

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WEBBING CONCEPT TO IMPROVE SEVENTH GRADERS' PERFORMANCE IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT

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Abstract

Writing may be considered as the most difficult and complicated skill for junior high students. Based on the data obtained in preliminary study, it was found that the major problems students faced were on how to generate and develop ideas, to choose appropriate diction, and to write sentences grammatically and spelling correctly. Besides, the activities in class were dominated by arranging jumbled words or sentences, translating sentences from English to Bahasa or vice versa. It is because the inclusion of writing part in final examination (UAN). As the result, students' performance in writing especially descriptive text was very poor. Collaborative Classroom Action by Kemmis and Mc. Taggart was used to implement the webbing concept to 39 seventh graders at SMPN 13 Malang. Besides the implementation of webbing concept, interested pictures also used as media. The implementation of the action was expected to solve the problems. Furthermore, the action was conducted into two cycles and resulted improvement of students performance in writing descriptive text. The improvement was shown by student's mean score on content that could reach 28.8. Also, the students' mean score on paragraph organization improved to 21, 7 in second cycle. On language used, the students' mean score could reach point of 21.2. Besides, the atmosphere of the classroom became better. Students were more actively involved in the process of teaching and learning writing.

Key words: writing, webbing concept, descriptive text, picture, action research

Writing is considered as the most important language skill to learn. According to Troyka (1987), writing is a way of thinking and learning. It gives unique opportunity to explore the ideas and acquire information. Moreover, Saukah (2000:1) adds that in the teaching of writing, language input or materials can be derived from reading, listening, or speaking. As ways of practicing the language to develop the students' writing skills, the exercises given should be focused on giving as many opportunities as possible for students to practice using the language to share observation, information, thoughts, or ideas in the written form.

However writing is neither a simple nor quick activity. Each level of education has its own difficulties. Students mostly do not know how to start and develop their ideas into paragraph. According to Amal (2004), Wilujeng (2005), and Dini (2010), for the most learners in every level of education especially the students of junior high school, writing is considered as the most complex skill to master because it involves a lot of stages such as planning, remembering, writing, rereading, etc. It also deals with choosing the right words

and organization. Because of the complexity of writing, many people think that writing is difficult especially in English. The difficulties lie on the language components such as content, organization, vocabulary, and mechanics. It is in line with Byrne (1979:1), he defines writing is not an easy or spontaneous activity. Writing needs process: plan (deciding the topic), writing itself, and the process of producing final product. He adds that writing as an act of forming graphic symbol—that is letters or combinations of letters—that have to be arranged according to certain conventions to form words, and these words have to be arranged to form sentences. He further states that writing is not just writing one sentence or even a number of unrelated sentences. It is a matter of producing a sequence of sentences arranged in particular order and linked together in certain ways. Furthermore, he mentions three problems that make writing difficult for most students especially in junior high school level.

Firstly, it is psychological problem. Writing is essentially a solitary activity and the fact that the students are required to write on their own without the possibility of interaction or the benefit of feedback in it that makes the act of writing difficult. The second is linguistic problem. The students have to compensate the absence of some features in writing: they have to keep the channel of communication open through their own effort and to ensure, both through their choice of their sentence structure and by the way their sentences are linked together and sequenced, and the next they produce can be interpreted on its own.

Lastly, it is related to cognitive problem, writing is learnt through a process of instruction; they have to master the written form of the language and to learn certain structures which are important for effective communication in writing. They also have to learn how to organize our ideas in such a way that they can be understood by a reader who is not present and perhaps by a reader who is not known to them. Similarly, Axelrod and Cooper (1988:4) state that sometimes the hardest part of writing is starting, just writing the first sentence.

Those problems were also found on the preliminary study that was done in SMPN 13 Malang. The students mostly felt stuck in generating and developing their ideas in writing. When the students were assigned to write a paragraph, they usually said 'I don't know what I am going to write', 'what should I write about?', and 'how to start writing?' etc. They actually know what they want to write, but they are still confused to bring the ideas out from their mind. When the researcher gave them a model of text (a model of descriptive text) and assigned them to make similar composition based on the model and topic given, they just tended to imitate the model by only changed the subject and some related verbs.

