

**THE USE OF THEME-BASED INSTRUCTION
TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING PERFORMANCE**

*PENGGUNAAN THEME-BASED INSTRUCTION UNTUK
MENINGKATKAN KETERAMPILAN MENULIS MAHASISWA*

ADIMAWATI HELINGO



**POSTGRADUATE PROGRAM
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**THE USE OF THEME-BASED INSTRUCTION
TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING PERFORMANCE**

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English Language Study

Submitted by

ADIMAWATI HELINGO

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PERNYATAAN KEASLIAN TESIS

Yang bertanda tangan di bawah ini:

Nama : Adimawati Helingo
Nomor Pokok : P0600211003
Program Studi : Bahasa Inggris

Menyatakan dengan sebenarnya bahwa tesis yang saya tulis ini benar-benar merupakan hasil karya saya sendiri, bukan merupakan pengambilalihan tulisan atau pemikiran orang lain. Apabila dikemudian hari terbukti atau dapat dibuktikan bahwa sebagian atau keseluruhan tesis ini hasil karya orang lain, saya bersedia menerima sanksi atas perbuatan tersebut.

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ABSTRAK

ADIMAWATI HELINGO. *Penggunaan Theme-Based Instruction untuk Meningkatkan Keterampilan Menulis Mahasiswa* (dibimbing oleh **Hamzah A. Machmoed** dan **Abdul Hakim Yassi**)

Penerapan *Theme-Based Instruction* (TBI) dalam penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan keterampilan menulis mahasiswa semester 4 di Jurusan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo.

Total 36 mahasiswa dari kelompok kontrol dan kelompok eksperimen ikut berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Metode kuantitatif diaplikasikan dalam penelitian ini dengan memberikan pre- dan post- tes menulis kepada kelompok kontrol dan eksperimen, dan kuisisioner untuk memperoleh persepsi mahasiswa terhadap TBI. Skor analitik digunakan untuk menilai tulisan mahasiswa.

Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa yang diajarkan dengan menggunakan TBI secara signifikan lebih baik dari pada mahasiswa di kelompok kontrol yang diajarkan dengan pendekatan tradisional dimana nilai observasi t lebih besar dari pada nilai tabel t ($2.206 > 2.042$). TBI juga dapat memotivasi mahasiswa untuk menulis dikarenakan oleh tema/topik yang menarik yang dipilih oleh mahasiswa itu sendiri. Pembelajaran secara otonomi dan terintegrasi mahasiswa juga meningkat karena mereka melakukan penelitian, membaca, berdiskusi, dan menulis tentang topik yang sudah dipilih selama penelitian. Persepsi positif terhadap penerapan TBI dalam kelas Writing juga diperoleh dari kuisisioner yang dibagikan kepada mahasiswa. Oleh karena itu dapat disimpulkan TBI secara positif dapat meningkatkan keterampilan menulis mahasiswa.

Kata kunci: theme-based instruction, topik, pembelajaran terintegrasi, menulis.

ABSTRACT

ADIMAWATI HELINGO. *The Use of Theme-Based Instruction to Improve Students' Writing Performance* (Supervised by **Hamzah A. Machmoed** and **Abdul Hakim Yassi**).

Implementation of Theme-Based Instruction (TBI) in the current research was aimed to improve writing performance of the students in 4th semester writing class in English Language Department of Gorontalo State University.

A total of 36 students from control and experimental group were involved. The study applied quantitative method in light of pre-post test of writing to both control and experimental groups and questionnaire to gain their perception upon the TBI. Analytical scoring profile was used to measure the students' writing.

The result shows that students under the guidance of TBI performed significantly better than students in control group with conventional way of teaching with t-observed value was greater than t-table value ($2.206 > 2.042$). It also found that TBI is able to motivate the students to write due to the interesting themes and/or topics that were selected by themselves. Autonomous and integrated learning of the students were also promoted since they did amount of research on their own, read, discussed, and wrote about the topics during the experimentation. A positive perception upon the implementation of TBI in writing class also gained from the students through questionnaire. Therefore, TBI positively improved the students' writing performance.

Keywords: Theme-Based Instruction (TBI), topics, integrated learning, writing.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter elaborates background of study, research questions, objectives of the research, significance of the research, scope of the research and definition of terms.

A. Background of Study

English has been known as a lingua franca to all language users for so long. Language speakers of other than English have been pursuing to learn English in order to be able to communicate across the globe. In Indonesia, status quo of English is as a foreign language and it has been taught as a compulsory subject since primary education up to university level. Due to its position as the foreign language, learning of English in schools seems to be less motivating because students appear to have less exposure on the use of the language as they do not use the language outside schools environment. However, maximum effort from both teacher and the students is needed in order to achieve main objective of teaching and learning English which is functioning language skills in communicative competence.

Among four language skills, writing is apparently considered as the most difficult skill to master particularly in EFL context because it requires a lot and detail attention on structure and its rules. As Richards &

Renandya (2002:303) stated that the difficulty happens because when a student wants to compose writing, he must be able to generate and organize ideas using appropriate choices of vocabularies, sentence, and paragraph organization and make those ideas readable and comprehensible to readers. Therefore, these matters are imperative in teaching and learning of English writing subject and that teachers in all level of education should find effective way to help the students to produce good writing.

