafa and Fuad Hamied. *Problematika Pengajaran Bahasa & Sastra Inggris Di Perguruan-Tinggi Di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Depdikbud, 2016).

² Robert Stephen Feldman, *P.O.W.E.R. Learning: Strategies for Success in College and Life* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2000).

P.O.W.E.R. learning is claimed as “the first scientifically-based system to promoting student success, with each step in the process based on sound, empirical research findings related to students’ academic performance in a college environment.”⁴ In other words each stage is a process that has been proven to be able to lead the student towards success. The first step, *prepare*, that is determining the target or goal. The second stage, *organize*, is an important thing to do after setting goals, whether it is managing time, information, or college assignments. Third, *work*, in this case motivation is the key to the success of this stage. Fourth, *evaluate*, is the stage of comparing the initial target with what they have accomplished. Finally, *rethink*, is a process of seeing what has been achieved by considering the process being undertaken. Each stage of P.O.W.E.R. Learning is based on the results of research experts⁵. Thus, P.O.W.E.R. learning has a strong foundation as a learning strategy.

This study takes the setting of freshmen because in general the first-year students are in transition conditions. Students should not only be able to adapt to the academic environment but also with the community on campus. Students at this level should

⁴ Robert S. Feldman and Christopher Poirier, “The Research Basis for POWER Learning,” n.d.

⁵ *Ibid.*

be able to demonstrate achievement in the academic field and to adapt to the existing community as well. It is hoped that when they learn well at the beginning of college, they also form a strong foundation that will be useful in life later.

From the above description of this study aims to answer the research questions:

1. How does P.O.W.E.R. learning affect students to be more effective in learning?
2. How is student writing ability after implementing P.O.W.E.R strategy learning?

B. Literature Review

P.O.W.E.R. Learning stands for Prepare, Organize, Work, Evaluate, and Rethink.⁶ This strategy is based on several frameworks, namely:

1. Clear, logical, and very supportive, so students can see the benefits directly;
2. Effective for different types of student learning styles - as well as different types of teaching styles;
3. Can be used in various forms of learning and as enrichment materials;
4. Valuable for the learning community;
5. Can be used in various settings;
6. Effective for directing the mind and spirit, providing cognitive strategies and skills, as well as involving natural enthusiasm, motivation, and a tendency to succeed.

⁶Feldman, *P.O.W.E.R. Learning*.

Thus, P.O.W.E.R. Learning is expected to help students, especially college students to be able to adapt to the campus environment. In the long-term goals, they are able to evaluate and find solutions to faithful problems they face.

Furthermore, *writing skills* are an important aspect especially in the academic setting. A person's academic success is strongly influenced by his writing skills. Nevertheless, many researchers argue that most students claim to have difficulty writing.⁷ This is because writing is not taught explicitly in classes at the primary school level of Higher Education⁸. In fact, in contrast to the speaking skills that are automatically learned since the baby, writing skills need to be taught. This is in line with the statement, "Everyone learns to speak. Not everyone learns to write; it has to be taught".⁹

Writing is an activity that involves physical and mental actions.¹⁰ At the

most basic level, writing is the activity of pouring words or ideas into a medium (leaves, stone, paper or computer). On the other hand writing is also a mental work involving the discovery of ideas, how to express and organize them into a clear statement that can be understood by the reader.

Writing is both a process and a product.¹¹ A constant process is required for the writing to mature. This process involves various aspects, ranging from grammar (subject-verb agreement, tense, and article use), syntactic (mechanical), mechanical (punctuation, spelling, and handwriting), and organizational ideas to form cohesive writing and coherent. The writing process does not just stop until the technical stuff. This process also involves the communication of ideas in which the organization of delivery, skills, word selection, and creativity of the author is required. Furthermore, the writing which becomes the end result of the process is a product; either in the form of letters, manuals, stories and so on.

To assess the results of student writing, several ways can be done. One of them is by using analytic scoring. Analytic scoring is a scoring method that

⁷ Emi Emilia, *A Critical Genre-Based Approach to Teaching Academic Writing in A Tertiary Efl Context in Indonesia*, vol. 1 (University of Melbourne, Department of Language, Literacy and Arts Education, Faculty of Education, 2005); Ronald T. Kellogg, "Training Writing Skills: A Cognitive Developmental Perspective.," *Journal of Writing Research* 1, no. 1 (2008).

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Keith Johnson, *An Introduction to Foreign Language Learning and Teaching* (London: Pearson Longman, 2005), 286.

¹⁰ David Nunan, *Practical English Language Teaching* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2003).

¹¹ Jerry G. Gebhard, *Teaching English as a Foreign Or Second Language, Second Edition: A Teacher Self-Development and Methodology Guide* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2006).

requires separate scores for each of the assessed aspects.¹² There are five aspects of writing that is grammar, vocabulary, mechanic, fluency, and form. Each aspect has an assessment scale of 1 - 6 so that it can get a minimum score of 6 and a maximum value of 30.

