

## Using Graphic Organizers to Improve the Writing Skill of IX Grade Students of SMPN 9 Yogyakarta in the Academic Year of 2014/2015

**Iqlima Mahmudah, Dra. Jamilah, M.Pd.**

**Abstract:** The objective of this study was to improve the writing skill of IX grade students of SMPN 9 Yogyakarta in the academic year of 2014/2015 through graphic organizers. This study was action research that was conducted in two cycles. Cycle one of the research consisted of three meetings, and cycle two of the research consisted of two meetings. The subjects of the study were 33 students of IX B class of SMPN 9 Yogyakarta in the academic year of 2014/2015. The data in this research were qualitative data and were also supported by quantitative data. The qualitative data were gained through observations and interviews. The data were in the form of vignettes and interview transcripts. Meanwhile, the quantitative data were gained through writing tests. This study used five kinds of validity, namely democratic validity, outcome validity, process validity, catalytic validity, and outcome validity, while to fulfil the reliability the researcher used investigator triangulation and theoretical triangulation. The steps of the study were planning, implementations/actions, observations, and reflections. The finding of this study was that the use of graphic organizers improved the writing skill of IX grade students of SMPN 9 Yogyakarta. The research showed that there was improvement on students writing skill in five aspects of writing, namely content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics of writing after the implementation of graphic organizer that was supported by other actions. Moreover, the students' improvement also can be seen from students' mean scores which increased from 62.88 in pre-test into 74.21 in post-test cycle 2. In addition, the use of graphic organizers was also able to improve students' motivation in writing.

Key words: action research, graphic organizers, writing skill.

---

### Introduction

Writing is one of the four language skills i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing. A simple view of writing would assume that writing is a graphic representation of spoken language (Brown, 2001:335), but the reality is far different. There are some aspects which differentiate speaking and writing that show the complexity of writing. The first aspect is formality. The second aspect is vocabulary. Writing is an important skill that needs to be learnt by the students. Having good English writing skills will give some benefits for them in their future life. In this global literate community, it is possible for the students to communicate with others in foreign countries. Since English is an international language, by having good writing skills will help them with their personal communication.

In order to achieve those purposes, the students should be able to communicate well in written language. A good written work is indicated by five aspects of writing. There are content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics of writing. In junior high school level, English is one of the compulsory subjects that has to be taught to the students. For writing skills, students are expected to write a cohesive and coherent composition, and they have to understand how to use the language forms from each text genre (procedure, report, and narrative). In fact, their writing ability is still low; students often face some difficulties in some

aspects.

The students' low writing ability indicates that they still find some difficulties in writing. It is difficult for the students to get and to develop an idea. The lack of vocabulary also contributes to their difficulties in writing. With regard to the condition, the researcher decided to conduct action research to solve the problems using graphic organizers. Graphic organizers are visual representation of knowledge. It is a way of structuring information, or arranging important aspects of a concept or topic into a pattern using labels.

### **Literature review**

Sakolik (2003: 88) stated that writing involves "a physical act" and "a mental act". Writing is a physical act since it is simply an act of putting down words or idea to some media. Writing as a mental act refers to the act of producing ideas, thinking about how to state the ideas and organizing the ideas into a good text. In addition, Sturm and Koppenhaver in Westwood (2008:56) explained that composing for writing involves complex thinking that must integrate multiple components including the topic or theme, choice of words, organisation, purpose, audience, clarity, sequence, cohesion and transcription. As the explanation above, it can be concluded that writing as one of productive skills is a skill in producing language through written composition involved multiple components, and it has function to communicate the message in it to other people.

A text comes from long process before it becomes a readable text. According to Richards and Renandya (2002:315), the process of writing consist of four basic writing stages, they are planning, drafting, revising, and editing. Meanwhile, Harmer (2006:4-6) divides the process of writing into four stages: planning, drafting, editing, and final version. Final version here is the product that is ready to be read by audiences. According to Harmer (1998:79), the reasons for teaching writing to students of English as a foreign language include reinforcement, language development, learning style, and writing as a skill in its own right.

In conducting the research, the researcher used genre based approach in implementing graphic organizers as the main action. Genre based approach also known as text based instruction is an approach that uses texts as a means of learning language. Richards (2005:40) stated that genre based approach sees communicative competence as involving the mastery of different types of text. English is one of the compulsory subjects that has to be taught for students in junior high school level. The aim of English learning in junior high school level is to make the students gain the functional level that is to communicate written and orally in solving daily problems. For writing skill, students in IX grade of Junior high school level are expected to be able to make a short essay in the form of procedure, report, and narrative.