Ability to compose good writing that tends to be more academic, such as expository writing, becomes one of the demands that the students in university level have to master for at the end of their study they will have to write academic research. Olson (2003:161) defined expository is a type of writing which is used to explain, analyze, evaluate, or reflect something. The students should be able to present ideas coherently and also provide facts to help the readers convey intended meaning. However, reality says differently. University students, particularly English Department students in Gorontalo, are still lack in writing subject which can be seen from their writing assignments that the researcher gained from one of the lecturers who taught Writing II subject in the university on December 2012. The researcher assumed that limited sources and knowledge force them to write short essays. It might be due to less practice of expository writing and limited amount of reading they have.

Furthermore, as the researcher has observed during pre experimental on January and March 2013, mostly the students are exposed to creative writing such as narrative or descriptive, and that the teaching writing is still conducted in traditional way which is process-based approach to Grammar Translation Method. In this method of teaching, the material is provided by lecturer and it is the lecturer's job to make the students understand the material by explaining in first language once the students got confused. Then students are asked to compose writing about a topic that is selected by the lecturer, and the lecturer corrects the students' writing for future revision. The researcher assumed this kind of teaching method put the charge on the lecturer and ignore the students' involvement in learning process that can influence to the students' motivation in learning English writing.

To overcome such problem, many experts have been conducting research in order to find out effective way to improve students' writing performance. Numbers of approaches, techniques, and teaching strategies have been proposed to help the teachers creating an effective way to teaching writing class. One of famous approaches to teaching writing that widely implemented is Genre Based Instruction (GBI). In GBI, the teaching is focused on the genre of writing types as to ease the students identifying them. One important stage in implementing GBI is modeling since the students can analyze the genre of writing, however, according to a research conducted by Miska (2004), she found that this

modeling leads the students to simply copy exactly the same with model of writing that she provided. In addition to this, Yang (2012) found that autonomous learning in GBI is uncertain to be approved since they simply rely on the model provided passively.

Solution to this drawback, Theme-Based Instruction (TBI) that proposed by Brinton, et al (1989, as cited in Brinton, 2003:162) is suggested. In TBI, the teaching is structured around certain theme/topic and it allows the students to be autonomous learners in which they are given selected theme/topic that relevant to their interest and level of proficiency, and are asked to find any information related to that particular theme/topic on their own while functioning their language proficiency as a whole. However, the researcher would like to focus on the implementation of TBI in teaching writing particularly expository writing with the assumption that this writing is a basic for future academic writing of the university students, as stated by Shih (1986:618) that this kind of writing is frequently assigned in academic courses. The research would like to see whether the applying of TBI can improve the students' writing performance. Therefore, the researcher came up with the title '**the use of theme-based instruction to improve students' writing performance**'.

B. Research Questions

Based on the above background, the present study intends to address two research questions as follows:

1. How does the implementation of TBI improve the students' writing performance?
2. What are the students' perceptions upon the implementation of TBI?

C. Research Objectives

In line with the formulation of research question above, objectives of research are:

1. To highlight whether the implementation of TBI improves students' writing performance.
2. To describe the students' perceptions upon the implementation of TBI.

D. Significance of the Research

Pedagogical implication in terms of practical benefit of this research is to provide alternative and effective way in teaching writing. The result of this study is expected to be useful for English teachers to improve the students' writing proficiency and to promote the students' autonomous learning.

Research on TBI is most frequently conducted in non-language class. Thus, in term of theoretical benefit, it is believed that this research

will contribute to theory of language learning with evidence on the implementation of Theme-based Instruction particularly in language class to improve students' writing performance in foreign language context.

E. Scope of the Research

The research is focused on the effects of implementing Theme-Based Instruction towards the students' expository writing performance in terms of its content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics.

F. List of Key Terms

Similar perceptions are necessary to be built between the researcher and the readers. Therefore the following are terms used within this research.

1. **Theme Based Instruction (TBI)** is classroom instruction which is organized around certain themes and/or topics.
2. **Writing** is a process of presenting writer's idea to readers through visual symbols.
3. **Expository writing** is a type of writing that used to inform, analyze, and reflect about something.
4. **Conventional way of teaching** is noticed as the usual model of teaching used in class in which process-based approach to grammar translation method where the teacher explain writing material to the students and then ask the students to compose a writing.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter provides previous study, theoretical framework, some related theories that discuss the overview of instructional types, background of content focus teaching, definition of Theme-Based Instruction (TBI), principles, and the implementation of TBI in classroom, and concept of expository writing. Furthermore, conceptual framework, hypothesis, and operational definition are described at the end.

A. Previous Related Study

Several studies related to the Theme-Based Instruction have been conducted by many researchers. Some of them are studying on students' language proficiency as a whole, and some are experimenting on specific language skill. An experimental study conducted by Kiziltan & Ersanli (2007), for example, showed positive impact of the theme-based instruction. They did the research to find out the contribution of Content-based Instruction (CBI) to young students' language development in English and they focused on the use of Theme-Based Instruction in their research. To determine appropriate themes and topics for the students, the researchers gave a questionnaire to experimental group in which the participants rank the themes/topics that related to their level based on their preference. At the end of every topic, achievement test is given to both

control and experimental group. There is a statistical significant difference between those two groups. And at final, t-test has been used to calculate the overall achievement and the result showed that there is a significant different between students who were taught using theme-based and students who received conventional way of teaching.

