

Conference Paper

Improving Students' Writing Ability in Recount Text Using Picture Series

Felix Ekarista

Master's Program Student, Fakultas Sastra, Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

Abstract

The objectives of this research are: (1) To know the class situation during the implementation of picture series in teaching writing. (2) To know the improvement of students' ability in writing recount text using picture series. The subjects of the research are thirty students of class X SMA N 1 Barusjahe. In collecting the data, the researcher used observation, interview, field notes, photographs and test. The tests were conducted before the action (pre-test) and after the action (posttest). The result of the research shows that there are positive improvements in students' writing ability and the class situation during the teaching learning process. The results of the tests improved, from the pre-test (conducted before the action) to the post-tests (conducted after the action). The mean scores of the test result are 56 for the pre-test, 66.74 for the post-test of cycle 1 and 70.2 for the posttest in the second, and the final post-test is 70.68. And also there are improvements in students' writing ability; (1) the students were more motivated in joining the writing class, (2) they paid much attention when the researcher explain about the picture series and (3) they were also more confident when they were asked to write individually.

Keywords: picture series, classroom action research, writing.

1. Introduction

Writing usually uses graphic symbols which are letters or combination of letters which relate to the sounds made in speaking. According to Donn (1988: 1) "writing is clearly much more than the production of graphic symbols, just as speech is more than the production of sounds. The symbols have to be arranged, according to certain conventions, to form words, and words have to be arranged to form sentences". In Christos and Mary Papoutsy (1998), writing skills could be defined as the creation of original text using the individual and linguistic resources, rather than copying someone else's text, using prepared list of words to create sentences or stories, filling in the blank or practicing handwriting. Further, Brainy (2003) also claims that writing skill is an important part of communication. Good writing skills allow you to communicate your

Corresponding Author:
 Felix Ekarista
 felixparopo@gmail.com

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message with clarity and ease to a far larger audience than through face-to-face or telephone conversations.

Barusjahe is a place of researcher field which is a district and village of Karo Regency. It is a major production centre for growing oranges, and for cut flowers. It is located in the east of Karo regency, bordering Merek District to the south, Simalungun Regency to the southeast, and Deli Serdang Regency to the North East. To the West is Tigapanah District. It is 16 km from Kabanjahe, and 101 km from Medan. It is located 1200 metres above sea level, and it has an area of 128.04 square kilometres. There are 19 villages within Barusjahe. The capital of Barusjahe is Barusjahe itself, which has a population of 1,991 as of 2007. Total population in 2007 was 23,188 in which 99% of primary-aged children attended school, and 94% of high-school-aged children. The populations in the sub-district are mostly Christians, being 1,470 Muslims, 7,655 Catholics, and 14,063 Protestants, as of 2007. Besides oranges, by far the most important crop, there is dry (*ladang*) and wet (*sawah*) rice production. There are also coffee, clove, chili, cabbage, pineapple, and green bean productions. There is no major industry in Barusjahe. The roads vary between paved and dirt roads.

In senior high school writing skills is one of the four English language skills in addition to listening, speaking and reading. Writing skills include productive, or produce other than speaking skills. Based on Indonesian syllabus for the X class (the first grade), it is said that *siswa dapat menangkap makna secara kontekstual terkait fungsi sosial, struktur teks, dan unsur kebahasaan teks lisan dan tulis terkait peristiwa bersejarah* (students can capture the meaning contextually related to social function, text structure, and linguistic element of written and oral texts related to historical event).

2. Literature Review

Bram (1995:7) says that writing means to try produce or reproduce written message, it should have something meaningful to convey. To put the messages successfully, the writer applies a number of writing strategies. According to Donn (1988: 2) writing is organizing the sentences into a text, into a coherent whole which is as explicit as possible and complete in itself that are able to communicate successfully with the readers through the medium of writing.

From the definitions above, it can be concluded that writing ability is capacity of someone to produce written message from words, into sentences, into text, into coherence whole where the readers can understand the meaning.

In Fenny and Muhammad (2015) teaching English there are four skills that must be mastered. The four skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Writing is

the most difficult skill because this skill involves the ability or mastery of grammar, vocabulary, and spelling. In addition, it also takes the ability of thinking, logic, the use of punctuation, and skills to concocting words into meaningful sentences. In the process of learning and teaching, students have difficulty in writing a recount text. The difficulty is because students have no idea to write so that difficulty in composing words and low understanding of students about the use of grammar and punctuation in a text recount.

For students in Senior high school, writing looks very difficult because the students lack of vocabulary and they do not have ideas on their mind, they do not understand English grammar and they also lack practice. Moreover, they have to express their ideas in English, in foreign language, rather than their mother tongue. They only will look their paper for many times without result. Based on the preliminary research done in January in the First grade of SMA Negeri 1 Barusjahe, the researcher found that there were some problems in students' writing ability: (1) The students' difficulties in generating ideas, (2) The students' difficulties in organizing text, (3) The students' difficulties in constructing past sentences, (4) They are low in vocabulary mastery.

