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E-JOURNAL

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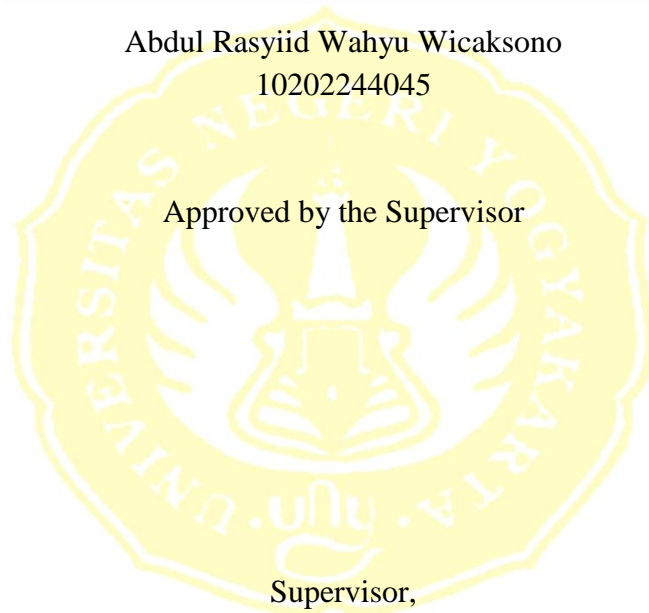
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APPROVAL

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Improving Students' Writing Skills in Descriptive Texts through Quantum Learning Strategy of Grade VIII A of

SMP N 5 Sleman

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Abstract: This research aimed to improve the writing skills of Grade VIII A students of SMP N 5 Sleman using Quantum Learning Strategy. This research was an action research study. The research was conducted in SMP N 5 Sleman from the 22nd of October to the 13th of November 2014. The subjects of the research were 32 students of Grade VIII A. The data were collected qualitatively through observation and interviews and quantitatively through a pre-test and a post-test. The field notes and interview transcripts were analyzed qualitatively using Burns' model (2010). Meanwhile, to build interpretations of the quantitative data, the pre-test and post-test results were analyzed using SPSS Statistics 16.0 to find the difference between the mean scores of the students in both tests. The results showed that the implementation of the Quantum Learning Strategy was effective to improve the students' writing skills. By using the design and the principles of this strategy, the students showed improvement in all aspects of writing namely content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. This strategy also improved the teaching and learning of writing such as classroom interaction, the students' participation and enthusiasm towards the learning. The findings were also supported by the quantitative data. The mean scores of the students' writing tests showed the improvement from 64.5 to 75.05.

Keywords: quantum learning strategy, enthusiasm, grade VIII students, writing

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan menulis siswa kelas VIII A SMP N 5 Sleman dengan menggunakan strategi Quantum Learning. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian tindakan kelas. Penelitian ini dilakukan di SMP N 5 Sleman dari tanggal 22 oktober sampai 13 november 2014. Subjek penelitian ini adalah 32 siswa kelas VIII A. Data dikumpulkan baik secara kualitatif dengan melakukan pengamatan dan wawancara sementara secara kuantitatif dengan melakukan pre-test dan post-test. Catatan observasi dan transkrip wawancara dianalisis secara kualitatif dengan menggunakan metode dari Burns (2010). Sementara untuk membangun interpretasi data kuantitatif, hasil pre-test dan post-test dianalisis menggunakan SPSS Statistics 16.0 untuk menemukan perbedaan nilai rata-rata siswa di kedua tes. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan Quantum Learning efektif untuk meningkatkan kemampuan menulis siswa. Dengan menggunakan desain dan prinsip-prinsip strategi ini, siswa menunjukkan peningkatan dalam semua aspek menulis yaitu isi, organisasi, kosakata, penggunaan bahasa, dan mekanik. Strategi ini juga meningkatkan pengajaran dan pembelajaran menulis seperti interaksi dalam kelas, partisipasi siswa dan

antusiasme terhadap pembelajaran tersebut. Temuan itu juga didukung oleh data kuantitatif. Nilai rata-rata tes menulis siswa menunjukkan peningkatan dari 64,5 menjadi 75,05.

