IMPROVING STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT THROUGH COLLABORATIVE WRITING

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ABSTRACT

Abstract

The main objective of this study is to know how effective the use of Collaborative Writing in teaching writing descriptive texts is. So this final project mainly aims at determining the effectiveness of using Collaborative Writing in teaching writing descriptive texts. This study was conducted under the consideration that the students often get difficulties in describing something. In order to achieve the objective of the study, the writer designed an action research. The population of this study was the second grade students of SMP Negeri 29 Medan. The number of the subjects of this study was 37 students. During the research, the students becoming the subjects were taught by using Collaborative Writing in teaching writing descriptive texts. There were two cycles in this action research. Each cycle consisted of four phases. Before giving treatments in those two cycles, the students were given pre-test. After each treatment in each cycle, the students were tested. And the last, they were given post-test and questionnaire. The main purpose of conducting it was to find out the validity and the reliability of the test as instrument. The result of this research showed that the students' ability in writing descriptive texts improved after a series of treatments given in the cycles. It can be seen by comparing the means of their tests. The mean score for the pre-test was 53.92, the mean score for test 1 was 70.27, while the mean score for the post-test was 80.08. It is clear that after applying Collaborative Writing in each treatment, the mean of each test improves and gets better. The use of Collaborative Writing technique is one of the ways to make students interest in studying English especially writing descriptive text.

Keywords: Achievement, Writing, Descriptive Text, Collaborative Writing

INTRODUCTION
Background of the Study

Writing is one of the important skills because it takes a part as an important communication tools. Through writing, everybody is not only able to express feelings and ideas, but also to communicate with others and have remembering facts and ideas.

Understanding the necessary of writing, Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP- Educational Level Unit Curriculum) as the educational orientation for most of the schools in Indonesia expects the students are able to write various types of genres. Based on KTSP for Junior High School, students are expected to be able to write at least five genres: narrative, recount, descriptive, report, and procedure in the context of daily life.

Even though most students have learnt writing English since primary school but most of them cannot write well. They frequently are being confused of what to write and how to start. This condition affects the students' achievement in writing descriptive text. It is needed some creative and engaged strategies to solve the problem.

Writing descriptive text is one of the problems in the students. The most difficult for them is how to describe a person or a thing since it has some rules to be followed. The students have to be able to describe based on the characteristics. Based on the observation, the writer found that the students cannot write it individually because they have different ability. They need to have a group or pairs discussion to share information each other.

The situation initiates the writer to conduct a research by applying collaborative writing as the method to improve students' ability in writing. Collaborative writing is a group work where the students write a text based on what teacher asked and then they

correct it one another. Collaborative writing is a powerful method of writing that encourages cooperation, critical thinking, peer learning and active participation toward an end product. It is meaningful interaction and shared decision making between members of a group using a common set of tools; and thus, the combination of techniques is effective in promoting improved students writing.

According to Mulligan and Garofalo (2011), there are four steps that will be conducted in this method, namely sharing information, writing first draft, correcting, revising, and evaluating. To apply this method, the teacher asks the students to sit in pairs. Then, they share information each other about descriptive text and the picture that has been given. After that, student A writes first draft based on their discussion and student B correcting it. Then, the revising will be written by student B. Finally it will be checked and evaluated by the teacher. Simply, these five steps really increase students' motivation to write since it makes all students to participate and gives appreciation.

In this research, the method will be applied by using media, which is picture. The media is needed in teaching writing especially in writing descriptive text. The media as the tool helps both teacher and students in conducting learning process. The teacher will get easier to describe the materials and the students will be interested in learning. So, by applying this method in teaching writing descriptive text provided by media, it is hoped that the students writing ability especially in writing descriptive text will be improved.

Research Question

The research problem is formulated as follows: Is students' achievement in writing descriptive text significantly improved if the students are taught by using Collaborative Writing?

The Scope of the Study

This study is focused on the application of Collaborative Writing in teaching writing descriptive text to the students of the second year of SMP Negeri 29 Medan.

The Objective of the Study

This study is aimed at finding out the improvement of students' achievement in writing descriptive text by using Collaborative Writing.

