

# STUDENT RESEARCH IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

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## ABSTRACT

English Language Teaching (ELT) is in need of innovative and up-to-date teaching strategies which can develop students' language competence and performance effectively. Student research is affirmed as one of effective as well as innovative teaching strategies, which develops student-centered learning. Through this strategy, the students learn how gathering information, interpreting it, and making conclusions based on the information gathered. The main purpose of applying this strategy is to make the students learn from the research, discover and also construct knowledge by themselves, as well as use the language. One important point that should be considered in implementing this strategy is the level of education in which the strategy is implemented. This article presents the way how this strategy may be utilized in the classroom.

**Keywords:** student research, teaching strategy, student centered learning

## ABSTRAK

*Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris membutuhkan strategi pengajaran inovatif dan kekinian yang dapat mengembangkan kemampuan berbahasa dan kinerja siswa secara efektif. Penelitian siswa ditegaskan sebagai salah satu strategi pengajaran yang efektif dan inovatif, karena merupakan pembelajaran yang berpusat pada siswa. Melalui strategi ini, siswa belajar bagaimana mengumpulkan informasi, menafsirkan, dan membuat kesimpulan berdasarkan informasi yang dikumpulkan. Tujuan utama dari penerapan strategi ini adalah untuk membuat siswa belajar dari penelitian, menemukan dan juga mengkonstruksi pengetahuan sendiri, serta menggunakan bahasa. Satu hal penting yang harus dipertimbangkan dalam menerapkan strategi ini adalah tingkat pendidikan dimana strategi ini diimplementasikan. Artikel ini menyajikan cara bagaimana strategi ini dapat digunakan di dalam kelas.*

**Kata kunci:** penelitian siswa, strategi pengajaran, pembelajaran berpusat pada siswa

## INTRODUCTION

English education at schools is expected to make students be able to utilize English both in spoken and written forms. However, it appears that the recent condition of students' language skills is that their written and oral proficiencies are not developed optimally. It happens in particular places, namely where teaching media and facilitations are not available and teachers have limited sources of knowledge of how to create an interactive classroom where the students are actively engaged. The teachers

find that it is difficult to encourage students to write and speak in English.

Furthermore, English language teaching is expected to be conducted contextually. Through language learning, the learners are expected to be able to use the language in the real contexts and also gain knowledge through any activities by making use of the language in the authentic communication setting. Students should know how to use their language and be able to use the language in the real context. Hadley (2001) argues that in language teaching students must know how to use the language forms they have learned in authentic communication situation. He commented

that this goal can be achieved if the language is presented and practiced in communicative contexts, which focus is on meaning and content (idem). It suggests that the students' involvement in language learning namely in the real language use both spoken and written may give a great beneficial for them to master the language.

Additionally, the students must be able to utilize the language themselves. This expectation suggests that the students should be provided with activities which allow them to explore themselves in understanding and using the language. In other word, teachers should search for teaching strategies which permit the students to be active learners and become autonomous learners. It is in accordance with the process standard of education in Indonesia, which states that learning processes in the educational unit should be organized interactively, inspiring, fun, and challenging, which motivate learners to actively participate and provide them enough space for innovation, creativity, and autonomy based on their talents, interests, and physical and psychological development (Depdikbud, 2013).

Likewise, it is approved that the learning processes in which the student-centered approach is applied are able to make the students responsible to their own learning which later lead them to be successful learners. Student-centered learning is a language learning process which emphasis on or account for learners' need, styles, and goals, give some controls to the students, include the consultation and input of students, allow students to be creative and innovative, and enhance students' sense of competence and self-worth (Brown, 2001). Furthermore, Brown (2001) suggests that "...even in beginning level classes, teachers can offer students certain choices [learner-centered instructions]. All of these efforts help to give students a sense of 'ownership' of their learning and thereby add to their intrinsic motivation". Brown's statements implies that in language learning teachers should give priority to activities which allow students to be more motivated and responsible of their own language learning.