Moreover, there are some problems faced related to the classroom situation; (1) Students uninteresting in writing class, (2) Low attention in teacher's explanation, (3) Students spent much time in starting task about writing, (4) Students made noise in teaching learning process.

To help students solved their problem in writing, the writer used picture series when teaching writing. Picture series make them easier to get the ideas. They do not need to imagine too long, that can waste their time. By looking at the picture, first, students can develop their ideas in less time.

Robert and Walter (2010: 5) say that Instructional media are "the physical means by which an instructional message is communicated". By this definition, a printed text, an audiotape, a training device, a TV program, instructor's talking, along with many other physical means are all considered media. In Brainy, Quote. (2003), picture is an image or resemblance; a representation, either to the eye or to the mind; that which, by its likeness, brings vividly to mind some other thing; as, a child is the picture of his father; the man is the picture of grief.

According to Wright (2005) there are five roles for pictures in writing. First, picture can motivate the students and make them pay attention and want to take part. Second, pictures contribute to the context in which the language being used. They bring the world into the classroom. Third, pictures can describe in an objective way or respond to subjectively. Fourth, pictures can cue responses to questions or cue substitutions

through controlled practice. Finally, pictures can stimulate and provide information to be referred to in storytelling.

The purposes of the research are: (1) To know the class situation during the implementation of picture series in teaching writing, (2) To know the improvement of students' ability in writing recount text using picture series.

3. Research Method

As a researcher, you will consider what method(s) might be most appropriate for answering the questions you want to investigate. Whether you are trying to get the basics of statistics and how to conduct statistical tests or use a statistics software package, looking to gain experience in using. When it happened in class activity, the method used in this study is classroom action research, Carr and Kemmis (1982) in Burns (1999: 30) states that action research is simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situation in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of this practices and the situations in which the practices are carried out. In this study, the researcher uses observational and non-observational techniques for collecting action research data (Burns, 1999: 79). Observational techniques are used to find out the situation of teaching learning process when the techniques is applied and the students' responses and feeling toward learning using the technique. Observational techniques used in this research are research diaries or journals, notes or field notes and photographs. While non-observational techniques used in this research are in the form of writing tests, and interviews. The quantitative data were analyzed by using statistical technique.

The research was carried out in two cycles. The researcher decided to conduct the first cycle in two meetings with time allotment of each meeting was 80 minutes. The first cycle was conducted in February 2012. The post – test 1 was conducted in 4th of February 2012. The second cycle was conducted in three meetings with time allotment 80 minutes. The post – test 2 was conducted in the 16th February. And giving the final post – test in 18th February.

4. Discussion

To know the condition of English teaching learning activity, the researcher conducted pre-observation in class XI IA.1 of SMA Negeri 1 Barusjahe before the action was done. In this pre-observation she found some problems of writing skill. The students had the problems in writing a text because they learned writing without using a good approach

and treatment. They were just asked to write a composition based on the topic that had been prepared in the text book. Sometimes, the students didn't understand the explanation about a text for example the generic structure of the text, purposes and the language features of the text. The researcher also gave questionnaires to the students about English writing in their class. Based on the questionnaires which were completed in by eight grade students of class XI IA.1of SMA Negeri 1 Barusjahe, the researcher found out some problems dealing with writing skill: (a) about 27% of students disliked English writing class, 5% students much disliked English writing, 53% had neutral attitude, and only 15% students liked English writing, (b) about 32% of students still found it difficult to generate ideas into composition. Only 15% students agreed that generating ideas was easy, (c) there was no student who agreed that writing a composition needs a short time. 53% still needed very long time in composing paragraphs.

From the observation done after to, the findings can be concluded as follows: (1) The positive improvement of students' attitude towards writing during the teaching learning process indicated that the students were more motivated and confident to write individually after saw the picture series and listened the researcher's explanation. Some students actively discussed the picture series in their own group; most students could start their task better without wasting time and got involved in their group actively, and some students focused on their task and sometimes asked questions to the researcher or their teacher in joint construction session. Meanwhile, few students still made errors in using appropriate words. (2) Improvements are seen in students' writings (the students could write a story with more detailed information, make longer paragraph with sufficient supporting details, organize their story better from beginning, middle and ending, finish their story until the end on time; the students could make some opening sentences in various ways better, make past sentences better and were more careful in constructing past sentences, change the verbs 1 into verbs 2 in correct forms and were able to use appropriate vocabulary better). In short, the students could write a narrative text better. Then, the comparison also showed that there was a significant improvement in students' writing skill.

Overall, the result of the research showed that there were some improvements. The findings of the result show positive improvements in students' writing skill and students' attitude towards writing in class. By doing more practices in writing using picture series, the students' writing skill could improve. They could write a story with more detailed information based on the picture series; they produced longer paragraph with sufficient supporting details. The students could get the ideas and inspirations to write a narrative text after they had seen the picture series and listened to the

researcher's explanation. The picture series gave them stimulus so that they could have something to write on their paper.