The advantage of this assessment is that it can analyze the weaknesses of each individual in detail. The second advantage is that assessors are expected to help assess the aspects that tend to be ignored. Finally, the scores given by the assessors tend to make this assessment more reliable. Nevertheless, scoring with this method is admittedly time-consuming¹³.

Next theory is about motivation. A number of factors can affect a person's learning desire. These factors can be grouped into two types, namely extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation.¹⁴ Extrinsic motivation is the motivation that students have from outside the classroom, such as community encouragement, family, or friends. While intrinsic motivation is the motivation that comes from within the classroom, such as the methods teachers use, the activities in which the

students participate, and their perceptions of success and failure.

To improve students' intrinsic motivation, teachers need to pay attention to the difficulty level of the task assigned to the students, neither too easy nor too difficult. This will provoke curiosity and student participation in the classroom. In addition, one way to make students maintain their motivation is by engaging them in order to be responsible to themselves. This can be done by involving the students into the decision-making process such as what activities will be done next, or how the student wants to be corrected by the teacher. If students feel they have an effect on what happens, rather than always being told what to do, they are often more motivated to participate in the class. However, whatever motivation is best provided by the teacher, the best motivation comes from within the student themselves.

The last theory is about *learning styles*. Characteristics of each individual is different, therefore the learning style of each student is different. Learning styles or learning styles are defined as natural habits and the ways in which one seeks to absorb, to process and to store new information and skills.¹⁵ This is similar to statement that learning styles are "the ways in which an individual

¹²Arthur Hughes, *Testing for Language Teachers* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴Jeremy Harmer, *How to Teach English* (London: Pearson/Longman, 2007).

¹⁵ Nunan, *Practical English Language Teaching*.

characteristically acquires, retains, and retrieves information".¹⁶ Learning styles have been widely discussed in the realm of educational psychology as well as language learning.

By understanding the importance of student learning styles, a teacher can help them to improve their abilities. There are several advantages when a teacher finds a student learning style. First, teachers can plan clear learning for individuals and groups. Second, teacher can help students meet their needs. Third, teacher can help students improve by using their strengths and strengthening their weaknesses. Fourth, teacher can make students become more effective and independent learners. Fifth, information on student learning styles can be linked to target achievement with the help of clear goals. Finally, this information can be used to vary the learning process.¹⁷

Feldman¹⁸ suggests 4 learning styles consisting of visual/verbal, visual/nonverbal, auditory/verbal, and tactile / kinesthetic. He further explained the differences in visual/verbal and

visual/nonverbal learning styles. Students with visual/verbal learning styles tend to like reading text; while students with visual/nonverbal learning with images or diagrams. Meanwhile, students with auditory/verbal learning styles tend to prefer listening to teacher explanations. While the students with tactile/ kinesthetic learning style need to learn by directly doing it.

In his book Feldman¹⁹ provides questionnaires to be filled in by students to find out their own learning styles. Thus, students are expected to recognize their learning styles so as to develop effective ways of learning that can improve their abilities.

C. Research Method

This study is a case study, as in line with the statement "The case study is a systematic collection of information about a person, group, or community; social setting; or event in order to gain insight into its functioning. A case is bounded in time and place. You may collect data through observation, discussion, task completions, standardized tests, and self-report from the classroom participants."²⁰

In accordance with the purpose and formulation of the proposed

¹⁶ Richard M. Felder and Eunice R. Henriques, "Learning and Teaching Styles in Foreign and Second Language Education," *Foreign Language Annals* 28, no. 1 (1995): 21–31.

¹⁷ Ian Duckett and Marilyn Tatarkowski, "Effective Practice: Learning Styles and Their Application for Effective Learning," n.d., <http://www.itslifejimbutnotasweknowit.org.uk/files/LearningStyles.pdf>.

¹⁸ Feldman, *P.O.W.E.R. Learning*.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ James B Schreiber and Kimberly Asner-Self. *Educational Research: The Interrelationship of Questions, Sampling, Design, and Analysis*. (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2011).

problem, the research design used in this study is qualitative. It is in accordance with the characteristics of qualitative research put forward that (i) its natural setting is the source of direct data, and the researcher is a key instrument of qualitative research; (ii) qualitative data is collected in the form of words or images, rather than numbers; (iii) qualitative researchers examine processes as well as outcomes; (iv) qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively; and (v) the main focus of qualitative research is how people understand their lives. From these characteristics, it can be concluded that this research is a qualitative research because it focuses on the process as well as the results.²¹

The participants of this study are 80 freshmen in English Education Program STKIP Siliwangi Bandung. It used Purposive Participant where participants who participated in this research are students who are willing to participate in this research.