Doyle (2008) states "creating a learner-centered environment is the most important thing an educator can do to optimize students' learning." It shows that teachers should be provided with the knowledge and information about updated classroom instructions namely teaching strategies, which may

improve language learning processes as well as provide the students with environment (activities) that supports and optimizes their learning; when teachers have found teaching strategies that could give the students opportunities to become more active and confident in using the language, students' language proficiency could be developed and increased. Moreover, when the students learn English in low-anxiety situation and in interesting ways, it also can make the class more alive and dynamic (Angelianawati, 2006, p. 77).

In fact, there are many teaching strategies which allow student centered learning in English Language Teaching (ELT). Killen (2006) suggests several teaching strategies which have been proved to effective in developing students' language proficiency, i.e. direct instruction, small-group work, co-operative learning, problem solving, student research, role play, case study, and writing as teaching strategies. Celce-Murcia (2001) shows that there are many teaching strategies commonly used for teaching four language skills. Besides, Herrel and Jordan (2004) have listed fifty strategies that can be used for teaching English as a foreign language in connection with the challenging situations in 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom, involving teaching strategies for enhancing instruction through planning, strategies for supporting student involvement, strategies for building vocabulary and fluency, and strategies for building comprehension. Those strategies sometimes are modified from the classical ones or breakthrough.

Seen from the expectation of the recent curriculum applied in Indonesia (Curriculum 2013), it is known that teachers should implement discovery/research-based learning; where students and their environment become the sources of learning (student-centered learning). The students should be encouraged to produce creative and contextual works both individually and in group; and teachers are suggested to apply learning approach which allow students to produce or creating particular works (Depdikbud, 2013).

This occurrence shows that using student research emerges to be an appropriate way to develop students' oral and written communication skill mainly when the students are expected to get information from others or surroundings, discuss their works, and also present their findings (Killen, 1996; 2006). In general, student research is an innovative and exciting

model for active learning through doing a research. It appears that a research seems to be a part of daily life. Therefore, it will be beneficial if students are capable to conduct researches, which are dealing with their daily activity, surroundings, etc, as well as apply their English language skills during the process. Based on that consideration, this writing was made to provide information about what is student research, why student research is suitable to be carried out as a teaching strategy, and as well as how to implement it in the real teaching and learning process.

## DISCUSSION

### What is meant by student research?

A research is mainly consisting of a systematic process of gathering information, interpreting it, and making conclusions based on the information gathered (Killen, 1996; 2006). The previous definition is in line with what Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009) state about research. They affirm that a research is a formal-systematic application of the scientific method to the study of problems. It means that by conducting researches, particular problems can be solved scientifically and systematically. It implies that when it is applied at schools toward the students who study English. It may develop students' various skills both linguistically and scientifically.

In the context of learning process, student research can be defined as a process which involves some activities, starting from formulating problem, collecting information, analyzing the information, and reporting the result of the analysis. It means that, in applying student research as a teaching strategy teacher engages the students in a systemic process of gathering information, interpreting the information and making conclusion based on the collected information (Killen, 1996; 2006). Besides, Sharp, Peters, & Howard (2002) also state that a student research refers a process by which students (researchers) extend their knowledge and possibly that of the whole community by the discovery of non-trivial facts and insights.

Student research can be encountered from low levels to high levels of education. It involves the development of competence in undertaking research, gaining knowledge, and adding to knowledge itself. In general the formers are more important at lower levels, the last at higher levels. In accordance with the

successfulness of student research, it is also approved that there are two key influential factors; those are timing and quality. The demands made toward the students in terms of timing and quality will also be varied according to the level at which the research is undertaken (Sharp, et.al., 2002).

The main things that should be considered by the teacher in applying this strategy are that the teacher must carefully determine what the students are going to research, make it possible to be carried out by the students, help the students in the process, and also respond and facilitate the students' conclusions. Moreover, in applying this strategy the teacher should accommodate the students with the skills of how to do the research (Killen, 1996). The last consideration is that in its application, student research should specifically take ideas from the current curriculum. The themes used as the focus of the research must be selected carefully since not all themes can be easily to be researched.

