

OPTIMIZING STUDENTS' JOURNAL TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' MOTIVATION IN LEARNING ENGLISH

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Abstract

This study aims at identifying to what extent students' journal becomes an appropriate way to enhance the students' motivation in learning English. Based on the preliminary findings, it was found that most of the eighth grade students of a junior high school in Surakarta, Central Java had low motivation in learning English. The data were collected by using observations, interviews, questionnaires, photograph, notes and document analysis. The research findings indicated that students' journal enhanced students' motivation in learning English. The improvement included showing appropriate behavior, such as most the fact that students paid attention to the teacher's explanation and they involved actively in learning process.

Keywords: students' journal, motivation, learning English

1. Introduction

In junior high school, English is a compulsory subject and for most of students is a complicated foreign language to be learnt. Most students usually face problems with the different language system, new vocabulary, diction, as well as written practice. Besides, in adolescent young age, students are more likely to encounter so many differences between themselves and their peers. This, coupled with the intense physiological changes common to early adolescence makes most students this age vulnerable and self-conscious, such as like, dislike, fear, success, challenged, or frustrated.

The objective of this study is to investigate to what extent students' journal becomes an appropriate way to enhance the students' motivation in learning English. Teachers usually use conventional method in teaching English. The method is monotonous and rigid. The teacher has a control of class, besides students should obey what teacher asks to do. This condition can be seen when teacher delivers material in the class, usually teacher uses speech method. While teacher explaining material, students are passive. The teachers do not ask students to do something, they ask students to keep silent during listen to teacher's explanation. In addition, students have a little chance to ask when they do not understand about material.

2. Background

Motivation is the deriving factor in catalyzing the will and desire to succeed or to achieve certain goal. Motivation is considered as an extension of the psychological process that derives a person to act. In principle, motivation is also related to the interest and stimulation. According to Ross (1999), "Motivation is the reason why people behave the way they do. Motivated behavior is energized, directed, and sustained."

High motivation will motivate an individual to work harder to achieve his goals. Indeed, motivation is a very useful to stimulant in determining a student's achievement in his studies. This is line with the opinion stated by Gardner (2011) that motivation is referred to as an internal power in human, which arouses, directs and controls their interest and behavior. A motivated individual makes an effort to learn the language (i.e does their homework, participates in class, etc), wants to learn the language, and will enjoy learning the language.

Infact, the observation and questionnaire result in the preresearch showed that students' motivation in learning English was low. This were supported by the indicators: (1) some students were not willing to tackle tasks and challenge and were not confident in his or her success; (2) some students did not find something important to succeed in earning in maintaining and promote his or her own positive self image; (3) some students did not have a need to achieve, did not overcome difficulties and succeed in what he or she sets out to do; (4) some students were not aware of goals of learning or specific learning activity and direct his or her toward achieving them; (5) some students did not invest a high level of effort in learning and are discouraged by setbacks or apparent lack of progress; (6) students were disturbed or frustrated by situation involving a temporary lack of understanding or confusion.

Those problems were due to three causes: (1) English task was presented in a dull way. The types of the task were always presented in multiple choice or essay. It made students can predict what they will do after reading the text. So, they bored do with the same type of the task; (2) some students were convinced that earning high grades would have no payoff. There was no reward if students got good score in English, so they were not motivated to reach high grades; (3) the teacher used few interactive media. There are many supporting devices provided in the classroom, but the teacher tended to use just text book and white board.

This research used students' journal to enhance students' motivation in learning English. Students' journal was assumed to be an effective alternative solution for enhancing students' motivation. Bagley and Gallenburger (1992) suggest that journal writing can be an effective method for an instructor (teacher) to ascertain a learner's feelings towards a particular subject. This can benefit both the learner and the instructors (teacher) by increasing understanding of areas of difficulty and strengths being experienced by the learner. Grennan (1989) notes it is important the learners understand the journal's purposes include being a memory aid, a documentation of learning, and a tool for deepening their understanding of the curriculum. When learners understand the purpose of any learning activity, the likelihood of engagement with that learning activity is increased because purpose (goal) is one of components of motivation (Gardner: 1985).

The justification of using students' journal which can enhance students' motivation is journal is a great tool to allow students to look back at what they have been doing and learning through the day. It provides an opportunity to reflect on their feelings and attitudes and to expand the cognitive aspects of learning from writing from writing about past experiences (Chirema, 2007). Journals are good sources to explore reflections of students' learning processes because they contain the events chronologically day-by-day and permit writers to imagine the future.

3. METHODS

3.1. Learner subject

The action research was conducted to the eighth grade of SMPN 14 Surakarta in the academic year of 2013/2014. It is located at Prof. WZ. Yohanes Street 54 Jebres, Surakarta. The class consists of 38 students, they are 13 males and 25 females. The student's personal ability is heterogeneous, some of them are slow learners, some of them are medium learners and the others are fast learners. The teaching learning process in the eighth grade runs well. Moreover, they have good relationship among students or the teachers.

3.2. Method of data collection

The method of the research applied in this study was classroom action research. According to Millis (in Hopkins, 2008:48), action research is any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers together information about the ways that their particular school operates, how they teach, and how well their students learn. The information is gathered with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting

positive changes in the school environment and on educational practices in general, and improving student outcomes.