There are four instruments used in this study. First is the primary data obtained directly to the students ie students' writing before, during, and after applying P.O.W.E.R. Learning. Second, data is also obtained through questionnaires (learning style and motivation). Third is the interview to the

²¹ Jack R. Fraenkel and Norman E. Wallen, *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education*, 6th ed (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2008).

students. Fourth is the observation result of application of P.O.W.E.R. Learning in the classroom.

Data analysis was conducted during and after the research took place. Student's writing was analyzed using analytical scoring by four assessors. Questionnaires and interview data were collected and grouped by question and thematic type. The data of questionnaires and interviews is related to the development of their writing skills. Meanwhile, observation data are transcribed and grouped according to the stages of P.O.W.E.R strategy Learning and also associated with the results of all three previous data.

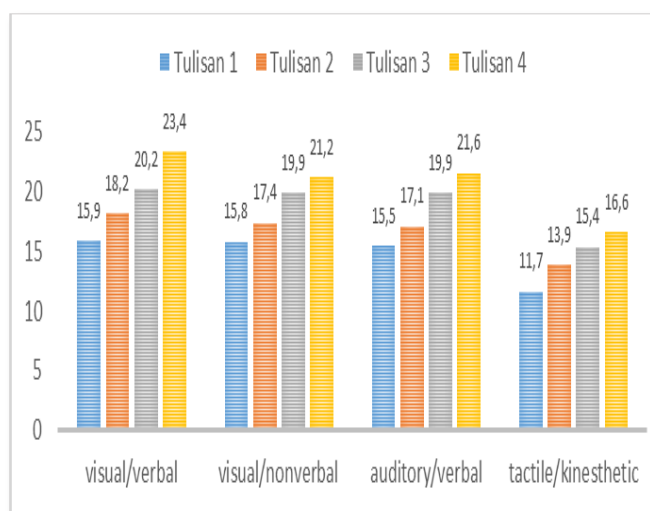
D. Results and Discussion

The assessed text is written before, during and after the implementation of P.O.W.E.R. Learning. The student's writing was assessed using analytic scoring. Analytic scoring assesses student writing based on five aspects, namely grammar, vocabulary, mechanic, fluency, and form. Minimum maximal value of each aspect is 1 while the maximum value is 6, so the student writing value is around 5 - 30. Students' writing is assessed by four assessors.

From the research result, it was found that the highest average score was obtained by students with visual/verbal learning style (19,4), followed by students with visual/nonverbal learning style (18,6),

auditory/verbal (18,5), and lowest by students with tactile/kinesthetic learning styles (14.4). Furthermore, below is a diagram of the development of the average value of students writing based on learning style.

Diagram 1
Development of the Average Scores
of Students Writing



From that diagram, it can be seen that the average value of students' writing before the implementation of P.O.W.E.R. Learning is in the range 11.7 - 15.9 from a maximum value of 30. This means it takes several times to read their writing to be completely understood. This implies that their writing skills are still lacking. Furthermore, there is development of legibility of writing at the time P.O.W.E.R. Learning implemented. This is evident from the increase in the value of the writing 1 to the writing 2 and 3. Similarly at the time of writing 4, after

implementing P.O.W.E.R. Learning. At this stage the student's writing can be understood even though there are still some errors and has not reached the expert level. Nonetheless referring to their initial skills, the results obtained show considerable progress.

Furthermore, from the results of observations and interviews, it was found that students feel the benefits during the implementation of P.O.W.E.R. Learning. This is because, during the learning progress, they get accustomed to know the purpose of learning and the importance of mastering the learning materials. By knowing these things, they become more focused on learning. In addition, at the end of learning, they are accustomed to evaluate what they have accomplished, the obstacles they faced, and to discuss possible solutions to resolve the problem. This activity accustoms them to think critically. They admit, they are more motivated to learn. In addition, understanding each learning style also helps improve their learning achievement. This is similar to what has been discussed in chapter two.

E. Conclusions and suggestions

Referring to the research questions in the first chapter, it can be concluded that:

1. P.O.W.E.R. Learning affects students to be more effective in learning by helping them understand their learning styles, improving their

learning motivation, and preparing themselves with critical thinking skills in accordance with the stages given.

2. The ability to write students has improved from before, during, and after applying the strategy P.O.W.E.R. learning.

From the results of this study some suggestions to note include:

1. P.O.W.E.R. Learning can be implemented in various fields of science. The results of research on the implementation of this learning strategy is still very limited so that research using this learning strategy is widely open to various fields of disciplines.
2. This research uses qualitative methods, for further research quantitative methods can be used in order to create more varied research results but can be accounted for.
3. This research assessed writing skills using analytic scoring. Although it has been argued that this assessment is time-consuming, it is considered objective. For further research it suggested to use other assessment system that is objective but not time-consuming. During this study, the process of assessment and recapitulation of analytic scoring results is the longest process.

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