### The circumstances when student research might be used as a teaching strategy

It is apparent that there is no teaching strategy that will be good to be applied in any conditions. One teaching technique may be very good to be applied in one condition, but it cannot be applied for another condition. So, to teach in another condition, teacher should find another technique that will be best for that condition. According to Killen (1996), student research will be appropriate to be conducted in the following circumstances:

- a) Students need to be motivated.
- b) Students need to be engaged in an in-depth study of content.
- c) Students need challenging
- d) Teachers require students' understanding of information from other people's research.
- e) Teachers would like to build students' appreciation.
- f) Teachers want to develop students' research skill

### Characteristics of Students Research

There are several prominent characters of student research strategy, as following:

1. Student research is always preceded by a problem.
2. It involves systematic process (including finding problems, collecting information, analyzing the

information, and reporting the result of the analysis).

3. It is a student-centered activity.
4. The teacher is just a facilitator.
5. It aims at finding or building new knowledge.

### **The strengths and weaknesses of student research strategy**

According to Killen (1996 & 2006), student-research strategy will advantage the students in many ways, such as:

- a. The students actively engage in learning.
- b. It challenges and motivates students to explore their ability and also to learn more.
- c. The students are able to develop much deeper understanding of a particular subject matter.
- d. It makes the students capable to understand various areas of study.
- e. It can develop students' critical thinking and speaking skill since they need to be capable to communicate with others in the process of gaining information, which is then continued with discussing their works and also presenting their findings.
- f. It provides the students meaningful contexts to develop their reading skills especially when they have to find out the grand theories from books, and any other documents.
- g. It may promote students writing skills as they have to write research reports
- h. It also can develop students' organizational and time management skills, as well as their responsibility of their own learning.
- i. It makes the students know how to make use of data or information available in their community.
- j. It makes the students be able to appreciate their works and efforts.
- k. It helps students to be more responsible for their own learning.
- l. It can be incorporated with other strategies (e.g. group work, co-operative learning, discussion or problem solving).

Beside its strengths above, there are some limitations of the strategy, as following:

- a. It spends a considerable amount of time to accomplish a research
- b. Students are sometimes lack of skills needed to conduct research.

- c. Not all students will enjoy conducting research.
- d. Not all students own good writing skills to record and report their results of research.
- e. Sometimes, students get disadvantage when they have to read a lot, especially for those who have poor reading skill.
- f. Sometimes the research will be very frustrating especially when they do not have the needed research skills, and it makes them unmotivated any longer.
- g. It sometimes difficult for the students with no skills of interpreting to interpret the information gathered.
- h. The result of the student analysis does not always match with the teacher's expectation.
- i. It will reduce the students' participation if they cannot accomplish their research.
- j. If the lesson is not planned well, it will become unmanageable.

Based on both the strengths and weaknesses of student research strategy above, it would be better to the teacher, who is going to implement the strategy, to be well prepared and be ready to be the students' supervisor or facilitator.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

### **1. Preparation**

A teaching strategy is aimed to make students learn effectively. It implies that a teacher while conducting particular teaching strategy should consider as well as prepare a sort of things, which are important to support the successfulness of the learning itself. Those preparations are made in order to ensure that this technique will help students to learn as effective as possible. Those preparations are including:

- a. Identifying students' level (prior knowledge, skills, etc).
- b. Selecting appropriate topic.
- c. Deciding research problem/problems.
- d. Deciding the ways of collecting the data.
- e. Providing research instruments, e.g. interview guide, observation sheet, questionnaire, etc (and prior information if necessary).
- f. Formulating research report format.

## 2. Procedure in the Classroom Implementation

In implementing student research as teaching strategy, teachers should follow the following steps:

1. The teacher tells the student about the research problem(s).
2. The teacher makes sure that the students understand the research problem(s) and know what information that they need to solve the problem.
3. The teacher should inform the possible way/ways that can be followed by the students in collecting the data so that they can collect the data effectively (if there is research instrument provided, explain them how they can use it).
4. In a complex research with various data, the teacher should explain the way to analyze the data and formulating the conclusion of the research.
5. The teacher gives an example about how to write the result of their research into a report.
6. When the students understand how to do their research, the students are asked to start doing the research.
7. The teacher monitors the students' activities.
8. The teacher gives some helps for those who encounter problems during the research activity.
9. The teacher helps the students in writing their research report.
10. At last, the teacher asks the students to report the result of their researches to the class (spoken and oral forms)

### Example of Teaching Scenario

#### a. School level

It is claimed that student research is suitable to be applied in teaching English as foreign language in all levels of education. Henceforth, this manual is aimed to provide information about its implementation namely in junior high school. The writer would like to show that this strategy is applicable for high school students. Besides, in order to fit the high school level, the procedures of implementing the strategy will be simplified.