Form the interview to the English teacher; it was found that the teaching and learning writing activities conducted in the class were monotonous and uninteresting. The teacher only gave a model of text without trying to explain more detail on how to write appropriately. In other words, the tasks for the students were likely imitating what the teacher carried out. Moreover, students' composition showed that their writing was lack of vocabulary and it was also organized badly. In terms of language used, students usually chose incorrect diction. In addition, writing activities also dominated by arranging jumbled words or sentences, translating English sentences into *Bahasa* or vice versa. These

activities were caused by the exclusion of writing skill in the final examination (UAN). Therefore, writing a composition was considered just as one of the assignments to be submitted as the students' score completion without considering the real students' writing performance in producing a piece of writing. As a result, students' writing performance was unsatisfactory.

Questionnaires also distributed to the students to know more about their attitude towards writing activities and their difficulties in writing a composition. It was obtained that more than a half of students in the class did not have interest in writing a composition. Besides, Most of them did not make any plans before writing. They were also not confident to produce a piece of writing since they had some serious problems related to idea development and organization vocabulary and grammar structure.

Therefore, it is necessary to do this study since it uses different way concerning on the implementation of webbing concept to help the students improving their writing performance. Axelrod and Cooper (1988: 367) suggest using webbing strategies to help them think about a topic. In making webs, they usually use key words—their private shorthand or code—to record material they want to remember. Webs also show possible ways materials can be connected and focused.

In this case, some steps are introduced to make webbing concept. First, write down a topic in the middle of a blank piece and then circle. The next step, draw a smaller circles around it. Write down examples, facts, or details in each circle. Then, draw lines to show the connection as one idea leads another. Finally, check that each circle really does represent a clear area that is in some way(s) different from the other areas relating to the main topic. Since webbing concept is implemented to help students generating and organize their ideas easily, it can be very useful to be applied in the prewriting stage. The students also do not have to worry about grammar and organization or try to make sensible composition out of his/ her webs.

Specifically, webbing concept was not implemented to improve students' writing performance in all types of text. Since the study involves junior high school students, the text type will be referred to 2006 English curriculum (BNSP, 2006). Those are descriptive, procedure, recount, and report. Each type has its own set of specific guidelines that writer or students must follow. Among those types of text, this study discusses further about descriptive one.

According to Ploeger (2000: 239), description is used to add details about something physical: a person, place, or thing by using sensory language, that is, words that appeal to the five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. To create the most accurate picture in reader's mind, the writer has to precise in the choice of words. What included in sight can be colours, shapes, styles, distances and depths, dimness and brightness, and movement. Sounds can be varying in loudness, pitch, and duration. Smells include stinky, fragrant, sharp, rotten, and musty. Tastes cover sweet, bitter, salty, or spicy. What can be touched are textures: tight, slimy, or bumpy. With adequate sensory details, the reader can create a clear and specific picture in his or her mind about topic that the writer wants to describe.

The generic structure of descriptive text includes identification and description. Identification mentions the object to be described, while the description explains about the

parts, the qualities, and the characteristics of the object. In writing descriptive text, the writer has to focus on the specific object. In addition, it usually uses simple present tense.

RESEARCH METHOD

A design of Collaborative Classroom Action Research (CAR) by Kemmis and Taggart in Nunan (1992: 18) was adapted to conduct the research. CAR has grown in popularity, and is considered to be an essential part of professional live (Gebhard and Robert, 1999). This is because it provides way of looking that helps people to reflect on the teaching. Gay (1987, in Marliasari, 2007:29) mentions that the purpose of an action research is to solve classroom problems through an application of a certain scientific method. It is in line with the definition and characteristics of CAR stated by Suyanto and Sukaryana (2001:15), CAR is a form of various activities as one of the efforts made by the teacher of practitioner which is conducted to improve an unsatisfactory condition or to increase learning community in the classroom.

Some characteristics of CAR includes: (1) it is done by the teacher; (2) it starts from the factual problem that appears in the teaching learning process; (3) there are some actions which are needed to improve the teaching and learning process; and (4) it can be done collaboratively. CAR is done in the form of cycles. It comprises four steps; they are planning, action, observation, and reflection. Those steps are done when the result of preliminary study is obtained.