The Significance of the Study

The finding of the research is expected to be useful:

a. For the teacher, it is one of alternative method in improving the quality of teaching English writing particularly teaching writing descriptive text.

b. For the students, it helps them in improving their descriptive writing and developing their writing skill.

c. For those who are interested in this study, it will be the basic information how to improve students' descriptive writing

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Writing

Graham and Perin (2007: 11) state that along with reading comprehension, writing skill is a predictor of academic success and a basic requirement for participation in civic life and in the global economy. The purposes of writing are to express oneself, provide information for her readers, persuade the readers to do something as proposed in the writing, and create a literary work. Siahaan (2008:215) expresses writing as a psychological activity of the language user to put information into written form.

Descriptive Text

According to Siahaan & Shinoda (2008: 89), descriptive text is a text containing two components namely identification and description. The identification is to identify the object to describe, while the description to describe parts, qualities, and the characteristic of the part of the object.

Generic Structure of Descriptive Text

Gerrot an Wignell (1994: 208) say that the generic structure of descriptive text are:

a) Identification, to identify the phenomenon to be described.

b) Description, to describe parts, qualities, and characteristics of something or someone in detail.

Language Features of Descriptive Text

Language features of descriptive text are (Gerot and Wignell, 1994:204):

a) Focus on the specific participant

b) Using attributive and identifying the process

c) Frequent use epithets and classifiers in nominal groups

d) Use of simple present tense

Collaborative Writing

Collaborative writing is two or more persons working together to produce a written document. (http://grammar.about.com/od/c/g/Collaborative-Writing.htm).

According to (Hernandez, et al: 2004) collaborative writing is a powerful method of writing that encourages cooperation, critical thinking, peer learning and active participation toward an end product.

The practice of collaborative writing has fairly recently (in comparison to other, more traditional techniques) entered classrooms in response to the need of addressing

the issues of structuring, negotiating, and combining ideas in a written form (Grgonic and Raden: 2005)

Based on those explanations, it can be assumed that collaborative writing is a teaching writing method by involving students writing in groups, reading and talking about writing, and giving evaluation to the writing.

Collaborative Writing Procedure

According to Mulligan and Garofalo (2011), the procedure of applying collaborative writing as follows:

1) Students chose their partners themselves, and exchanged contact information to facilitate meeting outside of class.

2) In class, pairs brainstormed ideas about the target topic and organized the information into coherent groupings

3) Pairs arranged to meet outside of class to do research and information-gathering to support their paper.

4) In class, pairs did outlining, planning, and crafting of the first draft. Students were required to hand in a detailed outline before submitting the first draft.

5) The instructor handed back the outlines with pertinent comments

6) Work on the first draft commenced. Student A typed the first draft and completed a detailed checklist provided by the instructor.

7) The instructor checked the drafts, pointing out structural and organization errors, and providing comments and suggestions.

8) Work on the second draft commenced. Student A and B switched roles for this part. That is, this time Student B had to type the revision and Student A had to edit it. The second draft was then submitted

9) Students received a single grade based on their overall effort and the quality of their essay.

10) For the next writing assignment, if a student had been assigned the role of A, they then assumed the role of B and vice versa, to ensure fairness.

The procedures of teaching hortatory exposition writing by using dictogloss technique can be seen as the following:

Table 2.1 Teaching and Learning Activities

Activities	
Teacher's Activities	**Students' Activities**
Opening	
1. Teacher greets the students and checks attendance list. 2. Teacher gives motivation and brainstorming.	1. Students give respond to the teacher. 2. Students listen to the teacher.
Main Activities	
1. The teacher explains a little bit about descriptive text 2. The teacher asks the students to choose their partner. 3. The teacher gives one picture for each pair. 4. The teacher asks the students to search and to share information about the picture in pairs. 5. The teacher asks the students to make their own outline based on the information they found. 6. The teacher asks student A to write the first draft and student B will check it. 7. The teacher checks the first draft and provide by some comments and suggestions. 8. The teacher asks student B to write the second draft and student A will	1. Students listen to the explanation 2. Students choose theirs partner by themselves quickly. 3. Students pay attention to the picture. 4. Students search and share the information about the picture. 5. Students make the outline diligently. 6. Student A writes the first draft and then student B gives some comments and suggestions. 7. Students pay attention to the comments and suggestion seriously. 8. Student B writes the second draft and then student A gives some comments and

check it.	suggestions.
9. The teacher checks the second draft and provides some comments and suggestion for better result.	9. Students pay attention to the teacher and try hard to understand the correction.
10. The teacher asks the student to write the final writing individually.	10. Students write the final writing.
Closing	
1. Teacher motivates the students to improve their writing in descriptive text	1. Students listen and pay attention to their teacher motivation