Semester	Standard of competence	Basic competencies
----------	------------------------	--------------------

1	1) Expressing the meaning of written functional texts and simple short essays in the form of procedure and report to interact with surroundings.	1.1 Expressing the meaning of simple short written functional text accurately, fluently, and acceptable to interact with surroundings.  1.2 Expressing the meaning and rhetorical steps of simple short essays in written language accurately, fluently, and acceptable to interact with surroundings in the form of procedure and report.
---	--	--

A graphic organizer, also commonly referred to as a content or a concept organizer, a map, or a web, has been defined as a visual representation of knowledge. It is a way of structuring information, or arranging important aspects of a concept or topic into a pattern using labels (Bromley, Irwin-DeVitis, and Modlo, 1995:6). There are some benefits that the writer will get after implementing graphic organizers as visual pre-writing tool. The use of modified graphic organizers can arouse motivation and attract student's attention to writing class. They also can be used as tools to plan writing projects. Through graphic organizers, the students can explore their imagination and explore their creativity in writing. Next, they also can be used to help students in developing and organizing the ideas.

### Research Method

This research belongs to an action research. This action research consists of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988 in Burns (2010:8)). This research was done to improve students' writing skill through graphic organizers. The use of graphic organizers lied in pre-writing stage of writing process. This research was conducted in SMPN 9 Yogyakarta with IX B grade class as the subject of the research. The data in this research were qualitative and were also supported by quantitative data. The qualitative data are in the form of vignettes and interview transcript. Meanwhile, the quantitative data were in the form of students' writing scores. In collecting the data, the researcher used three techniques; they were classroom observation, interviews, and test. The research instruments were in the form of observation paper notes, interview guideline, and writing task. In analyzing the data, the researcher adapted the technique from Burns (2010:104-105). The steps in analyzing the data were assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building meanings and interpretations, and reporting the outcomes. The validity of the research was obtained by implementing democratic validity, dialogic validity, process validity, outcome validity and catalytic validity. The reliability of the research was gained through investigator triangulation and theoretical triangulation.

### Finding and Discussions

In implementing graphic organizers to improve students' writing skill as the main action, the researcher also added some supported actions such as allowing the students to use a dictionary, giving feedback to students' writing, and then scoring their writing task. In the implementation of the first cycle, the researcher found out that 1) The students could generate their ideas better than before. However, some students still simply put the brief information in the graphic organizer without developing it. 2) The content and the organization of their writing had slightly improved. However, some students still seemed confused in those parts. 3) The students' comprehension about the generic structure and language features of the text was better. However, some students still made mistakes in those areas. 4) The students needed

much information to complete the graphic organizer. However, they had limited information about the topic given in the task. 5) The group work was not really effective, only one or two students who did the task. 6) The use of dictionary during the learning process was very helpful. However there were many students who did not bring dictionaries.

Since the students still found some similar problems as they did in the first cycle, the research team members discussed the actions which would be implemented to solve the problems. Then, the team members decided to focus on the same action with some revisions. The planning of the cycle 2 was based on the reflection from the first cycle. The successful actions were continued and the unsuccessful actions were revised. Different from the first cycle, the team members planned to let the students' creativity developed well by drawing and developing their own graphic organizer into a report text. The researcher also decided to change the group work into pairs in the JCOT stage.

In the implementation of the second cycle, the researcher found out that the students got deepen understanding about writing especially report text. The students could extract the important information from the text they had read as a model before they started writing. Their jumbled ideas can be organized well through a graphic organizer. The content and organization aspects of their writing also improved a lot than before. The use of dictionary also helped them a lot in writing class. They could find the meaning of the unfamiliar words they did not know. When they started writing, they could use the dictionary to find the equivalence of some words in English. By experiencing this activity, their abilities in choosing appropriate words also improved. Overall, their vocabulary mastery had increased significantly from the first meeting to the last meeting of this research. The feedback given during the process of research also improved their writing ability. By experiencing this activity, they were more aware of their writing. Then they were more careful in writing, and also considered the grammatical rules and also the mechanics of writing. From the students' writing in post-test 2, it was known that their mistakes had decreased than before.

The improvement of the students' writing skills was also supported by the students' score. The scores were collected by conducting a pre-test, a post-test of cycle 1, and a post-test of cycle 2. The students' mean score of the pre-test was 62.88, while the average score of the post-test of cycle 2 was 74.21. Therefore, the students' average score increased 11.33.

## **Conclusions, Implications, and Suggestions**

The findings showed that the students' writing skills were improved after the implementation of graphic organizer in writing process. The students' improvement could be seen from the two kinds of data i.e. qualitative data and quantitative data. From the qualitative data, it was known that the students' writing skills was improved in some aspects. The use of graphic organizers could improve students' writing skill in generating ideas. The content of their writing was acceptable and relevant since they could develop the information they had in the form of graphic organizers easily. Their writings were also well organized than before. They also had more knowledge about report texts, the graphic organizer, and the grammatical rules of the text from the exercises given to the students. By studying various titles of report texts and allowing them to use a dictionary, their vocabulary mastery improved too.