The preliminary study covers the information obtained from the English teachers and the students of the grade eight at SMPN 13 Malang. The first data was obtained from the interview to English teachers. The information covers some important information needed by researcher for preparing appropriate strategy to solve the problems. The interview was started by asking question about the students' attitude toward writing activity (writing a composition) and the writing activities done in the classroom. They said that students' attitude toward writing activity in class was not really positive. The students just talked to their friends when the teacher assigned them to write a composition although at the end of the class all of them finally submitted their works.

Based on the result of the students' work, it was shown that the products of students writing was not satisfactory in terms of content, organization, and language use. The ideas in the composition were not clearly stated and there were insufficient supporting details for the main ideas. It is assumed that the students had difficulty in generating and developing their ideas. Moreover, the teachers explained that writing activities were mostly dominated by arranging jumbled sentences or words, translating English sentence into *Bahasa*, and practicing grammatical structure. The exclusion of writing skill in final examination (*Ujian Nasional*) became the consideration for the teacher to skip writing practice in class and replace it with listening and reading oriented activities. Therefore, the teacher usually just considered writing a composition as one of the assignments to be submitted as students' score completion without considering the real students writing ability in producing a good piece of writing product.

The second information was obtained from 39 seventh graders in class VII-D. To obtain the data, the researcher distributed questionnaires to them. The questionnaires were in the form of multiple choices so the students would choose one choice that represented

their mind. The data were students' attitude towards writing activities and their difficulties in writing a composition. In brief, more than a half students did not have interest in writing a composition. As ordered to the most difficult one, the problems were related to the idea development and organization, vocabulary, and grammatical structure.

Following preliminary study is conducting cycle 1. Planning would be the first step which aims at preparing the teaching schedule, instruments, lesson plans, materials, and criteria of success. English was regularly taught three times a week. However, the implementation of the action would be scheduled twice a week. Materials also were prepared in form of a model of webs containing information related to the topic and a model of descriptive text. Besides, instruments were designed to collect the data during the implementation such as coring rubric, observation checklist, and field notes. Additionally, criteria of success were set to determine whether the implementation of webbing concept was successful or not. The determination was analyzed based on two indicators—the students' involvement in writing that was analyzed based on the information obtained from observation checklists which were described in field notes and students' writing achievement that analyzed based on the scoring rubric. The minimum degree of achievement (*KKM: Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimum*) prescribed by SMP N 13 Malang curriculum was 69.

In order to get reliable writing scores, two raters were chosen carefully. The first rater was an English teacher who has had 10 years experience while the second rater was the researcher's friend from State University of Malang. She also conducted similar research concerning with students' quality in writing.

The implementation of action was took place after all preparation made. In this implementation phase, the researcher taught the class while the teacher was the class observer who record all data obtained during the implementation of webbing concept. During the teaching and learning process the researcher introduced webbing concept and explained the procedure of making webs. Since the researcher used picture of a famous person as the medium so the students could actively get involved to determine the topic. The researcher gave an example on how to fill the web with the information they got and asked the students to do the rest. After that, the students were assigned to develop the webs into a good descriptive composition based on the web they had created. In that situation, the researcher would monitor them and give them helps if needed.

Following the implementation of the action was observation phase. It was aiming at observing the implementation of lesson plan, whether it was well-implemented as its procedures or not. Some problems that were recorded in checklist and field notes that occurred during the implementation of webbing concept were observed. The students' writing performance that can be seen through their product was also assessed.

The last phase is reflection that aims at providing data for further revision and planning for the next cycle. The data were obtained the result of observation during the implementation of action. The data then compared to the indicator of success. If the data showed the successfulness so the action could be stopped. Otherwise, the researcher should continue the action in the next cycle if the data indicated the unsuccessfulness. In cycle two, the planning and the action would be revised to minimize all shortcomings that was found in cycle one.

DISCUSSION

Considering the fact that the criteria of success was not fulfilled yet in cycle 1, which means that the improvement was not really significant. This might be because the students had not yet fully understood the webbing concept. Therefore, the researcher decided to design the second cycle by doing some revisions and improvement in the implementation of the action.

Students' writing performance can be seen from their product. The quality of their writing improved from cycle to cycle in terms of content, organization, and language use. It was shown in the slightly increasing the mean score of their writing.

