

The Use of Picture Prompts to Improve Students' Writing in Descriptive Texts

RATNAWATI,[✉]
SMP Negeri 5 Tambusai Utara

Corresponding Author: Ratnawati, E-mail: ratnawati197310@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This final project is about the use of picture prompts to improve students' writing in descriptive texts at the eighth grade students of SMP N 5 Tambusai Utara, Rokan Hulu in the academic year of 2021. An action research was conducted to find out in what ways picture prompts could improve students' writing in descriptive texts. The subject of this research was 31 students of eighth grade students since they got problem in mastering descriptive texts. I used some writing tests, field notes, and questionnaires in collecting the data. In this research I conducted two cycles consisted of cycle one and cycle 2. In cycle one, there were a pre test, three meetings for treatment, and a formative test. In cycle two, there were three meetings for treatment and a post test. The result of the data showed a significant improvement of the students' writing. The students' writing improved in all writing aspects including grammar, vocabulary, mechanic and relevance. The average results after conducting the research improved; pre test (57.58), formative test (65.00), and post test (81.13). Furthermore, based on questionnaires and field notes, it shows that the implementation of picture prompts made the students' behavior changed. They were more interested in writing descriptive texts. The prompts could ease their problem and helped them in revealing the ideas. Therefore, it can be concluded that picture prompts as learning media contributes to the improvement of students' writing in descriptive texts.

Keywords: : *Picture Prompts, Writing, Descriptive Text*

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INTRODUCTION

Among the four skills of language taught in school, writing is difficult to be learned and taught. Writing is not only drawing some words on a piece of paper and formulating letter together, but also a combination of process and product. It needs a specialization to combine an idea and good product of writing. In producing good writing, writers should fulfill some rules. They should master the terms of vocabulary, choices of word, paragraph organization, and grammar. This process of writing also needs some competencies and skill. This writing skill cannot develop naturally like speaking skill, but it needs to be trained and learned. Writing skill needs some practice and continuous training.

As one of the language skills that is taught in Junior High School, writing descriptive texts needs more attention because students get some difficulties in mastering descriptive text. When the

students write descriptive text, they should have imagination to gain idea, a skill of writing, and should also master some vocabularies. They also need to understand the sensory detail of the object that they describe. Moreover, they need motivation to keep them writing the descriptive texts.

In fact, when I did my observation in class eight, I found that the teacher emphasize more on reading skill through reading activities while the writing activities get less attention. Therefore, reading plays an important role in the teaching and learning process than writing. Additionally, most of the test items are based on reading passage. There are a few items only to explore the writing skill. Besides that, when I interviewed the students, most of the students of Junior High School comment that they have difficulty in mastering writing and they prefer comprehending reading to writing. Because students focused on comprehending reading, they got less practice in writing. They are not accustomed to write. As we know writing is a matter of practice. When students have enough practice they will get the ability to write. It influence the students in writing skill, they have less motivation in writing. They set aside the writing. It is proven when students were given homework to write, some students only copied from the internet. Some others only wrote few sentences and others not do the homework. It means that students are not interested in writing. Some students also complained that they are less practice in writing so they are not interested and prefer reading.

Based on the problems above, I focused on the strategy in the way of teaching and learning process that can make the condition in the classroom as effective as possible. Therefore, some teachers usually use picture to help students in writing, especially writing descriptive texts. Picture can help students to understand what they are going to write. Pictures provide them the information they see, tell about specific topic and help the students in writing. The use of picture is very powerful and has many advantages on engaging student's in task to flow. Picture can stimulate students to understand the sensory detail of the object. Some picture can be used to help student in writing. They are flash picture, picture cards, motion picture and picture prompts.

This study is an action research entitled —The use of picture prompts to improve students' ability in writing descriptive texts. This research was done with the purpose to make the teaching and learning process more enjoyable in writing descriptive texts. The picture prompts can help students to gain their motivation in learning writing descriptive text. The pictures include some prompts or clues, some information and explanation about the picture. It also provides us some vocabulary, some questions and clues according to the picture, so the students can explore their idea based on the picture. When they get stuck in writing, they can use the prompts to gain and explore the idea. Therefore, it can help the students in writing descriptive texts.

In this case, I chose a state school, SMP N 5 Tambusai Utara to do my research based on the consideration of the students' achievement. They always got low score in writing because in their class they only concerned on reading comprehension. Some students also have less motivation

in learning English. There are less media and games in the class, so they are not interested in learn English. Therefore, this research was done to help the students to increase their ability in learning English especially in writing descriptive texts for better achievement.

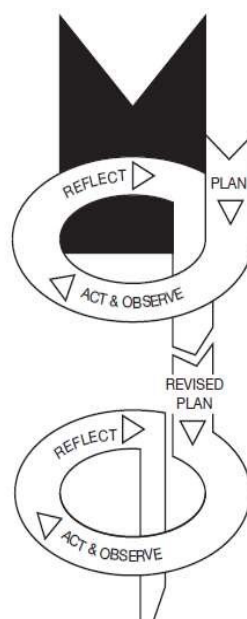
METHOD

Research is a formal and systematic application to study a problem. This study needs a systematic method called research design. This research design is used to predict and examine the problem of the study. In this study, I used classroom action research in order to solve some problems in the classroom through application of scientific method. Based on Burn (1993: 24) the major focus of action research is in the particular social and groups, it is only for particular classroom. The goal of action research as stated in Gay (1981:10) is to solve classroom problem through the application of scientific method and it is local problem and conducted in local setting. The action research is conducted to give solution of particular problem. Teacher will take a lot of part in this action research.