Kemmis and Mc.Taggart (in Burns 1999:32) state that action research occurs through a dynamic and complementary process which consists of four fundamental steps in a spiral process. The steps are planning, action, observation, and reflection. In planning covered lesson plan, teaching material and teaching media, and students' journal for each meeting. When the action, I held the research in two cycle (6 meetings) using different method in each meeting, such as Know-Want-Learn (KWL), number head together method, and jigsaw method. In the observation, I observed the result of students' journal, students' achievement, and students' behavior, and then evaluate them to get optimal enhancement in motivation.

In qualitative data, I collected the data through observation, interview, questionnaire, document analysis, photograph, and notes. Meanwhile, the quantitative data were collected using the result of questionnaire. In analyzing the qualitative data I used assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building interpretation, and reporting the outcomes to know the improvement of students' motivation in learning English

4. Result

There were two cycles conducted in this research. Each cycle consisted of three meetings. The material used in this research was descriptive text. Before conducting the research, I held observation, pre-interview to English teacher and some students, distributing questionnaire, and pre-test to collect the detailed data.

Cycle 1 and cycle 2 were implemented through several stages, namely: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The plan was made by designing lesson plan, preparing students' journal, and preparing media for learning process to improve students' motivation in learning English. I observed the implementation of the action by identifying the behavior of students during teaching and learning process. I analyzed students' writing in students' journal to measure their motivation meeting per meeting. Next, I also gave test to students to know their achievement after students' journal implemented. I compared then the data between cycle 1 and cycle 2 to know to what extent students' journal enhances students' motivation. Last, I did reflection to evaluate teaching learning process, I found all indicators of students' motivation were covered in cycle 2. The improvement of students' motivation came from three aspects: questionnaire, students' behavior, and students' achievement.

First, the improvement of students' motivation appeared in questionnaire. Questionnaire reflected indicators of students' motivation in learning English. The questionnaire consisted of 50 statements with different number of item in each indicator. After students' journal was implemented, there was enhancement in all indicators of students' motivation. The number of students categorized to positive task orientation and ego involvement improve up to 97.36%, need for achievement improve up to 92.10%, high aspiration improves up to 94.73%, and perseverance and tolerance of ambiguity improve up to 84.21%. The improvement of motivation is presented in table 1:

Table 1. Checklist of improvement

No.	Indicators	Checklist	
		Before the action	After the action
1.	Positive task orientation	Not improved	Improved
2.	Ego involvement	Improved	Improved
3.	Need for achievement	Not improved	Improved
4.	High aspiration	Improved	Improved
5.	Perseverance	Improved	Improved

6. Tolerance of ambiguity Not improved Improved

Second, the improvement of students' motivation appeared from students' behavior. Behavior appears to be motivated intrinsically. Motivation is a hypothetical construct, meaning that it is an abstraction, not an overt entity that can be seen with the eyes. Although it is not observable in and of itself, motivation does have direct links to observable behavior. That is, motivation cannot be observed, but its effects may be observed. Specifically, one infers motivation from observing the movement of individuals. Such movement often appears to be systematic, rather than random, and the force that impels and guides this systematic movement is presumed to be motivation (Elliot: 2005).

During teaching learning process, I took a note of students' activities simultaneously in the form of field notes. Then, I observed students' behavior that improved students' motivation in learning English. The detail of students' behavior appeared by all indicators of motivation are as follows:

First, the students' enhancement appeared from indicator of positive task orientation. This indicator improved as the result of the action done in the third meeting of the cycle 1 when I gave motivation to students when they felt ashamed to answer the question. Most students looked passive and kept silent. The statement was written in the field note:

"I asked students to say some words what they know dealing the picture. Most students kept silent, but some of them whispered what they know about Nusa Tenggara. Then, she motivated students to speak up what they know about Nusa Tenggara by saying, *"Come on! You just mentioned some words about Nusa Tenggara, such as savanna, West Nusa Tenggara, East Nusa Tenggara.. Don't be ashamed! (Kalian cuman menyebutkan beberapa kata yang kalian tahutentang Nusa tenggara, misalnya: Padang rumput, Nusa Tenggara Timur, Nusa Tenggara Barat... Gausah malu-malu, ga ada yang salah. Miss Dita yang menulis di papantulis. Gampangkan?)"* After I gave them motivation, some students started to raise hand and mentioned the words." (Field Notes:3)

It can also be seen from the third meeting in cycle 1 when I asked students to do task. Most of students did not want to do the task, and then I motivated them to be confident to answer the question.