In term of content, the number of the students who were at level "fair to poor" decreased by 5.2% from preliminary study to cycle 1 and decreased by 25.6% from cycle 1 to cycle 2. The number of student who produced "good to average" writing increased by 5.2% from preliminary to cycle 1, and then increased again by 7.7% in cycle 2. However, there was no student who achieved the highest level or "excellent to very good" category in cycle 1. It was found when cycle 2 was conducted. There were 7 students (17.9) who could make a descriptive writing categorized "excellent to very good" level. The 0% of students who wrote "fair to poor" and "very poor" level of writing showed the most significant improvement.

In terms of organization, has also improved from cycle to cycle. The number of students who made descriptive writing categorized as "fair to poor" decreased 5.1% from preliminary to cycle 1 and 15.4% to cycle 2. While, "good to average" level of writing increased by 5.1% in cycle 1 but it decreased by 5.1% in cycle 2. Category "excellent to very good" could not be achieved by students in cycle 1 but it could finally be achieved in cycle 2 by 10.3%. As the previous one, there was no one produced descriptive writing categorized as "fair to poor" and "very poor" at the end of cycle 2.

Similarly, in terms of language use, none of student produced descriptive writing categorized as "very poor" and "fair to poor". However, it still could be found some of students who produced 'fair to poor' level of writing. It then decreased from preliminary study by 2.6% to cycle 1 and 46.2% to cycle 2. The number of students who produced "good to average" writing decreased by 10.2% from the preliminary study to cycle 1, increased by 43.5% to cycle 2. There was no student who produced "excellent to very good" in cycle 1 and then increased by 2.7% in cycle 2.

In brief, the result showed that webbing concept and the using of pictures as media were able to help the students to improve their writing competence. Webbing concept led the materials can be connected and focused. Also, the students indirectly were assigned to enrich their vocabulary.

The insignificantly improvement of the students' performance from preliminary study to cycle 1 could be caused by the students still had not fully understood on how to implement webbing concept in prewriting stage. The more detail explanation on the webbing concept use was given in cycle 2. When the students had better understanding on webbing concept, they could easily do assignment. Moreover, in the last cycle the students freely choose a picture of famous person they wanted to describe such as artist, hero, or their close friend.

The implementation of the action did not only increase students' performance in writing descriptive writing but also made the students actively involved or participated in classroom activity. It created better atmosphere in the classroom. Students paid more attention to the explanation, responded the instructions, and actively asked questions if they did not understand. They agreed that they got advantages when they use webbing concept to generate their ideas. Additionally, they were motivated and enjoyed the process of teaching and learning writing.

Based on the result, it could be said that the implementation of webbing concept not only improved students' writing performance in writing descriptive text in terms of content, organization, and language use, but also brought students' positive attitude toward the teaching and learning. It showed that webbing concept could be implemented to improve seventh graders' performance in writing descriptive text.

CONCLUSIONS

Several conclusions are drawn for the process of the research. Firstly, webbing concept could be implemented to improve students' performance in writing descriptive text and solved the problems of generating and organizing their ideas. Implementing it in prewriting stage helped the students improving their writing performance in terms of content, organization, and language use. Winterwood (1981) states that webbing concept is one way of generating ideas that begins with a key word, and that adds other words using free association. It was seemingly easy and practical to do. Moreover, making web concept before writing would relieve students' frustration and anxiety. It is because students have already had framework to start and refine their writing. Besides, webs also helped the students learned how to evaluate and make appropriate changes before completing the writing assignment since they could make as many revisions as possible until they thought that their web was ready to be developed into a composition.

Secondly, the action of the research conducted in two cycles. The first cycle was considered unsuccessful since the improvement was not really significant so the results could not fulfil the criteria of success. Therefore, the next cycle was done by revising the planning, and the implementation of the action.

The next, picture of famous person was also used as media. It was aiming to make students enjoyed and interested in writing activity. Therefore, the atmosphere created in the classroom would be better and more positive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In relation to the improvement of the students' performance in writing, it is necessary for other researchers or practitioners who are interested in this field to implement this webbing concept to teach other text types , such as narrative and recount to get more information about the strengths and weaknesses of it.

Also, it is expected to the next researcher to conduct a similar research in different level of education, such as senior high or the higher one. Other recommendation is to involve more than one teacher or practitioner to implement the webbing concept so that more insight and input can be obtained.

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