

IMPROVING WRITING SKILLS OF GRADE VIII STUDENTS THROUGH PICTURE SERIES

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Abstract

The aim of this action research is to improve the writing skills of Grade VIII students through picture series in writing narrative texts.

The study was conducted in two cycles from April 22nd 2017 until May 23rd 2017. Each of the cycles consisted of four stages which were planning, action, observation, and reflection. The first cycle was conducted in three meetings and the second cycle was conducted in two meetings. The subjects of this study were the VIII grade students in one of the public schools in the middle-southern area of Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta. The data of this study were in the form of qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data were collected from the observations and interviews. The quantitative data were gained from individual tests. The researcher used several instruments in the process of data collection including the interview guideline, the writing rubric, the field note, the observation checklist, the pre-test, and the post test.

The results of this study showed that picture series and supporting actions were able to improve students' writing skills in composing a narrative text. Those helped the students to develop the ideas and choose the vocabulary easily for their writing. The students also could compose sentences in the past tense and make their paragraphs well organized. Moreover, they motivated the students to be more active during the lesson. The significant improvement could also be seen on the results of the quantitative data analysis in the SPSS using a *t*-test and the average scores of the pre-test, the post-test Cycle 1, and post-test Cycle 2. The mean score of the pre-test was 44.02, the Cycle 1 was 56.44, and the Cycle 2 was 68.62.

Keywords: *writing skill, action research, picture series.*

MENINGKATKAN KETERAMPILAN PENULISAN SISWA KELAS VIII MELALUI GAMBAR SERI

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan menulis siswa kelas VIII melalui gambar seri dalam menulis teks naratif.

Penelitian dilakukan dalam dua siklus pada tanggal 22 April 2017 sampai 23 Mei 2017. Masing-masing siklus terdiri dari empat tahap yaitu perencanaan, tindakan, pengamatan, dan refleksi. Siklus pertama dilakukan dalam tiga pertemuan dan siklus kedua dilakukan dalam dua pertemuan. Subyek penelitian ini adalah siswa kelas VIII di salah satu sekolah negeri daerah tengah-selatan Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta. Data penelitian ini berupa data kualitatif dan kuantitatif. Data kualitatif dikumpulkan dari observasi dan wawancara. Data kuantitatif diperoleh dari tes individual. Peneliti juga menggunakan beberapa instrumen dalam proses pengumpulan data termasuk pedoman wawancara, rubrik penulisan, catatan lapangan, daftar periksa observasi, pretest, dan post test.

Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa gambar seri dan tindakan pendukung mampu meningkatkan kemampuan menulis siswa dalam menyusun teks naratif.

Penggunaan gambar seri dapat membantu siswa mengembangkan gagasan dan memilih kosa kata dengan mudah untuk tulisan mereka. Para siswa dapat menyusun kalimat dalam bentuk lampau dan membuat paragraf mereka terorganisasi dengan baik. Penggunaan gambar seri juga dapat meningkatkan motivasi siswa untuk lebih aktif selama pelajaran. Peningkatan yang signifikan juga dapat dilihat pada hasil analisis data kuantitatif pada SPSS dengan menggunakan T-test dan nilai rata-rata pre-test, post-test Siklus 1 dan post-test siklus 2. Skor rata-rata dari pre-test adalah 44,02, Siklus 1 adalah 56,44, dan Siklus 2 adalah 68,62.

Kata kunci: keterampilan menulis, penelitian tindakan kelas, seri gambar.

INTRODUCTION

English becomes one of the compulsory subjects to be taught in junior high school up to university level in Indonesia. In the English learning and teaching process, the students are expected to have the ability to communicate in English in the four skills of language namely; speaking, listening, reading and writing (Depdiknas, 2006). Those skills are bond to each other.

However, Richards (2002) states that writing is more complex and difficult to learn than other skills especially for foreign or second language learners. Students need to combine three other skills to make a good writing. Before writing, they have to collect ideas and information from different resources. From those processes, writing also can be considered as the final product (Wallace, 2004).

Brown (2001) defines writing as a developmental skill which needs the other skills and more processes of practicing. Moreover, Richards and Renandya (2002) elaborates that writing is not only to create ideas before those are given to the audience but also to assess the ideas and language we use involving some processes. At least, the processes cover planning, drafting, editing, and producing final version (Harmer, 2004).

In addition, Sparatt, Pulverness and Wiliams (2005) outline that writing involves several micro-skills that emphasizes accuracy and communication, and macroskills which are required for mastering responsive and extensive writing. Brown (2004) also advises that both students and teacher have to know six

microskills and six macroskills so they can be able to determine what they really need in writing.

According to the School-Based Curriculum (Depdiknas, 2006), the general goal of teaching writing in junior high school is that students are able to communicate in the form of written. In the discourse competence, the students should have the ability to understand or create written text. Then, they also must have the ability to create and understand various short functional texts and essays.

