

Improving the Writing Skills of Class VII B Students of SMP N 8 Yogyakarta By Using Picture – Cued Tasks in the Academic Year of 2015/ 2016

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Abstract: The objective of this research is to improve the writing skills of class VII B students of SMP N 8 Yogyakarta by using picture-cued tasks in the academic year of 2015/2016. The research is classroom action research. It consisted of three cycles. The writer applied some instruments to obtain the research data, i.e. observation sheet, interview guidelines, and test. The data from the observation sheet and interview guidelines was analyzed qualitatively while the test was analyzed quantitatively. Before doing the action, the writer conducted observations and interviews both the students and the teacher as collaborator. The writer found that there were some problems in the writing learning process. The students still have difficulties in making and developing idea in writing. Based on the situations, the writer offered picture-cued tasks to solve the problem in the writing learning process. Picture-cued tasks used to stimulate the students' written responses. It means by giving the students pictures, it will be much easier to them make and develop the ideas from the picture. There are three kinds of picture-cued tasks; they are a short sentence, a picture description, and a picture sequence description. After she conducted the action, she would hold a test to know the improvements of their writing ability. The results of the research showed that the use of picture-cued tasks was able to improve student' writing skills in each cycle. It was supported by the students' mean scores. In the first cycle found the mean of the score of the students' writing was 61,375. In the second cycle found the mean of the score of the students' writing was 67,375. In the third cycle found the mean of the score of the students' writing was 78. Moreover, the students were more enjoy in the writing activities than before.

Keywords : writing skills, action research, picture-cued tasks

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Introduction

Writing is one of language component. It is very important to learn. Among of these four skills, writing is considered as the most difficult skill because it combines many elements of English linguistics and social relations. Writing becomes one of the most important skills in studying English.

To write well, people must have good capabilities in writing. Someone who wants to write the essay or story must know the steps in writing process and aspect of writing. The writer must be able to organise the idea, to construct the sentence, to use punctuation and spelling well. The writer also must be able to arrange their writing into cohesive and coherent paragraphs and texts.

Based on the observation in SMP Negeri 8 Yogyakarta by the writer on August 7 2015, the problem arises related to writing skill that is the students have difficulties in word spelling, punctuation marks, dictions, and grammar. Based on information from the English teacher in SMP N 8 Yogyakarta, there are many problems faced by the teacher and the students in writing learning process. It can be seen from their grade. It happens because they face several problems when writing learning process . The students usually face unfamiliar words, grammar, lacks of vocabulary (they often open the dictionary).

Based on the reasons, the solution that the writer offered was to apply picture-cued tasks when teaching them writing. By using picture-cued tasks, they would consider that it is easier to get and develop an idea. Picture contain picture telling or illustrating someone, something, or somewhere. They guide students to explore and to generate the ideas to write.

Research Method

This research was categorized as classroom action research. Burns (2010: 2) explain that action research is a research in which in doing the research the researcher involves taking a self- reflective, critical, and systematic approach to explore teaching context. The subjects of this study were 32 students of grade VII B SMP Negeri 8 Yogyakarta. The research was carried out in the first semester of 2015/2016 academic year. In this research design, the data were in the form of qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data were obtained through classroom observation, interviews, field-note making, and photograph-taking, while the quantitative data were obtained through writing tests (a pre-test and a post-test). The qualitative data were analyzed using several steps proposed by Burns (1999) including assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building interpretation, and reporting the outcomes. As to analyze the quantitative data, the researcher used descriptive statistic to find the mean scores of the writing test scores. The validity of the data was established by fulfilling the democratic, outcome, process, catalytic, and dialogic validity, and the reliability of the data was obtained by applying time triangulation, space triangulation, investigator triangulation, and theoretical triangulation. Finally, the research

procedures consist of planning, action, observation, and reflection (Burn, 2010).

Research Findings and Discussions

The research findings show that the writing skill of class VII B students of SMP N 8 Yogyakarta improved through the implementation of picture – cued tasks.