#### b. Topic

There are many topics in which student research is applicable. In this teaching manual, the writer would like to focus on one genre of texts taken from the syllabus for Grade VIII of Junior High School, namely

descriptive text (My Friends' Rooms). See the Appendix.

## CONCLUSION

Student research is one of teaching strategies to be applied when teachers want to create students-centered learning environment. It will direct the students to learn by discovering the knowledge themselves in a systematic process. To ensure the effectiveness of this strategy, teachers should prepare all the things that they need before they do the real application in the classroom. Since it is a student centered-based learning, the role of the teachers is as facilitator. Teachers should monitor and guide the students whenever they have problems. It is suggested that the teachers should have mastered various types of researches unless they will be unable to assist their students while conducting particular kinds of researches.

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APPENDIX

LESSON PLAN

Level : Junior High School  
 Subject Matter : Integrated English  
 Class : VIII  
 Semester : 1  
 Time Allotment : 2 x 40 minutes  
 Topic : Descriptive Text/ My Friends' Rooms

- A. **Standard Competency** : Expressing meaning in simple interpersonal and transactional conversation about their surrounding.
- B. **Basic Competency** : Asking simple questions and giving information about their surrounding.
- C. **Achievement Indicators** : The students are able to:
- Mention the things that are available in their friends' bedrooms.
  - Explain how the things look like and their positions
  - Make a comparison of their friends' rooms
- D. **Learning Objective** : The students are able to describe their friends' bedrooms as well as compare theirs.
- E. **Learning Material** : Vocabulary about names of things which are usually available in a bedroom.  
 Language functions:  
 - asking and giving information  
 - describing  
 - comparing  
  
 Format of a small report
- F. **Method** : Student research
- G. **Teaching Scenario**

Teacher's Activity	Students' Activity	Duration
<b>PRE-ACTIVITIES</b> <i>Engagement</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Greeting the students</li> <li>2. Checking the students' attendance</li> <li>3. Showing a video "My room"</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Replying the teacher's greeting</li> <li>2. Responding to the teacher</li> <li>3. Watching the video</li> </ol>	10 minutes
<b>WHILST ACTIVITIES</b> <i>Exploration</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Telling the students about the problem that they are going to solve (What are the things that your friends have in their bedrooms? How do they look like? And how are they organized? What are the differences and similarities of your friends' bedrooms? )</li> <li>2. Explaining the data required (the things that their friends have in their bedrooms)</li> <li>3. Distributing the interview guide</li> <li>4. Tell the students how to use the interview guide and the language expression that they may use in asking information to their friends.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Paying attention on teacher's explanation</li> <li>2. Paying attention on teacher's explanation</li> <li>3. Receiving the interview guide and paying attention</li> <li>4. Paying attention on teacher's explanation</li> </ol>	20 minutes

<p>5. Explaining the method of data analysis and how to make the research report (tell the students to list all the things their friends have in their bedrooms in a report paper and give the report paper format)</p> <p><b>Elaboration</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asking the students to start collecting the information by moving around the class to ask their friends about: What are the things that their friends have in their bedrooms?; How do they look like?; And how are they organized?</li> <li>Monitoring students' activity and helping those who find any difficulties in collecting the data</li> </ol> <p><b>Confirmation</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asking the students to write their report.</li> <li>Helping the students to write their report</li> <li>Asking some students to present their report.</li> </ol>	<p>5. Paying attention on teacher's explanation (and receiving report format)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collecting the information by moving around the class to ask their friends about what they have in their bedrooms, how they look like, and how they are organized.</li> <li>Collecting the information and asking questions if they have problem.</li> </ol> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing their report</li> <li>Asking for help from their teacher when they need it.</li> <li>Presenting their report and paying attention on their friends' presentation</li> </ol>	<p>30 minutes</p> <p>20 minutes</p>
<p><b>POST ACTIVITIES</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asking the students to conclude briefly what they have learnt</li> <li>Closing the lesson and saying Good bye</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concluding what they have learnt</li> <li>Saying good bye</li> </ol>	<p>10 minutes</p>