In this study, I used Kemmis and McTaggart's concept of action research. According to Kemmis and McTaggart in Burn, action research occurs through a dynamic and complementary process. There are 4 essential steps in this cycle:

planning, action, observation, reflection. Those steps cannot be separated. The action research model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart can be represented as a figure below:

Figure 3.1: Cyclical action research model based on Kemmis & McTaggart



They are two cycles in this research, in every cycle there are four steps: planning, action, observation, reflection.

3.1.1 Cycle 1

(a) Planning

The cycle begins with a series of planning actions in order to get optimal result. It was an activity in which a researcher needs to prepare before doing an action research. In doing this step, I prepare a lesson plan and picture prompts to teach descriptive texts. I continue to prepare the materials such as pre-test, first questionnaire, formative test, and field notes as the research instruments.

(b) Acting

In this section, the researcher implemented the plan, which was made in the previous phase in the field of research. The first thing I do in this stage is conducting pre-test to check students' current ability in writing. In this stage, before delivering some material to the students I give them a building knowledge and a game. It's called —what is it?. I will give them a clue and students will try to answer it. The game will be held in group of 4-5 persons. They will discuss it together. I also used round robin brainstorming to help the students understand the prompts.

After that I will show them about some picture prompt. I tried to gain students' attention by showing those pictures. I gave some pictures to each group and asked them to explain what it is in the picture. I asked them to try to describe what they see in the picture and give some vocabulary. Then, I will explain what descriptive text is. It covers the purpose, structure, and language features of descriptive. I gave them an example of descriptive text based on the given picture prompt. I put it into slides and give some parts of it as examples of generic structure and language features.

(c) Observing

In this step, I observe all the events or activities that happen during the study. Observation is needed to plan a further strategy or to revise the treatment in the next cycle. I observe the classroom atmosphere to know student's enthusiasm, response, and ability in doing exercise are observed. Field notes is used to guide me in judging students' behavior in receiving the materials and interacting in the teaching learning activities.

(d) Reflecting

It was a section in which the writer tried to inspect the students' progress in writing. I will analyze some problems that have not been solved. In short, the purpose of reflecting is to revise the plan for the next cycle. Then there will be cycle 2 in this research to revise the previous cycle.

3.1.2 Cycle 2

a. Planning

After analyzing cycle 1, the writer designed a lesson plan for cycle. Here, I tried to find out the solution of the problems arose in cycle 1. I create a lesson plan that has been modified to cover the weaknesses in cycle 1. Another picture I prepared to this cycle. I used more detailed picture with

some guided vocabulary and detail information about the picture. Wright (1989: 17) stated that the more detail picture and information in the picture, the clearer context which will be easy to describe. I prepared instruments to measure students' progress. They are the posttest and field notes.

b. Acting

In order to help the students understand the picture easily, I will guide the students to find the information at the picture and try to put it in a diagram. Students will write everything what they have seen in the diagram. After doing it students will do brainstorming. They will try to write it step by step. Students start writing their own descriptive text based on the given picture.

c. Observing

In this step, the writer tried to observe how far students understand the whole materials. This step is done by writing down the learning process during this cycle in the field notes. It was about the students response during the lesson when they have some pictures prompt. How they understand and respond the picture.

d. Reflecting

It was an activity to find out significant progress of cycle 1 and cycle 2. I analyze the result of the test. I compared the result of pre-test, formative test, and post-test. The non-test instruments such as questionnaires and field notes are used to find the progress of students including student's behaviour. All data are gathered, calculated and concluded to find out the students improvement

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the use of picture prompts to improve students' writing in descriptive text. After the research findings were discussed in the previous chapter, the conclusion of the research can be drawn from the analysis of the tests, questionnaires, and field notes.

The analysis during the treatment showed that the use of picture prompts could improve the students' writing skill. It could be seen from classroom behavioral activities and the quantitative description of the pre-test, formative test, and post-test. The improvement in the first cycle was a result of mastering the vocabulary and adjective in the descriptive text. It was delivered using clear explanation and round robin brainstorming method. Students were more enthusiastic using picture prompts and cooperative learning. Then, the second cycle improvement was in the students' ability in gaining their idea. The result of both cycle showed good improvement. The post-test gave a satisfying result in which indicated picture prompts are appropriate media to improve writing in descriptive text. The analysis of the questionnaires showed that the students got advantages from picture prompts to help them in writing descriptive text. The prompts helped them to reveal the idea and help them in gaining the idea. Besides

that, picture prompts could increase their motivation in learning writing because the pictures are attracting them, as a result, the class situation became more enjoyable when using picture prompts.

Based on the field notes, it could be seen that the students' behavior during the learning activities improved positively. Students who were passive in the first meeting showed their interest and enthusiasm after being taught with picture prompts. Overall, students became more enthusiastic, active, and cooperative during the lesson.

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Author Information:

Ratnawati:

Email ratnawati197310@gmail.com, SMP Negeri 5 Tambusai Utara, Indonesia.