

**IMPROVING THE STUDENTS' WRITING ABILITY BY USING
PICTURE SERIES AT GRADE VIII IN SMP PEMBANGUNAN
PIYUNGAN IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR OF 2014/2015**

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Improving the Students' Writing Ability b Using Pictureseries at Grade VIII in SMP Pembangunan Piyungan in the Academic Year of 2014/2015

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Abstract

Abstract: This research aimed to improve students' writing ability of grade VIII of SMP Pembangunan Piyungan by using a picture series in the academic year of 2014/2015. It concerns on how the use of picture series can improve the students writing ability in five aspects of writing (content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics). This study is classified into action research study. The qualitative data were obtained through the classroom observations and interview. The quantitative data were obtained through the students' writing performance in pre-test, post-test 1 and post-test 2. Based on the qualitative data, the use of picture series as the media in the teaching and learning process helped the students in generating and developing the ideas. By looking at the order of the pictures series the students were able to organize their writing better. By using games and picture series the students became more active and involved in the teaching and learning process. Based on the quantitative data, the students also gained significant improvement in their writing performance. In the pre-test the students' writing mean score was 52.36 and it increased up to 59.99 in the post-test 1. In the post-test 2 the students' mean score reached 73.02 which proved that the use of picture series as the media in the teaching and learning process improved the students' writing ability of grade VIII A of SMP Pembangunan Piyungan.

Keywords: picture series, writing ability

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan *writing* mahasiswa kelas VIII SMP Pembangunan Piyungan dengan menggunakan *picture series* pada tahun ajaran 2014/2015. Penelitian ini terkait dengan bagaimana penggunaan *picture series* dapat meningkatkan kemampuan *writing* siswa dalam lima aspek *writing (content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics)*. Penelitian ini diklasifikasikan ke dalam penelitian tindakan kelas. Data kualitatif diperoleh melalui observasi dan wawancara. Data kuantitatif diperoleh melalui hasil *writing* siswa pada pre-test, pre-test, post-test 1 and post-test 2. Berdasarkan data kualitatif, penggunaan *picture series* sebagai media dalam proses belajar mengajar membantu siswa dalam menghasilkan dan mengembangkan gagasan. Dengan melihat urutan *picture series* siswa dapat menyusun tulisannya lebih baik. Dengan menggunakan games dan *picture series* siswa menjadi lebih aktif dan terlibat dalam proses belajar mengajar. Berdasarkan data kuantitatif, siswa juga mendapatkan peningkatan yang signifikan pada hasil *writing* mereka. Pada pre test rerata siswa adalah 52.36 dan meningkat sampai 59.99 pada post-test 1. Pada post-test 2 rerata siswa 73.02 yang menunjukkan bawa penggunaa *picture series* sebagai media dalam proses belajar mengajar meningkatkan kemampuan *writing* siswa kelas VIII A SMP Pembangunan Piyungan

Kata kunci: gambar berseri, kemampuan menulis

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Introduction

Nowadays, in the globalization era, English takes part as a tool of communication in the universal society that helps people communicate with the ones from other countries. Indonesia, as a non-English speaking country, maintains English as a compulsory subject in school in order to produce students that are capable in using English. The goal of 2013 Curriculum is to prepare students to have life skills to be able to contribute in their country and universal society. It is quite similar with two of three goals of 2006 Curriculum that is reused in school now. Those two goals are developing students' communication ability in both spoken text and written text and building students' awareness about the importance of mastering English to compete in global society. Harmer (1998: 79) says that writing is a basic language skill, just as important as speaking, listening, and reading. Students have to know not only how to write written text but also how to manage their writing.

However, students of Grade VIII of SMP Pembangunan Piyungan still faced some problems in learning writing. Based on the observation, the students had a big problem in generating and developing the idea. The students also lack in grammar and vocabulary mastery. They also considered that writing was a difficult skill to learn that made them feel reluctant to write. In addition, the teacher did not conduct proper teaching and learning process whereas there were a lot of theories in teaching writing that the English teacher could relate to. The learning activity was monotonous. She also did not provide the students with suitable material and media. She used LKS in the teaching and learning process.

According to Harmer (2007), teachers' job in teaching young learners are to engage them with relevant material and to provoke intellectual activity by helping them to be aware of contrasting ideas and concepts which they can resolve for themselves, though still with teachers' guidance. At the same time, teachers have to strengthen students' self-esteem, and always be conscious of their need to identity. Teaching teens has a special and different technique. The teacher has to be able to adapt to teens characteristics and lead interesting teaching and learning process so that the students will not get bored and lose their attention span quickly in the class. Providing challenge but not overwhelming activities, doing discussion, and giving correction and feedback are some ways to raise students' attention span, self-esteem and learning achievement.

In addition, Nation (2000: 93-95) proposes four principles of teaching writing. Those principles are (1) meaning-focused input considers that the students need to bring their experience and knowledge to their writing; (2) meaning-focused output considers that students need to practice a lot of different kinds of writing with delivering the message on their writing; (3) language-focused learning considers that students need to be aware in writing process; and (4) fluency development considers that students need to produce writing in a reasonable time. Harmer (2007) also mentions three teacher's role in teaching writing; as motivator, resource, and feedback provider to guide the students in the process of writing.