There was also an improvement on the students' behaviour. They were more motivated in writing class and their involvement increased too. They were not shy anymore to ask to the teacher if they found some difficulties. Besides, in terms of quantitative data, the improvement can be seen from their writing scores. The scores were taken three times, in a pre-test, a post-test of cycle 1, and a post-test of cycle 2. The students' mean score in the pre-test was 62.88, and it increased to 68.40 in the post-test of cycle 1, and 74.21 in the post-test of cycle 2. The gain score from the pre-test to the post-test was 11.33.

## Implications

The implication of the study was that it is important to:

- a. choose appropriate media in writing activities,
- b. use the graphic organizers to help them in classifying and developing the information they have into good paragraphs,
- c. bring their dictionary to the English class,
- d. provide some relevant exercises and practices before asking them to write a text, e. give feedback on students' work,
- f. create friendly atmosphere.

## Suggestions

There were some suggestions for the teachers, students, and other researchers. It was suggested that the English teacher use and apply graphic organizers in teaching and learning process specially for writing skills. The English teacher may develop and explore more about the graphic organizers to adjust the materials and the students' needs and conditions. In addition, the teacher should maximize the facilities provided in school to support the teaching and learning process.

Furthermore, it was suggested for the students to continue writing by using graphic organizers as the clue to help them in develop their ideas in an organized way. They can modify the graphic organizers based on their needs. Moreover, they should maintain their motivation and their willingness toward English learning for their own benefits.

This research was conducted because the researcher found some problems related to writing skills faced by the students. The researcher has not solved all of the problems yet because of limited time and ability. So that for other researchers may conduct further research to solve the problems. This study can be used as an additional reference for them who want to conduct similar research.

## References

- Brown, H.D. 2001. *Teaching by Principle: An Interactive Approach Language to Language Pedagogy: 2nd Edition*. White Plains, New York: Pearson Education.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2004. *Language Assessment: Principles and Language Practice*. New York: Longman.
- Burns, A. 2010. *Doing Action Research in English Language Teaching: A Guide for Practitioners*. New York: Routledge.
- Bromley, K., Irwin-DeVitis, L., and Modlo, M. 1995. *Graphic Organizers: Visual Strategies for Active Learning*. New York: Scholastic Professional Books.
- Byrne, D. 1993. *Teaching Writing Skill*. London: Longman Group UK Limited.
- Ellis, E. and Howard. P. 2005. *Graphic Organizers: Power Tools for Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities*. The University of Alabama.
- Emerson, K. and Maxwell T.W. 2011. *Graphic organisers and writing performance: Improving*

- Hanson, A. 2002. *Visual Writing*. New York: Learning Express.
- Harmer, J. 1998. *How to Teach English: An Introduction to the Practice of English Language Teaching*. New York: Longman
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2006. *How to Teach English*. London: Pearson Education Limited
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2007. *How to Teach Writing*. New York: Longman
- Hyland, K. 2003. *Second Language Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lancaster, K. 2013. *An Examination of Using Graphic Organizers to Teach Writing: A case study*. Easter Illinois University.
- Langan, J. 2008. *College Writing Skill (Revised Edition)*. New York: Mc. Graw-Hill.
- Miller, A.S. 2011. *Using Graphic Organizers to Increase Writing Performance*. Master's Project. State University of New York at Fredonia.
- Richards, J. C., and. Renandya, W.A. 2002. *Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C. 2005. *Communicative Language Teaching Today*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Sakolik, M., Nunan, D. 2003. *Practical English Language Teaching*. San Francisco: The McGraw-Hill Companies.
- Sharrock, T. 2008. *The Effect of Graphic Organizers on Students' Writing*. Kennesaw State University.
- Sorenson, S. 2010. *Webster's New World: Student Writing Handbook: 5th Edition*: Wiley Publishing.
- Spratt, M., Pulverness, A.,, and Melanie, W. 2005. *The TKT (Teaching Knowledge Test) Course*. Cambridge: Cambridge ESOL
- Susilohadi, G. et al. 2008. *Contextual Teaching and Learning, Bahasa Inggris Sekolah Menengah Pertama/Madrasah Tsanawiyah Kelas IX*. Jakarta: Pusat Perbukuan, Departemen Pendidikan Nasional.
- Weigle, S. C. 2009. *Assessing Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Westwood, P. 2008. *What Teachers Need to Know about Reading and Writing Difficulties*. Victoria: ACER Press.