Some suggestions for general strategies for using any pictures might be useful by Raimes (1983: 28) :

1. Whole – class discussion, which then leads to writing can be generated by many types of pictures such as posters, textbook pictures, magazine pictures.
2. To provide a student audience for student writers, give half the class one picture the other half another.
3. With students working in pairs or small groups, give each student of the pair or give each group a different picture to work with.
4. Real communicative tasks can be developed by using in the classroom pictures that the students themselves provide.
5. Do not limit classroom work to what the students can actually see in the picture.

Based on some benefits mentioned above, it can be concluded that most stimulants come through eyes; therefore, visual aids, especially pictures, play an important role for everyone who is learning a language. These media are very appropriate to support the learning process. So it cannot be separated from them because by missing it, the delivery of messages in the teaching-learning process will not perfectly be fulfilled. Pictures are effective media to improve the writing learning process in the school target.

This research was carried out in three cycles. During the implementation of the actions, the writer also used accompanying activities and supporting teaching aids such as pictures, multimedia, games, power point and reward which were useful and meaningful to provide in the class. They indeed played an important role in succeeding the process of the implementation of the actions. As the result, the implementation of picture – cued tasks was not only effective in improving the students' writing, but also the students' are very happy in teaching writing. The improvement occurred during the implementation of the actions can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1: The Improvement after the Implementation

No.	Before the Actions were Implemented	After the Actions were Implemented		
		Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
1.	The students felt so hard to organize the ideas.	The students did try to organize the ideas based on the picture – cued tasks (short sentence)	The students did try to organize the ideas based on the picture description.	The students did try to organize the ideas based on the picture sequence description.
2.	The students were lack of vocabulary mastery	The students still had some mistakes related to vocabulary. They got difficulties in building their ideas in English.	The students' vocabulary was increased in Cycle 2.	The students' vocabulary was more increased in Cycle 3.
3.	The students found it was difficult to construct the sentence.	Some students needed long time to construct the sentence.	As the students understand to construct the sentence based on the picture – cued tasks.	As the students got better to construct the sentence based on the picture-cued tasks.
4.	The students were not accurate in using correct punctuation and spelling.	Some students still were made many mistakes in using correct punctuation and spelling.	Some students were made a few mistakes in using correct punctuation and spelling.	Some students were made almost no mistake in using correct punctuation and spelling.

To support the results of the observation and interviews, a pre-test was done to gain the students' scores of writing skill. The test had been designed involving some aspects areas of writing skill namely the cohesion of sentences, word choice, vocabularies writing, the coherence of content, and grammar accuracy.

The mean score of the pre-test was compared with the mean score of the post-test. This aimed to find out if there was an improvement after implementing the actions. This quantitative data were used to support the qualitative data of the research. The students' mean scores of the pre-test and the post-test presented in the following table.

Table 2: **The Mean Scores of the Writing skill**

Mean Score	Pre-test	After cycle 1	After cycle 2	Post- test
	56,875	61,375	67,375	78

There was an improvement of the mean score in each cycle. The mean score increased from pre – test until post – test 21,125 points. In percentage terms it increased 37,14 %. This improvement showed the influence of picture – cued tasks to the teaching writing process. As the final reflection, the writer and the English teacher discussed the result of the research. Both of them agreed that the actions which had been implemented were successful to improve the teaching of writing. In other words, the objective of the research was achieved.

Conclusions

The implementation of picture – cued tasks objectived to improve the writing skill students. The actions were carried out in three cycles. There are three kinds of picture-cued tasks; they are a short sentence, a picture description, and a picture sequence description.

After conducting the action, the writing skill students of class VII B students improved. The improvement was also supported by the result of writing test that show the students' mean score increased from 56,875 to 78. In addition to the improvement in writing skill, there were some aspects that also changed after the implementation of the actions: 1) the students' motivation and interest increased; 2) the student were more enthusiastic in practicing writing; 3) the students' knowledge of vocabulary increased.

Considering the benefits and the results of the implementation of the picture – cued tasks, it is suggested that English teachers could implement this action in their teaching writing process to improve the students' writing skill.

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