Seow in Renandya and Richard (2002: 315) says that in teaching writing as a process, writing teacher has to construct the four basic writing stages (planning, drafting, revising and editing) and three other stages that a teacher has to bring to the classroom activity, namely, responding, evaluating, and post-writing. In planning or pre-writing stage a teacher needs to encourage the students to write and stimulate them in generating the idea. Then, in the drafting stage he directs the students to focus on fluency rather than accuracy. He also needs to give respond or feedback such as, suggestions and corrections. These feedbacks can be used by the students in revising their draft. In editing stage, the students have to be focused on correcting their grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. and preparing their final draft. In evaluating stage, a teacher has to be prepared with some aspects of competencies that will be measured or evaluated. In the post-writing stage, a teacher can announce the

result of the students' writing score, make conclusion, or share and provide them with feedback and suggestion.

The researcher choosed a recount text to be used in this research. The reason was that based on the 2013 Curriculum that recount text was one of the texts taught in the second semester in Grade VIII of Junior High School. The researcher decided to use a picture series as the media in this study since picture series has several benefits. According to Raimes (1983: 27), pictures can be valuable resources in teaching writing in ESL class. Pictures can provide four functions. The first is as a shared experience in the classroom that drives to a variety of language activities. Second is as a need for common language forms and vocabulary to use in the classroom. Third is as a variety of tasks that ranging from fairly mechanical controlled compositions, sentence-combining exercises, or sequencing of sentences. Fourth is as a focus of students' interests since everybody likes to look at the pictures and picture themselves can bring outside world into the classroom in a clearly concrete way.

In addition, Wright (1989: 201) suggests that cartoon strips and instruction strips of picture are very useful in teaching language, especially teaching writing skill. These series of pictures can be used to contextualize a story or a description of a process. For intermediate students, these series of pictures can help them in representing the people in the pictures, setting and the relationship between the picture and the words.

Research Methods

This study was an action research study and conducted from January to March 2015 in the second semester of the academic year of 2014/2015. The subjects of the research were 35 students of Class VIII A of SMP Pembangunan Piyungan. The researcher collaborated with the English teacher in conducting the research. This study adopted cyclical action research proposed by Kemmis and Mc Taggart(1998) in Burns (2010: 8) that consists of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection.

There were two kinds of data used in this research; qualitative data and quantitative data. The qualitative data were gained from classroom observation and interview and transformed into field notes and interview transcripts by using qualitative data analysis proposed by Miles and Huberman(1994: 10-12). The steps of analyzing qualitative data were data reduction, data display and drawing and verifying conclusion. The quantitative data were gained from pre-test and post-tests and transformed into writing score by using scoring rubric of writing by Jacobs et al. in Weigle (2002: 116). Then the mean scores of the students' scores in each test was compared by using Microsoft Excel program.

Findings and Discussions

In doing this research, the researcher acted as a teacher and delivered the teaching and learning process. The English teacher acted as the collaborator and observed the teaching and learning process. There were two cycles in this research. In the end of each cycle, the researcher conducted a pos-test to see and measure the students' improvement in writing. Before implementing the actions, the researcher conducted a pre-test to measure the students' writing ability. In this pre-test, the students were asked to write a recount text. Then, the results of the students' writing performance were analyzed and transformed into writing score by the researcher and the collaborator using scoring rubric of writing proposed by Jacobs et al. in Weigle (2002: 116). There were some actions that were implemented by the researcher in the teaching and learning process; 1) using picture series as the media; 2) providing grammar exercise; 3) providing vocabulary exercise; 4) giving prizes, and 5) giving feedback to students' writing. Some of those actions had successful and unsuccessful effect in Cycle 1. The implementation of picture series as the media successfully improved

students' interest in learning writing. Picture series helped the students in generating and developing their idea and put the event in correct order. However, the students still had limited number of supporting idea in their writing. This action was continued in Cycle 2 to gain better improvement in students' writing ability.

Providing grammar exercises combined with picture series and games raised students' interest in learning. However, the students still considered that grammar was a difficult skill to learn. They only focused on playing the game, instead of learning the material. Therefore, the students still had inadequate grammar mastery. In addition, Grammar exercises take too much time. Providing vocabulary exercises combined with picture series and games increased students' interest in learning. The students' vocabulary skill range widened. However, they still made frequent errors in capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. Giving prizes to the students successfully improved their interest in learning. Providing feedback to students' writing also improved the students' awareness and confident in writing. The students were able to know and study from their mistakes and errors in their writing. These two actions were continued in Cycle 2. Based on the result of students' writing performance in post-test 1, it can be seen that the students' improvement were not maximum since there were some obstacles found in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the researcher modified some actions that could improve the students' writing ability better.

In Cycle 2, the researcher combined grammar and vocabulary exercise and games to save the time. This action successfully improved the students' grammar and vocabulary mastery and increased their interest in learning. The combination between picture series and games also improved students' interest in learning activities. The researcher also provided the students with both oral and written feedback. Oral feedback was given to the students through classroom discussion and question and answer session to save the time. Through the implementation of some modified actions the students' writing ability improved significantly in Cycle 2. The results of the students' writing score are presented in the table and charts below.

Score	Pre-test	Post-test 1	Post-test 2
Mean	52.36	59.99	73.02

Table 2: The Comparison between Pre-test, Post-test 1 and Post-test 2 Scores

Conclusions

Based on the result in discussion session, several changes were found. Through the observation during the implementation of the action, it can be seen that the students' behavior changed. The students became active in joining the teaching and learning process. They were actively involved in classroom discussion and voluntarily answered the questions addressed by the researcher. From the result of the pre-test and post-tests, it can be seen that there are significant improvement of students' writing skills. In the pre-test, the students' writing score was only 52.36. Then, in the post-test 1 the students' writing score reached 59.99 and increased to 73.02 in the post-test 2. It proved that the use of picture as the media in the teaching and learning process improved the students' writing ability.

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