Kata Kunci: strategi *quantum learning*, antusiasme, siswa kelas VIII, menulis

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Introduction

Meyers (2005: 2) states that writing is a way to produce language you do naturally when you speak. People communicate not only through spoken media but also through written media. There are so many communication media which use written language such as newspapers, magazines, blogs, websites, and even social media. Based on those reasons, it is clear that the writing skill is important to be mastered in order to maintain a good communication with other people. Its purpose is both to express and impress (Nunan, 2003: 88). Therefore, the English teaching and learning process in the classroom should include teaching the writing skill in correct ways in order to help students build their ability in writing.

However, the objective of teaching writing was not yet fulfilled in SMP N 5 Sleman. Based on the observation and interviews with both the teacher and the students, the students of SMP N 5 Sleman, especially Grade VIII A, still had problems with writing. They lacked of vocabulary mastery, got difficulties in developing ideas, had low motivation, made grammatical errors, and ignored the mechanism. All of those problems needed to be solved because they gave impact on the students' writing achievement.

To solve these problems, a new strategy is needed. One of them is the Quantum Learning Strategy. Quantum Learning strategy is powerful and engaging teaching and learning methodology that integrates best educational practices into a unified whole (Suryani, 2013: 54). In the classroom, the researcher implemented Quantum Learning Design and Quantum Learning Principles. Quantum Learning design includes: Enroll*, Experience, Label, Demonstrate, Review* and *Celebrate* (De Porter, 2005: 10) while Quantum Learning Principles include: *Everything Speaks, Everything is on Purpose, Experience before Label, Acknowledge every Effort, and If It's Worth Learning, it's Worth Celebrating* (De Porter, 2005:7). The Quantum Learning is an appropriate strategy to teach writing in the classroom. This strategy helped students improve their skills in writing by serving the supported stimulus every time they learnt. Besides, this strategy brought a joy to the classroom with new atmosphere. Therefore, this study was carried out to improve the students' writing skills in descriptive text through the use of the Quantum Learning Strategy.

Research Method

The type of the research was an action research study following Kemmis and McTaggart model in Burns (1999: 32) consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection with some modifications. This study focused on improving the real condition of the English teaching and learning process to reach the improvement of the students' writing skills. This research involved 32 students of Grade VIII A at SMP N 3 Sleman, Yogyakarta as the subjects of the research. It was conducted from 22 October to 13 November 2014.

The data of the research were collected through observation, interviews, a pre-test and a post-test. The observation was done by observing the condition and the activities of the teaching and learning process of writing during the action research. The interviews were also conducted to collect some opinions, ideas, comments and suggestion from the English teacher, the collaborator, and the students. The instruments were in the forms of observation checklists, interview guidelines, and tests. The data were in the forms of field notes, interview transcripts, and the students' writing scores. In addition, the assessments were done in the meetings of each cycle to know the students' progress after the actions were implemented.

The qualitative data were analyzed by using qualitative data analysis technique proposed by Burns (1999: 156) including assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building meanings and interpretations, and reporting the outcomes. Meanwhile, the quantitative data were analyzed by comparing the mean scores in the pre-test and those in the post-test by using SPSS 16.0. The validity of the data were fulfilled according to Anderson et al. (1994) in Burns (1999: 161) including democratic validity, dialogic validity, process validity, outcome validity, and catalytic validity. To obtain the reliability of research, time triangulation, theoretical triangulation, and investigator triangulation were employed.