The researchers, however, admitted that information sources in English for lower lever was hard to find, thus they had to simplify the text. In addition, some students tend to copy directly from the source text when they compose their assignment, therefore appropriate task should be designed to drive the students to evaluate the information in such a way and put them into the assignment.

Similarly, Gao (2011) also conducted an experimental research. However, he focused on oral proficiency of university students. He did research to assess the effect on the implementation of what he called Theme-based Oral Approach (TOA) toward non-English major students' oral English proficiency during one semester. There were 136 students as an experimental group which are randomly chosen from three different universities in China. Oral test has been conducted at pre- and post-experiment to both control and experimental group. During the implementation of TOA the students underwent some oral activities such as group discussion, role-play, debate, and questions & answer. The result of the study showed significant progress of the students' oral

proficiency which can be seen from post-test in class that employed TOA compared to the control group with traditional treatment.

Another research on theme-based instruction which is closely related to the current study was a research by Osman, Ahmad, & Jusoff (2009) who aimed their research to find out the perception of students in Malaysian tertiary institution on the implementation of theme based instruction toward their writing proficiency. There were 36 pre-degree ESL students who participate in this research. The result of the research is gathered from interview with 6 random-candidates with three different level of proficiency, namely weak, average, and excellent. Four of them claimed that they are motivated in writing English and their language proficiency is enhanced through this method, while the other two students considered this method was such a waste of time. Overall, the students showed significant difference in their writing performance.

Despite positive outcomes of theme-based from the researches above, a research conducted by Yang (2009) showed less effective result. She researched on theme-based teaching in an English course for primary ESL students in Hong Kong. She investigated students' perceptions and the impact of the theme-based teaching approach on their level of interest in learning English through pre- and post-questionnaire. The majority of the result indicated that that theme-based teaching could not make the students more interested in learning English. It is due to the theme and

activities given to the students were less appropriate and not relevant to the students' level of competence.

Considering the pitfall of Yang's research, it is imperative for the researcher to appropriately select the themes/topics that relevant to the students' interest, needs, and competency level. Among those previous studies, the research by Osman et.al. (2009) might be similar to the researcher's study in terms of the focus of language skill, namely writing proficiency. However, the current research more focuses on the implementation of Theme-Based Instruction to improve the students' writing performance, particularly expository essay, within university level. Also, the design of this research is an experimental method in which the result of the research will be accumulated quantitatively.

B. Overview of Instructional Types

1) Strategies-Based Instruction

Brown (2007:140) defines Strategies-Based Instruction (SBI) as the application of both learning and communication strategies in classroom. This type of instruction is also referred to Style- and Strategy-Based Instruction (SSBI) by Cohen & Weaver (2005:6) who consider that style and strategy has become one entity. The aim of this instructional type is to determine what students' learning strategies are and how the students make use of the strategies to learn language (Brown, 2007; Cohen & Waver, 2005). There are three steps and considerations to apply the SBI in the classroom effectively that provided by Brown (2007:142). First is

identifying students' style and potential strategies, and then incorporating SBI in communicative language courses and classrooms. The last is providing extra-class assistance for students.

Before implementing SBI in classroom, teacher needs to help the students to determine and be aware of the preference learning style and strategies of their own through some sort of questionnaire. One that has been widely used to identify students' learning strategy is called Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). Once the styles have been determined, the students may proceed to find out strategies that suit their learning. Therefore, it is relevant to what Cohen (2011) stated that it is through SSBI the students become more aware of what kinds of strategies are available to them, understand how to organize and use strategies systematically and effectively, and learn when and how to transfer the strategies to new language learning.

Apart from its positive contribution to students' language learning, some claims are addressed to the application of SBI in classroom. Brown (2007), for example, questioned about the students' ability on how to use their strategy identified from the questionnaire. The teacher is demanded to do extra work to help the students put the strategy, which is not alike among the students, into practice that might be time consuming and less focus on material that is being learned since the teacher will be busy reminding the students with strategies they are using.

2) Competency-Based Instruction

As what is named for this instructional type, Competency-Based Instruction is organized around the students' competencies. Richards & Rodgers (2001:141) determine that the focus of Competency-Based Instruction lies on learning outcomes of language program development. It prepares the students to perform language skills needed in certain situations that are commonly occurred in their daily basis. This instruction has closely resemblance to Performance-Based Instruction. In competency-based instruction, the teaching of language is based on the competencies that the students need to acquire in order to proficiently function in the society in which they live.

Since the teaching is focused on the specific expected outcomes, the first thing to do by the teacher is to conduct needs analysis. Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998:121) define needs analysis as "the process of establishing the what and how of a course." From the needs analysis the teacher will have a clear vision of what to teach and how to organize the class in order to meet the students' needs in reaching the goal or target of learning. In line with this view, Norland & Pruett-Said (2006:57) claim that assessment on the students' needs is included in competency-based approach, and then followed by selecting competencies suited to the needs, providing instruction aimed to meet the needs, and evaluating the students' performance in meeting the competencies. This instructional method seek to teach language in relation to the social context in which it

is used, therefore through the implementation of competency-based instruction, the students are expected to know about the language and what they can do with it. Mostly, this method is encountered in ESL classroom context which prepare the students to engage in professional or work-related situation and survival-oriented language program for adults (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:144).