In teaching writing, teacher can use at least five steps of teaching writing which are demonstrating, motivating and provoking, supporting, responding and evaluating (Harmer, 2004). Besides, there are several approaches that can be implemented in the practice of teaching writing. One of those approaches is Genre-based approach or Text-based approach. Feez and Joyce (2002) elaborate that the concern of this approach is what the students do with the language based on the whole texts. They also explain that this approach contain five stages namely building knowledge of field, modeling of text, joint contraction of text, independent contraction of text, and linking to related text.

Based on the preliminary observation, there are some problems related to the teaching and learning process of writing. There are three major aspects which affect the success of teaching and learning process of writing. They are the problem related to the students, the teacher, and the media.

Generally, the students have different levels of English proficiency. Although they have different

background knowledge, almost all of the students have the same difficulties in the writing class. When the teacher asks them to write an English text, they tend to be confused because of the lack of ideas, vocabulary and skill to write. It also makes the students have low motivation in learning English especially writing.

From the teacher aspect, the teaching technique used by the teacher is rather conventional. The teacher normally asks the students to do some tasks in the course book or exercise book and rarely uses interesting media in delivering the materials. On the contrary, the teacher should not only demonstrate how to write, respond the students' questions, support and evaluate the students' writing but also motivates and provokes the students (Harmer, 2004). In motivating and provoking the students, the teacher can use interesting media and creative activities during the teaching and learning process which are aimed to attract the students and stimulate their ideas so they can write easily.

From the media aspect, there are several facilities such as LCD, projector, tape recorder and speakers to support the classroom teaching and learning process. However, those facilities are rarely used because in some classes they are already broken and or not provided. The use of media in the teaching and learning process is necessary. According to Briton (2001), media can motivate students to be more active in the classroom. Media also appeal to the students' sense and help them to process the information easily.

Based on the problems found, the researcher focuses on the problems which are related to the students'

writing skills and the medium use to support the classroom teaching and learning process. This research aims to improve the writing skills of Grade VIII students in narrative text by using picture series.

Hobson, as cited in Dunn and Finely (2010) says that pictures could be a compact and efficient units for students in their pre-writing because it offers the illustration for developing the ideas. Fu and Shelton, as cited by Dunn and Finley (2010), add that picture series help the students to illustrate the initial story ideas which help to promote their confidence, stamina, and writing skill. Moreover, pictures help teachers to teach better and students to learn better because pictures have the attribute to engage students because they are appealing resources for them (Uematsu, 2012). A picture also can be interpreted in many different ways and encourage the students to think 'outside the box' (Krcelic and Matijevic, 2015). From those reasons, this study can answer to the concern raised by Ghasemi (2013) that picture series can be a cohesive device in writing, especially for those who learn English as a second language.

Using pictures as media in the teaching and learning process indeed help the students to improve their writing skill. The previous studies conducted by Saputri (2014) and Eliya (2015) proof that using the variation of pictures could increase the students' motivation during the writing class. They became more confident in writing because they could express their ideas. Pictures are valuable media because they provide a shared experience, a need for common language form to use in the classroom,

a variety of tasks, and a focus interest for students. He also adds that the set of pictures provides guidance in vocabulary, sentence structure, and organization of the text which students going to write (Raimes, 1983). Therefore, the decision to use picture series as media in this study were expected to improve the students' writing skill in enjoyable way.

Based on research explored above, this study intended to improve the writing skill of Grade VIII students in one of the public schools in Wonosari through picture series. Moreover, the researcher also wanted to find out whether picture series were effective in learning writing narrative text among Grade VIII students' in that school or not.

RESEARCH METHOD

This action research consisted of two cycles. The researcher used Kemmis and McTaggart's action research model which were planning, action, observation and reflection. The study was conducted in a public school which is located in middle southern areas of Wonosari, Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta. It was carry out in the second semester according to the school's academic schedule. The participants of this study were the members of one class of Grade VIII. The class consisted of around 29 students and it was chosen by the consideration of the English teacher. Moreover, all of the students were natives of Javanese and Indonesian. They learn English as a foreign language. The data of this study were qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data were in the form of descriptions obtained during the observations and interviews. the

quantitative data were in the form of students' scores obtained from the pre-test and post-test. Some instruments were used to help the researcher to collect the data; observation checklists, interview guidelines, and writing tests. The qualitative data were analyzed by following some steps, namely assembling the data, categorizing the data, comparing the data, and building interpretation. The quantitative data were analyzed by using statistical analysis in the form of mean or average scores. To ensure the validity of the data, the researcher used democratic, outcome, process, catalytic, and dialogic validity. The reliability was enhanced time and investigator triangulation.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Before the implementation of picture series, the students had some problems in their individual writing. They had difficulty in developing ideas, using past tense, choosing vocabulary, and organizing their paragraphs. The students had low motivation towards the writing class. In addition, they were not aware about the punctuation, spelling and capitalized letters on their writing. Therefore, the researcher used picture series and the supporting actions to solve those problems.