Findings and Discussion

This action research study was carried out in two cycles. During the cycles, some actions were employed including teaching descriptive texts about people and place, implementing the Quantum Learning Design and Principles, making the students accustomed to opening a dictionary, arranging the table into semicircle, playing music, giving handouts to the students, and using LCD projector in teaching. The research findings and the discussion showed that the writing skills of Grade VIII A students of SMP N 5 Sleman improved through the use of the Quantum Learning Strategy with its accompanying actions.

The implementation of Quantum Learning in this research brought some successful improvements in the students' writing skills on descriptive text and the teaching and learning process. The improvement was achieved by using the Quantum Learning strategy which was defined by Suryani (2013: 55) as a learning activity in a pleasant atmosphere. The use of QL strategy gave much improvement towards the learning.

Giving freedom to do the task wherever the students wanted helped the students in stimulating their brain to produce creative ideas.

The findings of the research showed improvement in the student's writing skills. The stimulation given by the teacher to open the dictionary gave a good impact to the students. Their vocabulary mastery increased. Besides, each stage in Quantum Learning Design and Principles supported the students in writing especially in dealing with the context that they wanted to write.

All strategies in Quantum Learning did not burden the students and even Quantum Learning gave enjoyable and easy ways to learn the materials. This is in line with Suryani (2013: 55), stating that the implementation of learning model, which is conducive, enjoyable and challenging enables students to have activities to develop themselves based on the learning experience they have got and the creativity they have done, will be able to stimulate the learning interest of students in which in the end will be able to increase the achievement of their learning competence. Students having high interest will be more perseverant, more attentive and more serious in completing the activities as best as possible. In other words it can be stated that there is an influential interaction between the learning model and the learning interest to the achievement of learning competence.

The students were also more engaged in the lesson after the researcher played instrumental music. The students were more relax and could understand the materials faster than usual. This is in line with what Schuster and Schuster & Gritton (1986) states that music has a strong influence on the learning environment. Learning is easier and faster if the students are in a relaxed and receptive condition. This is also supported by Lozanov(1979) in DePorter (2005:73) who states that music helps students the condition of optimal learning.

The implementation of Quantum Learning model and the principles of Quantum Learning were giving many differences to the students towards the TL process. Based on the findings of this research, the framework of "*Tumbuhkan*" (enroll) and "*alami*" (experience) were effective activities to activate the students' background knowledge of the topic being discussed because they could brainstorm many ideas related to the topic based on their prior knowledge in order to transfer ideas into the writing form. This finding is in line with Zaid (2005) who states that brainstorming activity allows the students to make use of their prior knowledge or experiences. He adds that the students' prior knowledge is useful as a stepping block to new knowledge. The framework "*rayakan*" (celebrate) and the principles "if it's worth learning, it's worth celebrating" also made the students participate actively towards the lesson and more motivated. This is in line with DePorter (2005:93) who states that hold a celebration for students will encourage them to strengthen the sense of responsibility and initiate their own learning process.

Applying Quantum Learning strategy is one of the solutions that can be taken by the teachers. The application of quantum learning strategy will be much easier in

involving the student activities, so that it is expected that it can materialize the more conducive and enjoyable learning atmosphere compared to the Expository learning model which tends to be *teacher centered learning*, in which teachers have very dominant roles. The conducive and pleasant learning atmosphere is quite possible to increase the student achievement; in this case the student's writing skills.

Based on the quantitative data analysis, the result from SPSS Statistics 16.0 showed that the probability value (p-value) was 0.00. The result was statistically significant because the p-value was lower than the significance level (0.00 < 0.05). It means that the use of the Quantum Learning Strategy influenced the students' writing skill. Based on the quantitative data that can be seen from the result of the pre-test and the post-test, the students' writing ability improved. The mean scores of the students' writing test showed improvement from 64.5 to 75.05.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the Quantum Learning Strategy was useful to improve the students' writing skills and vocabulary mastery. This strategy also improved the teaching and learning of writing such as the students' participation and confidence and the classroom interaction. Therefore, it is suggested that the English teachers implement the Quantum Learning Strategy during the teaching and learning of writing.

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