What the students can be benefited from this instructional type is the extent to competencies which are specific and practical that the students can directly relate to their needs and interest. Also, Richards & Rodgers (2001) advocate that the teacher can directly predict the language skills that are likely to be experienced by the students in particular situation. However, to some extent this method has also its weaknesses. The students are just taught particular language skills and form that required by the situation in which they will function. This may lead to limitation of knowledge of other language forms used in different situation and context. Furthermore, the development of thinking skill is paid less attention since the focus of this instruction is typically on behavior and performance.

3) Form-Focused Instruction

The Form-Focused Instruction (FFI) appeared as a modification to Grammar Translation method since in this situation, classroom instruction does not only focus on the language forms, rather it also pursues students' communicative competence. As Ellis (2001, cited in Rahimpour &

Magsoudpour, 2011:171) contends that FFI includes both traditional approaches to teaching forms based on structural syllabi and more communicative approach, where attention to form is created from activities that are meaning-focused. Similarly, Poole (2005:47) advocates that focus on form instruction is a type of instruction that, on one hand, support the importance of communicative language teaching principles such as authentic communication and student-centeredness, and, on the other hand, maintains the value study of problematic grammatical forms.

As Spada (1997:73, cited in Brown, 2007:276) defines FFI as any pedagogical effort which is used to draw the students' attention to language form either implicitly or explicitly. Implicitly or explicitly refer to the error treatment given to the students when they make incorrect language forms. The error treatment covers types of feedback from the teacher, such as recast or corrective feedback, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, explicit correction, and repetition. In addition, students' responses to feedback, uptake, repair and repetition for instance, are also taken into account (Brown, 2007). The aim is that to make linguistic forms salient so that students can 'notice the gap' which result from the mismatch between input (the target language ideal) and their own output or their current interlanguage (Coleman & Klapper, 2005:36).

Even the FFI, however, combines traditional and communicative approaches, the implementation in classroom setting still raises many

issues and claims. The question of how explicit the correction should be given to help the students notice the gap is still unclear. Besides, the appropriate way of the teacher to interrupt the students, whether during their attempt to communicate or after their practice, is undecided yet. Further, Poole (2005:52) describes that when problematic grammar forms can be addressed using another language, which is first language, then the focus on form instruction could be seen unnecessary and impractical. In addition, FFI seems optimally suited to classroom that are small enough to enable instructor to verbally address their students' problem forms. Nevertheless, in many settings where classes are large, individual attention or students-student interaction is not possible (Long, 1991; Long & Robinson, 1998, cited in Poole, 2005:51). Also, focus on form instruction demands teachers to have native-like or near native-like competence fluency; more specifically, in oral situations, they would need to be able to spontaneously recognize students' form-based errors and provide with the correct ones (Long, 1991; Long & Robinson, 1998, cited in Poole, 2005:51). Therefore, FFI is less applicable within EFL contexts like Indonesia, in which the classes are large and that very few teachers possess native-like competency.

C. Background of Content Focus Teaching

Integration of language and content teaching has been implemented within second language contexts for decades. It appeared as a critic against traditional teaching approach that emphasizes on linguistic

form of the language itself and firstly employed in teaching immersion program in Canada. Hymes (1971, cited in Sherris, 2008) asserted that content and language integration rooted from a believe that communicative competence in second language is facilitated with language as a medium for learning content rather than studying it separately. Lambert & Tucker (1972, cited in King et.al, 1995, p. 86) further added in second language setting language skills can be developed and empowered while acquiring knowledge and academic skills which are salient for success in content-area subject.

Later, in 1980s this language and content integrated teaching has known as Content-Based Instruction (CBI). Brinton (2003, p. 202) said that it was firstly introduced through Bernard Mohan's work on *Language and Content*. Supporting his prior, Crandall (1995, p. 3) stated that the focus of such content instruction "is not just on learning the language, but in using it as a medium to learn something else". Researchers on language and content teaching believe that learning a new language will be much more effective if it is integrated with learning a content or subject matter, for example math, science, and social studies. It has been proved through King et.al's (1995, p. 89) investigation on social study which revealed that an effective way to provide natural exposure to the language is achieved by using language as a vehicle to focus on subject-matter content.

Another term used to label the integration of language and content approach is called Content and Language Integration Learning (CLIL).

Marsh (2002:58, cited in Coyle, 2006:2) referred CLIL to “any activity in which a foreign language is used as a tool in the learning of a non-language subject in which both language and subject have a joint role.” Many scholars tend to believe that typically in the CLIL setting the content is taught in a foreign language only to improve the students’ foreign language competence. However, Wolff (2003:3) argued that this approach does not intend that way, rather it is designed for content learning as well as language learning. It is clearly stated that the emphasis on language and content is equal.

As it has been mentioned previously, this teaching integration occurs in most second language contexts such as program for Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, ESP, EOP, and immersion programs. Francis (2008:343), for instance, who focused his study in immersion program revealed that in particular, for school-age second language students, content-based immersion teaching has been shown to be the most efficient approach for providing high quality language instruction to L2 students while at the same time ensuring that children make progress in the academic content objectives.