"I asked students to read the text and discussing the text in group by saying, *"Ok students, after you write down them, then read the text. You write down what information in the text is same with the information in the text. Any problem? Then, students answered the questions in the text. (Kemudian jawab pertanyaan yang ada di teks yaa, gampang kok, kalian pasti bisa)." Then, all students did the task."*

Second, the enhancement which was encountered in the first meeting of cycle 1 is the characteristic of motivated students named high aspiration. It could be proved when the students had a discussion to finish the task provided. This field note supported the statement:

"I asked students to read the text in group. Some students asked difficult words to her, and then answer the question. FTU said, Sssstttt, don't be noise! (*"Sssssttt jangan berisik, biar jawabannya ga ketahuan sama kelompok lain."*) (Field Notes:3)

Third, the enhancement of motivated students could be shown during learning process named tolerance of ambiguity. During discussion, there was a group who not understand teacher's instruction, and then they asked me to repeat the instruction. This

statement could be used as the indicator that showed their improvement: How to write the comments, Miss? Give us the example, Miss, please! (*“Ngasih komentarnya gimana Miss. Tolong kasih contoh dulu.”*)(Field Notes: 2)

Fourth, the characteristic of motivated students named need for achievement was appeared during teaching learning process. Some students felt ashamed to go in front of class because they did not obtain achievement from teacher. There was a statement when the teacher asked the students to complete the task on the board in front of the class:

“I asked students who want to be the first one to present. But, all group kept silent. They felt ashamed to present their result in front class. They said, I’m ashamed..(*“Malu Miss, kalau salah gimana? Kelompok lain aja Miss.”*) Then I pointed one group to present their discussion in front class. I motivated them by saying, *Come on class! Don’t be afraid to go in front of class! I’ll give you stars!* (*“Ayo class jangan takut buat maju! Come on! Kan udah didiskuskan sama kelompoknya. Nanti Miss Dita kasih bintang deeh..”*) Then, group 6 went in front of class. (Field Notes: 2)

Fifth, the enhancement appeared when I gave star to students who could be answer the question named perseverance. They felt excited and happy when they knew that they would obtain star from the task. The sentence which supported that characteristic: *Group 4 presented their result in front of class after pointed by me and I would give stars to them. They looked happy and excited in doing the task when knew there was rewards.* (Field Notes: 2)

5. Discussion

After reflecting and evaluating the result of cycle 1, I got some improvement after cycle 2 was implemented: (1) Most students did the task seriously, and they were active to raise hands to answer question, (2) Most students used English during answering question; they seemed confident when the teacher pointed them to answer the question; (3) Most students were interested in joining English lesson, they liked when the teacher gave them homework, so they could study at home; (4) most students raised hands as fast as they could to answer the question and paid attention when the teacher was explaining the material; (5) most students tried to answer question well because the teacher provided stars to students who got the best score; (6) most students did the task on time in order to get better score in English lesson.

Besides, the improvement of students’ motivation is shown in class situation in table 1:

Table 1 The improvement of the class situation

Indicators	Before the action	After the action
1) Students did not pay attention to the teacher and they prefer to do something else	1) Most students were busy with their stuff and did nonacademic activity like chatting to their friends when the teacher explained the material or did homework of other lesson	1) Students paid attention when the teacher explained material, and they did not do other activities. The class situation was conducive because students did not make noise during the material.
2) Group work was bad	2) There was no interaction during discussion; students did the task individually although there were in groups.	2) Group discussion was a tool to make interaction among students and they could share their idea dealing with the task. So, they were involved in English lesson actively.
3) There few students	3) When the teacher asked questions, most students	3) By giving stars as the reward to students, it made

who were active and most of them kept silent during teaching and learning process.	kept silent and ashamed if their answer was not correct.	better improvement to class situation. Students were active in answering questions.
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Students' motivation enhancement could be seen from the increase of students' achievement in post test. During cycle 1, the mean of post test was 65, the highest score 80 and lowest score 50. Besides, the mean score of students' achievement in cycle 2 was 70.27. The highest score was 86 and the lowest score, with 10 points improvement from cycle 1. It means there was improvement in students' motivation which affected in students' achievement. The detail of students' post test in cycle 2 is presented in table 2:

Table 2 The Summary of Students' Achievement

No.	Level	Pre test	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Percentage of improvement (%)
1.	Maximum	76	85	90	14.25%
2.	Mean	65.13	72.81	78.34	10.75%
3.	Minimum	50	55	63	10,30%

From the data above, there was improvement in students' achievement in cycle 2. There was improvement in the highest score from 85 to 90 in cycle 2, while in lowest score reached 63 in this cycle, although, two students or about 5.26% nearly passed of KKM.

6. Conclusion

Some progress was definitely made in six meetings. Students' journal can enhance students' motivation in learning English. Students' motivation refers to six aspects: the number of students categorized to positive task orientation and ego involvement improve up to 97.36%, need for achievement improves up to 92.10%, high aspiration improves up to 94.73%, and perseverance and tolerance of ambiguity improve up to 84.21%. The implementation of students' journal in the classroom shows the progress of class situation. The students become more active and enthusiastic during the lesson: (1) most students pay attention to the teacher's explanation and they do not do other activities. The class situation is conducive because they are rare to make noise during learning process; (2) group discussion is a means to create good interaction among students and they can share their idea dealing with the task. So, they get involved in English lesson actively; (3) by giving stars as the reward to students who active in answering questions, and they do not feel ashamed again.

Moreover, other researchers can use this finding as a starting point of future research on similar problems, considering that this study still has lack and it is just one of efforts in enhancing the students' motivation

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