H. Media : Video, observation sheet, report format.

Example of notes:

No	Name of the students	List of the things that your friends have in their bedrooms (involving how they look like and are organized)
1.		<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
2	....	....

Example of research report format:

**Title** \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Report of the interview about .....)

**Introduction**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



*Findings and Discussion*

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*Conclusion*

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I. Evaluation/Assessment

Research Report Rubric

No.	Components	Criteria of Score				Score
		4 (Excellent)	3 (Good)	2 (Fair)	1 (Needs Improvement)	
1.	Organization	Information in logical, interesting sequence which reader can follow.	Student presents information in logical sequence which reader can follow.	Reader has a slight difficulty following the work because the students jumps around.	Sequence of information is very difficult to follow.	.....
2.	Content	Student demonstrates full knowledge (more than required).	Student is at ease with the content; and able to demonstrate basic concepts, but fails to elaborate.	Students is uncomfortable with the content and is able to demonstrate only basic concepts.	Student does not have grasp of information; student cannot answer questions about subject.	.....
3.	Vocabulary	Broad vocabulary; precise and appropriate	Fairly broad vocabulary; some inappropriate words	Adequate but repetitive; invented words; many inappropriate words	Words do not fit the context; hard to understand	.....
4.	Grammar and spelling	Work has no misspellings or grammatical errors.	Work has no more than two misspellings and/or grammatical errors.	Work has three misspellings and/or grammatical errors.	Work has four or more spelling errors and/or grammatical errors.	.....
5.	Mechanics	Punctuation and capitalization are correct.	There is one error in punctuation and/or capitalization	There is two or three errors in punctuation and/or capitalization	There is four or more errors in punctuation and/or capitalization	.....
<b>TOTAL</b>						.....

(Adapted from Dugan, 2015)

Final score of student's report = total score x 5  
 Therefore, the maximum score will be 100, and the minimum score will be 20.

**Presentation Rubric**

No.	Components	Criteria				Score
		4 (Excellent)	3 (Good)	2 (Fair)	1 (Needs Improvement)	
1.	Organization	Student presents information in logical, interesting sequence which audience can follow.	Student presents information in logical sequence which audience can follow.	Audience has difficulty following presentation because student jumps around.	Audience cannot understand presentation because there is no sequence of information.	.....
2.	Content	Student demonstrates full knowledge (more than required) with explanations and elaboration.	Student is at ease with content, but fails to elaborate.	Student is uncomfortable with information and is able to answer only basic questions.	Student does not have grasp of information; student cannot answer questions about the subject	.....
3.	Visual	Student used visuals to reinforce screen text and presentation.	Visuals related to text and presentation.	Student occasional used visuals that rarely support text and presentation.	Student used no visuals.	.....
4.	Grammar and spelling	Student's presentation has no misspellings or grammatical errors.	Student's presentation has no more than two misspellings and/or grammatical errors.	Student's presentation has three misspellings and/or grammatical errors.	Student's presentation has four or more spelling errors and/or grammatical errors.	.....
5.	Delivery	Student used a clear voice and correct, precise pronunciation of terms.	Student's voice is clear. Student pronounces most words correctly.	Student incorrectly pronounces terms. Audience have difficulty hearing presentation.	Student mumbles, incorrectly pronounces terms, and speaks too quietly for students in the back of class to hear.	.....
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>						.....

(Adapted from Teachnology, 2012)

Final score of student's presentation = total score x 5  
 Therefore, the maximum score will be 100, and the minimum score will be 20.