In recent years, the implementaiton of content focus teaching has been spreading within foreign language context as well such as in university foreign language program, and business and vocational courses in EFL settings (Richards & Rodgers, 2001:207). In addition, Torass (1991:120), affirms that teaching foreign language through contet should

revolved around social, geographical, historical, and natural science theme. This is due to the students under the guidance of CBI are mostly students in non-language disciplines

Nevertheless, according to Junyue & Yang (2011:28) the application of CBI to the education of English language majors was neglected area for many years particularly in China. Feng and Li (1995) as cited in Junyue & Yang (2011) raised the necessity of applying content based instruction to the teaching of English major but the article failed to attract attention. Therefore, applying CBI within foreign language context to teaching language-major disciplines need to be taken into more consideration.

Since this approach is not originally new in educational field, the existence of preceding approaches is inevitable. There are some previous principles of teaching approaches and methods, and language theory that are covered in the content based approach. In **direct method**, for example, Diller (1978, cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2000) determined that during the learning process, meaning is to be understood directly in target language without interference of students' first language. It appears to be quite similar to CBI in which the target language is the medium of instruction to convey the meaning. Another characteristic of direct method as stated by Larsen-Freeman (2000) is that the syllabus designed builds upon situation and topics, which is the basic in content based.

Another theory that seemingly support CBI is **experiential approach** which according to Madrid & Sanchez (2001:108) is “non-analytic and global”. In this approach the learners are given opportunities to use language for a purpose, and to focus on the message and content rather than on the code and its form. Nunan (2004:12) further added that the central to this approach is the active involvement of the learner which is contrast with the old approach where the learner gains knowledge from the teacher in a passive way. It aims to enable the learner to become self-directed and responsible for his own learning (Kohonen, 1992, cited in Nunan, 2004:13)

Other theory related to CBI is **natural approach** where the language learning is subconscious. This means that the learning of meaning is the main focus and that the students simultaneously learn the linguistic form. Richards & Rodgers (2001) confirmed that in natural approach, a focus on comprehension and meaningful communication as well as the act of giving the right kinds of comprehensible input provide the necessary and sufficient condition for successful classroom second and foreign language acquisition.

The theory of comprehensible input also counts on within the principle of content based instruction. Krashen (1982), who proposed the **input theory**, contended that input should be beyond the students current level of competence and once the students understand the input, it means that the meaning becomes the focus and as a result, the students acquire

language structure as well. It is believed that input that is beyond the students' current level of competence, as Krashen noted $i+1$, will force them to reach beyond linguistic input and use their previous knowledge to learn the meaning of unfamiliar structure. However, issue on how the input is called comprehensible raised question among researcher, then Escribano (1999:59) further added that the key factor determining acquisition of competence in L2 is exposure to large amount of meaningful, interesting or relevant L2 input material which accounts for the success of learning. As in content based, the content or themes/topics are authentic and relevant to students' needs and interests and suit their level of competence.

Last but not the least, **Communicative approach** also shares the same belief with content based as Madrid & Sanchez (2001:120) stated that this approach suggests to deal with motivated activities, topics, and themes that engage the students within authentic communication. Likewise, Richards & Rodgers (2001:204) contend that classroom should focus on real communication and the exchange of information of content from outside of language. Similarly in CBI, authenticity of tasks and texts is designed to be relevant to students needs in learning content and language and is one of the important characteristics in content based that aimed to help the students to convey the meaning and learn language effectively.

D. Theme Based Instruction

1. Definition of Theme Based Instruction derived from CBI

Before coming to the definition of Theme Based Instruction, it is better to notice that Content Based Instruction (CBI) refers to the teaching of language through exposure to content that is interesting and relevant to learners (Brinton, 2003:201). As the bigger umbrella, this instructional approach is divided into three prototypes they are Shelter Content Instruction, Adjunct Model Instruction, and Theme-Based Instruction which is the focus of this research. Those three types of CBI has something in common in which the teaching is structured around the content/themes, however, they are also different in some aspects.

Met (1999) referred *sheltered content instruction* courses are subject course whose focus is content-driven which means the goal is set for students to content mastery and they are assessed in terms of content learning, while language learning is put in second place. Further, Oxford et.al, (1994) said that this course is instructed by subject-content teacher who is also native speaker of the language and assisting the students to pursue academic or vocational goals.

Unlike sheltered instruction which emphasizes its focus on content, *adjunct model instruction* focuses on both content and language mastery. The students are expected to learn content material while simultaneously acquiring academic language proficiency. Brinton (2003) indicated that adjunct instruction requires collaboration of subject-matter teacher and

language teacher and that the students are enrolled in content class and a supporting language class. There must be good cooperation between language and content teacher to prepare content material and appropriate language activities that will be needed by the students. Norland & Pruett-Said (2006) suggested language teacher to sit in content class to observe what the students need and later in the supporting language class, various language activities required in content class are provided to the students. Considering the complexity of applying this instruction in classroom due to the extra time needed which unfortunately most teachers do not have, the researcher assume that this adjunct model is less implemented in EFL contexts.

Oxford et.al (1994:263) defined *theme-based instruction* (TBI) as an instruction that integrates the language skills through the study of particular aspect of content known as a “theme”. Since theme is central to this approach, it is selected to be appropriate to students’ needs and interests (Snow, 2001, cited in Duenas, 2004:84). In term of its focus adjunct instruction focuses on both language and content, sheltered instruction focuses on content, while theme-based instruction is focus into language (Brinton, 2003). In line with this, Duenas (2003) indicated that theme-based does have explicit language aims which are usually more important than the content learning objectives. Further, Met (1999:10) added that the goal of theme-based is to help students develop language skills and proficiency.