Before the students started their writing, the researcher gave the explanation about the definition of narrative texts, the elements and the language features in order to build their knowledge of the topic. After that, the researcher used the example of narrative text as the model of the text for the students. In order to give the opportunities for the students to

construct the text examples, the researcher held the group and pair works. During the activities, the researcher asked the students to arrange jumbled sentences and paragraphs, and compose sentences in past tense based on the picture series. In addition, the researcher also gave the students an exercise in the form of revising the incorrect sentences on a narrative text before they proofread their partner's draft.

As the result, the students were more confident in writing a narrative text. They used more words and added some details story in their writing. By implementing picture series and encouraging the students to use dictionary in every meeting, they got more various vocabulary. The students also used the dictionary properly so they could minimize their mistakes in spelling. Then the used of the stages in writing in the individual activity gave the students the opportunity in composing better narrative text. In the planning stage, the students had more time to analyze the pictures and look for the suitable vocabulary in the dictionary. After composing the sentences in the drafting stage, the students did the reviewing stage. They were helped by their partner to check their draft. Finally, the students revised their draft and submitted to the researcher. During the process reviewing and revising, the students got the advantage to correct their mistakes in all of the writing aspects. The students also seemed to enjoy the writing classes and could understand the materials well. For those reasons, the researcher believed that the implementation of picture series and the supporting actions in writing

narrative text improved the students' writing skill.

From the results above, it could be concluded that the students made progress during the implementation of picture series in the Cycle 1 and Cycle 2. The media and the actions which were implemented by the researcher could make the students' writing skill improved. The use of picture series in writing a narrative text made the students easier to write a story. Picture series also could get their attention towards the materials given by the researcher. That statement was proved by the result of the students interview. They agreed that picture series were helping them in composing a narrative text. Besides, the similar findings were also found in the the result of the collaborator interview:

“C : The students had positive attitude towards the use of picture series. They also found it enjoyable and interesting.”

(Interview on May 20th 2017)

In addition, the researcher also conducted one Pre-test and two Post-tests during the study. The result of the students' scores was used as the quantitative data to support the qualitative data.

The results of the students' achievement shows an increase in all of the writing aspects. The significant increase was shown in mechanic aspect (Me) from the Pre-test to the Post-test of the Cycle 1 and the Post-test of the Cycle 2. The students' gained score was 2.27. It was obtained from the comparison of the mean score in the Pre-test and the Post-test of the Cycle 2. Following by the format aspect (Fo), the improvement could be seen from the students'

gained score which was 1.38. Then, on the vocabulary aspect (Vo), the students gained 1.41 after implementation of the picture series in the Cycle 2. The improvement was also shown in the fluency aspect (Fl) and the grammar aspect (Gr). The students gained 1.14 in the fluency aspect (Fl) and 0.90 in the grammar aspect (Gr).

To support the comparison of mean scores on each aspect, the researcher also analyzed the data by looking at the Paired Sample T-test.

Based on the result of t-test, the score difference of the pre-test and post-test was significant $p < 0.05$. In the table 1.2, the significance (2-tailed) was 0,000. It means that there was a statistically significant difference. It suggests that there was a change in the students writing scores in the pre-test and post-test.

The researcher also compared the average of students' scores showed the change from the Pre-test, Post-test Cycle 1, and Post-test Cycle 2 in the form of mean scores. In the Pre-test, the mean score was 44.02. It increased to be 56.44 in the Post Test Cycle 1. The mean score was getting higher after the implementation of picture series in Cycle 2. In the result of Post-test Cycle 2, the mean score increased into 68.62. The gain score from the Pre-test to the Post Test Cycle 2 was 24.60. It showed that there was an improvement of the students' writing skill.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study showed improvements after implementing picture series as media in teaching and learning process of writing. First, picture series were effective as

teaching media which engaged the students' interest and attention during the lesson. Second, by modifying the picture series into interesting variety of tasks, fun learning activities during the classroom learning process could occur in the classroom. It is because picture series provided visual help to the students to communicate ideas so the students could be actively involved in the classroom discussions. Third, the students became more motivated and confident to write because they could communicate their ideas easily so their writing skill was also improved. Furthermore, the use of picture series affected the improvement of the students' writing skills. Picture series could help the students develop ideas and choose vocabulary so they could write easily. Picture series also assisted the students to apply the appropriate generic structure and use simple past tense to write a narrative text. The application of picture series in the teaching and learning process made the classroom's atmosphere be more fun and interesting so the students could enjoy the lesson. Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of picture series could improve the students' writing skill.

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