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BASIC-TO-BASIC: ANSWERING THE CHALLENGE TO HELP STUDENTS IMPROVE THEIR SKILLS IN WRITING

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ABSTRACT

In today's modern era, English learning tends to be characterized by the use of communicative approach. The ideal is great: enabling students to engage to one another meaningfully in English. Besides being practical, the meaningfulness aspect of this approach may also result a long lasting retention. Putting this approach together with proper context, this approach would often be regarded as among the best practices in English learning. Despite of the great ideals, building meaningful communication is actually a huge challenge, since it requires participating students to have a certain level of proficiency in English. Without this prerequisite, meaningful communication is unlikely to occur. Given the insufficient English proficiency of the majority of Indonesian students and adding their passive nature into account, meaningful communication in English tends to results more in failure than success. However, given that communicating in English is actually the goal of the learning, students are required to achieve that nonetheless. This paper aims to present basics applied in the writer's writing classes to help students cope with English writing requirements. Practice shows that exercising these basics proves helpful for students to reach the required English proficiency and thus improves their writing skills.

Keywords: *Teaching Writing, Writing Skills*

INTRODUCTION

Currently, English learning tends to be characterized by the use of communicative approach, including in Indonesia. Various textbooks from many different publishers show the urge to have students directly use the language to communicate. The ideal is actually quite good: enabling students to engage with one another meaningfully, directly in English as the target language. Besides being practical, the meaningfulness aspect of this approach would likely to result in a long lasting retention. Assigning into proper themes, the approach would often be regarded as among the best practices in English learning.

Although the ideals would sufficiently suffice for several groups of students, this approach poses a serious problem to the other groups of students: the inability to communicate well in English. Communicating in English requires one to actively exchange ideas and thought with one another. To have such exchanges, the participating interlocutors must have a certain level of proficiency in English. In other words, without having sufficient proficiency in English, meaningful communication in English is unlikely to occur. This insufficient proficiency seems to hinder quite many Indonesian students to actively communicate in English.

Current booms in written-based social media such as Twitter and Facebook, as well as the instant messenger facilities such as WhatsApp, Line, and the previously infamous Blackberry Messenger, have boosted interests towards written communication in particular. However, despite the increasing use of English in written communication, many students were still found to be incapable of writing in English to share or elaborate their ideas. It was quite an opposing fact since these same students were capable to use the so-called default terms such as "rofl – rolling on the floor laughing" or "c u – see you". In other words, many students still have insufficient skills to write in English.

In retrospect, such phenomenon may indicate that something was amiss in the English learning process, especially the learning process of writing in English. Should the phenomenon be properly evaluated and the weaknesses areas are to be uncovered, then it is probable to improve the learning process of writing in English in a whole. Such course of actions may, in turn, yield better learning results, particularly the better proficiency for students to write in order to share or express their ideas in English. Driven by such thoughts, this paper aimed to share the



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