Brinton et.al (1989, cited in Duenas, 2003) distinguish what they call 'weak' and 'strong' forms of CBI, and TBI courses would constitute the weakest representation of CBI models. According to this pattern, weaker forms would include language courses whose main aim is to develop students' communicative proficiency, whereas the stronger versions would integrate content courses for L2 speakers in non-language disciplines, in which the primary goals is mastery of the subject matter.

Met (1999:6) distinguish the continuum of content and language teaching into "content-driven" and "language-driven". In *content-driven*, student learning of content is of greater importance than language learning. Content outcomes are a driving force of instruction, and student mastery of content is held to be of paramount importance. In *language-driven programs*, content is a useful tool for furthering the aims of the language curriculum. Content learning may be considered incidental, and neither teachers nor students are held accountable for content outcomes. The classification of content- and language-driven courses can be view in Figure 1 below.

CONTENT-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING: A CONTINUUM OF CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATION					
Content-Driven			Language-Driven		
Total Immersion	Partial Immersion	Sheltered Courses	Adjunct Model	Theme-Based Courses	Language classes with frequent use of content for language practice

Figure 1. Content-driven & Language-driven in continuum of content and language integration
Met (1999:6)

Even most scholars assume that theme-based puts its emphasis on the success of language proficiency, Eskey (1997) asserted that it does not mean that theme-based course design begins with a prescribed list of language forms or functions to be learned, but rather with topics of interest to students. Theme-based language courses give students an interesting subject to learn or communicate about. Language is used to explore content, and language growth emerges as students need to comprehend or produce language related to content.

Further, Duenas (2003) said that TB courses constitute an excellent tool for the integration of language and content providing the curriculum planners, course designer and teachers to make all possible efforts to

keep language and content exploration in balance. Further, not to lose sight of content and language learning objective, and not to overwhelm students with excessive amounts of content that may lead to overlooking the language exploitation aspects of instruction.

In terms of classroom coordination, Davies (2003) claims that the TBI is considered to be the most appropriate instruction to suit EFL students because it can be taught by language teacher only, while the other two models require subject matter teacher. In TBI integrated learning is applied in order for the students to learn about certain themes or topics while functioning their language proficiency.

2. Principles of Theme Based Instruction

Theme-Based Instruction is considered to be the most frequently adopted and the most common model in CBI. Even Stoller & Grabe (1997:3) firmly claimed that “CBI is fundamentally theme-based”. It is due to the believe that thematic instruction is the basic in most educational context and in every learning process the existence of a particular content (theme/topic) is salient. Therefore, the researcher assume that principles of CBI also belong to TBI. Following is the five main principles in TBI.

a. Instruction based on themes/topics

The principle number one in CBI is that the instruction base is on content rather than language. This principle suits to the idea of theme based instruction in which the teaching is structured around the

themes/topics, only in TBI the students language proficiency is taken into account, which means they function their language skills while learning the theme/topics.

The themes/topics in TBI can be organized randomly even they are not related to each other, such as technology, culture, and politics. Another way of organizing topics is by determining one major theme and adding subthemes as topics. This is suited to Duenas (2003) who said that the foreign language syllabus in TBI courses is organized either around different topics within a particular discipline, or including a number of individual topics associated with a relevant general theme or content area.

In TBI, the content is not necessarily to be academic. It can include any topic, theme, or non-language issue of interest or importance to the students, and this is one of the advantages of TBI which is its flexibility in terms of content selection.

b. Integrate skills

Unlike traditional approach which focuses on isolation skill specific, Brinton (2003:206) said TBI uses an integrated skills approach to language teaching, covering all four language skills as well as grammar and vocabulary. It is in accordance with Cameron (2001) who claimed that new vocabulary items can be learned easily and this is another important advantage of TBI. This reflects what happens in the real world, where communication involves multiple skills simultaneously. In line with that, Larsen-Freeman (2000:141) note that communicative competence

involves not only language conversationally, but also include the ability to read, discuss, and write about content from other fields.

Students in TBI class are engaged in activities that integrate four language skills, such as exposing them to materials from various sources like internet articles that related to given topics. The students are also functioning their speaking skill through presentation and discussion part in class as they exchange information from their reading, or/and video may be presented to them to practice their listening comprehension. At the same time, they may practice to do note-taking, summarizing, or getting informational key from the topic that is being presented. At the end, they may be asked to compose a writing about the topics that has been discussed during the class.

c. Promote students autonomy learning

Harmer (2007) said that telling students to be autonomous will not work effectively unless it is being implemented. Brown (2007:130) valued learner autonomy in the form of allowing students to do things like initiate oral production, solve problems in small groups, practice language forms in pairs, and practice using the language outside of the classroom. It is viewed by Farrell & Jacobs (2010:15) as contrast to having the teacher decide everything in class.

In TBI, promoting students' autonomy learning is one of the principles in which the classroom setting is learner-centered. Central to this approach is the belief that learning occurs not only through the

teacher's exposure, but also through peer input and interaction (Brinton, 2003:207). Activities to trigger autonomous learning involve interactive learning, negotiation, and information gathering. In such classroom, the students are actively engaged in all phase of learning process and do not depend on the teacher as the source of information, rather it is their job to find information on their own.