They could also make stories in good organization according to the generic structure of narrative text. The students could produce writing in well organized text consisted of orientation, complication and resolution. They start their writing with opening sentences in variety of ways in the beginning of the story, such as; "My family and I went to my grandmother's house in Yogyakarta last month"; "When I was in Junior High School, my father once took me to go fishing with him at the river on Sunday morning"; "After a year working in Australia, I finally managed to come back to my hometown last month. They could use word transitions (time conjunction) to make their writing systematic from beginning until the end of the story. The picture series could also guide the students to write the story in good order because they present systematically story line from the beginning, middle and ending. The picture series contain simple stories that can be easily understood by the junior high school students. By seeing the picture series and listening to the explanation which contain simple stories, the students can easily write a good story.

Besides, the students could apply the appropriate tense in their writing. In this action the researcher give the students enough opportunity to write, so that the teaching learning focused on writing skill. Through this action, the students could have more practices in writing narrative text using picture series. They could create a better writing than before, including in constructing the past sentences by using simple past tense. Some picture series present the narrator in past tense, so that it can help the students to use the appropriate tenses in their writing actively seeing the picture series and listening the explanation. By the action, the students were also able to use appropriate vocabulary. The students wrote correct spelling of the word used in their writing. The students could also change the verb 1 into verb 2 in correct forms. It could be seen in the students' worksheet in which the mistakes were fewer than before.

The class situation in learning activities before the action research was described as follows: some students were busy with themselves, especially the students at the back rows. They did some other activities when starting their writing such as talking with other students, day dreaming and drawing.

The improvement of the class situation shows that the students were more motivated and confident when they were asked to write individually by seeing the picture series and listening the explanation first. They did their writing without being asked many times and did not complain anymore. By seeing the picture series, the students could spend shorter time when they were asked to write and most of the students

could finish their writing on time. It is because the picture series could help them by presenting certain topics which can be written down. Besides, the positive improvement can be seen in the activeness of the students during the teaching learning process. Some students discussed actively about the picture series in their own group after they seen the picture series. The students also asked questions to the researcher and their English teacher in joint construction session. In other words, the students' attitude toward writing during the teaching learning in the class improved

TABLE 1: The Summary of Research Findings.

Sources	Research	Findings
TESTS:	Indicators of writing ability	Pre Post 1 Post 2 Final
1. Pre-test	Get the ideas	56 66,74 70,2 70,68
2. Post-test 1	Can organizing text	
3. Post-test 2	Can constructing past tense	
4. Final post-test	Get more vocabularies	
Observation (filed notes)	Teaching learning process using picture series	
Pre- interview	Students are more motivated and confident to write individually	
Post- interview	Students could write story more detailed information, easy to get idea and vocabulary also organizing text.	
Pre- questionnaire	Students were more motivated in joining the writing class,	
Postquestionnaire	They paid much attention in teaching learning process.	

Having analyzed the research result, the researcher is presenting the discussion of the finding to answer the research questions. The results of this research were satisfactorily improved in the terms of: (1) the improvement of students' writing ability; (2) the improvement of the classroom situation.

Practically the use of picture series is an appropriate teaching technique which can be implemented in the classroom. It also implies that during the implementation of using picture series in teaching learning process, there are some benefits for the students, as follows: (1) Picture series improve students' writing skill. Students learn about narrative text easily and enjoyable. By using the narrative picture series, they can easily know about social function and generic structure of narrative text. Picture series give them knowledge about certain topics so that they can easily construct and generate the ideas into a narrative story based on the picture series given. They can also arrange better paragraphs based on the generic structure of narrative text. (2) Picture series can improve the students' motivation. The picture series provide various materials that arose the students' interest to join the lesson from the beginning until the end of lesson. Therefore, during teaching learning process, they follow all of activities conducted in class well. (3) Picture series can improve the students' self confidence in English class. Especially in writing, the students are more confident when they are

asked to make a story after seeing and understanding the picture series because they get some stimulus about certain topics from the picture series they seen. (4) Picture series provide various materials which can arose the students' interest. There are so many picture series with an attractive pictures and story. By seeing and understanding the interesting picture series, the students will get interest and motivation in involving actively to the teaching learning process.

5. Conclusion

The research results show the positive improvements in students' writing skill and class situation. The findings are as follows: The first finding is the positive improvement of students' attitude toward writing during the teaching learning process. The students were more motivated and confident to write individually after using picture series; some students discussed actively about the picture series in their own group; most students could start their task better without wasting the time and get involved in their group actively; some students focused on their task and sometimes asked questions to the researcher or their teacher in joint construction session. Meanwhile, few students still made errors in using appropriate words. The second finding is improvement in students' writing skill; the students could write a story with more detailed information; the students could make longer paragraph with sufficient supporting details; the students could organize their story better from the beginning, middle and final part; the students could finish their story until the end on the lesson; the students could make sentences in past tense better and were more careful; the students could change the verb₁ into verb₂ in correct forms and were able to use appropriate vocabulary better. In short, the students could write a narrative text well. And it also can be looked from the result score of the students from the pretest (conducted before the action) to the posttests (conducted after the action). The mean scores of the test result are 56 for the pretest, 66.74 for the posttest of cycle 1 and 70.2 for the posttest in the second, and the final posttest is 70.68.

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