Textbook is not the only source used in TBI classroom. The students are allowed to select their own texts from internet, newspaper, magazine and other source that are related to the themes/topics (Dupuy, 2000; Davies, 2003). That way the students are exposed to different types of discourse and linguistic forms, also such informational texts are accessible easily.

d. Themes/topics relevant to students' lives and interests

Since theme is the core of lesson in TBI, it is imperative to arrange and choose the topic to be appropriate and suit students' needs, interest, and their level of proficiency and giving students chance to select the topic during the learning process is strongly advocated by TBI. This is one of the strengths of TBI showed by Davies (2003) that its flexibility to create theme or topics based on specific learner needs. However, language academic goals or educational aims, and institutional demands and expectation are not putting aside (Duenas, 2004)

By allowing students to choose their own topic to study, it has been aimed to address their interest and to encourage students to develop a

sense of ownership in the topic. Furthermore, once the students learn as they are interested in, they may be more encourage to learn. It is in line with Larsen-Freeman (2000:142) who considered the students' motivation will increase because they are learning content that is relevant to the academic requirements of the program in which they are entered. Similarly, Dornyei (2001) emphasized the importance of helping the students see the relevance of what they learn to their lives will develop the students' intrinsic motivation.

e. Authenticity of text and task

Authenticity is important either for texts or sources used in TBI, and for activities that the students perform in class. Hutchinson & Waters (1987:159 defined authentic texts are those that are not originally constructed for language teaching purpose. The aim of authentic texts is not to teach language, but rather to inform, entertain, or both (Brinton, 2003:208). Newspaper ads, guidebook for tourists, restaurant menu are classified into authentic materials and activities that are organized around them should reflect what would take place in real world.

Authenticity of text and task refers to any materials or activities employed in classroom that is relevant to needs of the students. It is believed when the content materials are relevant to the needs, it is easier for the students to comprehend the linguistic forms used in the text

because it is contextualized (Norland & Pruett-Said, 2006) and thus the students will learn more effectively.

3. Implementation of TBI in classroom

There is so-called Six-Ts Approaches in implementing TBI in class suggested by Stoller & Grabe (1997). This new approach to TBI is outlined to be applicable to both second and foreign language settings and within a wide range of CBI programs.

- a. *Themes* are the core ideas in which other components like materials and activities are structured around while considering students' needs and interest, and academic goals appropriately.
- b. *Texts* are defined as content resources, whether in written or oral form, which deliver the basic plan of the theme in order to achieve goals of a course. Not only the themes are to be chosen appropriately, but so are the texts.
- c. *Topics* are the subunits of content which explore more specific aspects of the theme. The topics should be coherent to the theme in that they can provide setting where the students explore both content and language.
- d. *Threads* are linkages across themes which create greater curricular coherence. They are, in general, not directly tied to the central idea controlling each theme unit.

- e. *Tasks*, in accordance with the texts being used, are the instructional activities and techniques utilized for content, language, and strategy instruction in language classrooms
- f. *Transitions* are explicitly planned actions which provide coherence across topics in a theme unit and across tasks within topics

In brief, the theme is the primary source for curriculum planning in this approach. A variety of relevant and interesting texts lead to topic selection. Specific tasks are design to teach the language knowledge and content information central to the texts for a given theme unit, thereby meeting student needs and achieving curricular priorities. Transitions and threads create additional linkages throughout the curriculum, creating a sense of coherence and seamlessness.

E. Writing Performance and Expository Writing

As a nature of communication, people deliver their thoughts and ideas to make other people understand their intended meaning. It happens both in oral and written form. Patel & Jain (2008) perceive writing as a presentation of language sounds that put through visual symbols, or in other words it is a speaking in a paper form. Someone writes something in order to help other people understands his/her ideas. It can be said that writing is a process whereby a writer organizes his ideas, puts them in a written form to help readers convey the intended meaning.

In second language context, writing is still perceived as a difficult language skill to be master as it consists of particular and important rules such as organizing coherent ideas within sentence, punctuation, word choice, and spelling. Not only that, Richards & Renandya (2002:303) clarify that the difficulty also lies on making those ideas readable to others. Even more, it appears to be more difficult in foreign language context where students learn English, particularly writing, only in school environment, and it indicates that less exposure is given to them.

As in Gorontalo State University writing is taught from second semester up to fifth semester in Writing I, Writing II, Writing III, and Writing IV Classes. However, it appears that the students have less practice to write since conventional way of teaching is still adopted in which the students listen to the teacher giving lectures, which is quite boring, and then are asked to compose free writing.

In a mean time, the demand of syllabus in university is that the students should be able to produce academic writing as prerequisite for their academic paper at the end of their study. Nevertheless, the word 'academic' is viewed as a tough thing to do. As a result, the students are mostly asked to compose creative writing such as narrative or descriptive writing, instead of doing more practice in expository writing. Derewianka (1992:60) defines expository essay is a type of writing which aims to explain and present information of how something works or reasons for some phenomenon. In order for the information to be grasp easily by the

reader, it must be arranged and presented in a logical and sequential with detail. Further, Escribano (1999:61) defines expository text as a type of writing that takes into account the analysis and synthesis of the constituent element of given concepts.

Regardless its purpose, expository writing consists of introduction, main body, and conclusion. Olson (2003:161) describes that orientation of the introduction covers the purpose and focus of a writer and consists of thesis statements that deliver the intended point of the writer, while the body of the expository explores more ideas by presenting examples, details, reasons, and facts. For the conclusion part, summary of the whole idea together with new offering insights are provided.

The crucial things in composing an expository writing are clear explanation, availability of appropriate examples, reasons, and adequate evidence to support the idea which gained thorough research of topic. This type of writing is quite similar to the composition of research papers, such as report and thesis. As Swales (1990, as cited in Maroko, 2009:337) points out, a thesis or dissertation provides opportunity for students to demonstrate some identification of a topic and following-up their insight with a more systematic piece of research work.

Therefore, it is imperative to practice writing expository essay more frequently for the students in university level as their pre stage of composing more academic papers such as research.

F. Conceptual Framework

Putting ideas into written form requires more practice and appropriate approach to fit in, particularly where English is a foreign language. Theme-Based Instruction, with one of its principles is integrated skill, is perceived as an effective approach to help students improve their writing performance. As Patel & Jain (2008:125) claimed that ability in composing writing can be acquired most efficiently when other skills are also involved.

Therefore, teaching and learning process in this research will be conducted in two classes in which one class act as control group, and the other as experimental group. The control group will have conventional way of teaching writing, while the experimental group will be taught by using Theme Based Instruction. Output of this research will provide the students' writing performance and their perception upon the implementation of TBI. Below is conceptual framework of this research presented in figure below.

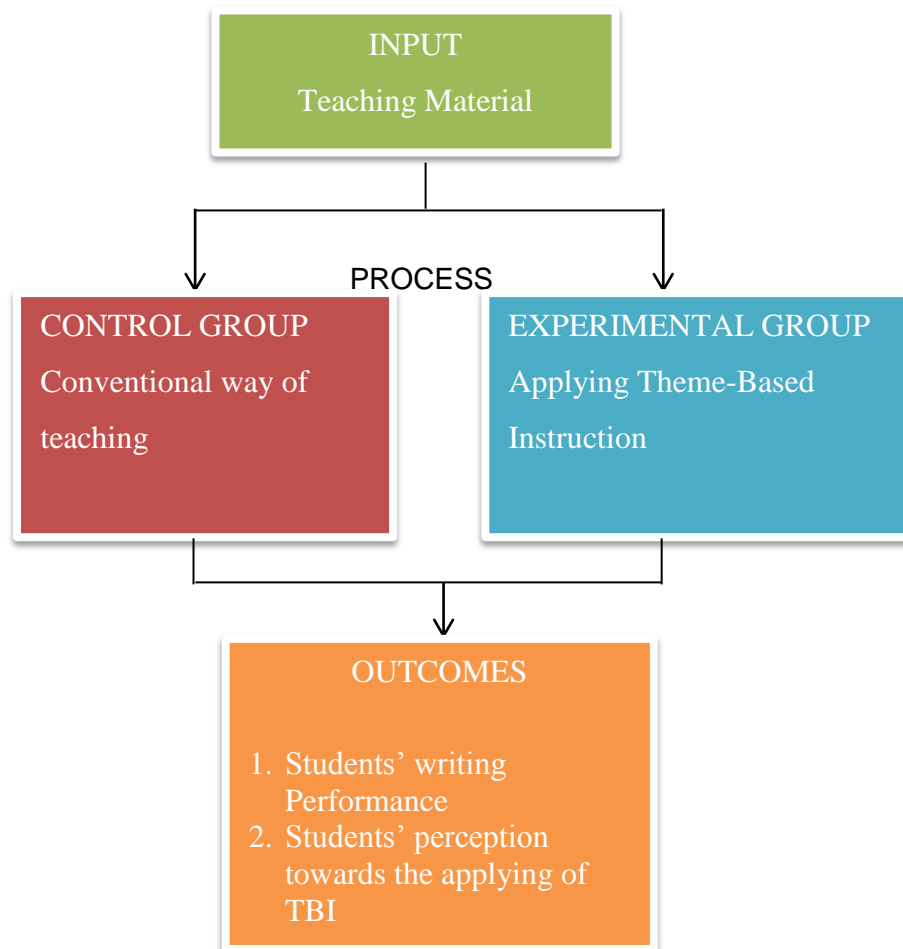


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of the research

G. Hypothesis

Based on conceptual framework two hypotheses are put forward below.

1. Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): there is a significant difference between the students who are taught by implementing Theme-Based Instruction and those who are not.

2. Null Hypothesis (H_0): there is *no* significant difference between the students who are taught by implementing Theme-Based Instruction and those who are not.

H. Operational Definitions

Operational definitions refer to the description of variables that involve within the research. As presented in preceding part, teaching material becomes the input as well as independent variable. For the outcomes, this research pursues the improvement on the students' writing performance and the students' perception on the implementation of the TBI. Below the researcher provides the operational definition of this research.

1. **Teaching material** is the material used in the research, in this case materials related to themes and/or topics.
2. **Students' writing performance** is the students ability to compose a writing.
3. **Students' perception on TBI** refers to the students' impression toward the applying of TBI which is presented through the result of questionnaire.