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research was conducted by applying Classroom Action Research (CAR). It is basically a way of reflecting on your teaching. It is done by systematically collecting data on your everyday practice and analyzing it in order to come to some decisions about what your future practice should be (Wallace: 2001).

In addition, Sonora in Burns (2010:5) states that action research is research carried out in the classroom by the teacher of the course mainly with the purpose of solving a problem or improving the teaching/learning process.

While Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988) in Burns (2009:7) define that action research typically involves four broad phase in a cycle of research, the first cycle may become a continuing or iterative, spiral of cycles which recur until the action research has achieved a satisfactory outcome and feels it is time to stop.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that action research is a research which aims to solve educational problems and improve the educational practice by doing reflection.

Action research takes place in the teacher's own classroom and involves a cycle of activities namely planning, acting, observing and reflecting.

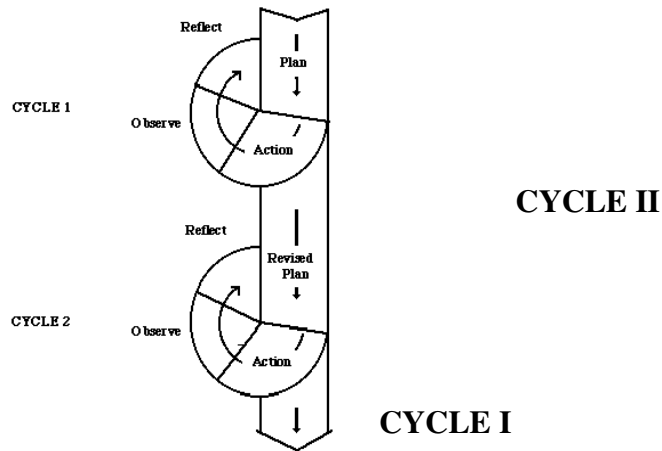The procedures of action research illustrated as follows:

Figure 3.1 Cyclical action research model based on Kemmis and Mc.Taggart

(1988) in Burns (2010:9)

1. Planning

   Planning refers to the proposed instructional strategy to be developed in the research to solve instructional problems.

2. Action

   Acting refers to the implementation of new teaching techniques and collecting data. Data collection could include by administering tests, observing students, and conducting surveys and interviews.

3. Observation

   In observing, the data indicating success and other instructional problems are recorded, the researcher will take a note of the process of action, the action's effects, environment, and some troubles.

4. Reflection

   Reflecting is the process of analyzing data to determine how far the data collected have shown the success of the strategy in solving the problem. Reflection shows what factors support the success of the strategy or what other problems may occur during the implementation process.

Subject

The subject of this research was the second year students of SMP Negeri 29 Medan, class VIII- 1 which consists of 37 students.

Data Collection

The researcher used written tests, diary notes, observation sheets, and questionnaire sheets as the instruments of data collection. The data in this study were analyzed by using qualitative and quantitative design. The qualitative data were taken from diary notes, observation sheets and questionnaire sheets, while quantitative data were taken from students' writing scores.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher took three writing test scores to show the improvement of students' achievement in their writing assignments from the score of the orientation test given before conducting the research and the writing tests done in the last meeting of each cycle.

The researcher applied the following formula:

$$\overline{x} = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

where:
  $\overline{x}$ = the mean of the students' scores
  $\sum x$ = the total scores of the students
  N = the number of the students

The students' scores increased from the first competence test to the last competence test. It can be seen in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Students' Writing Scores in Test I, Test II and Test III

No.	INITIAL	TEST I	TEST II	TEST III
1.	AA	50	60	78
2.	AH	68	80	88
3.	AN	60	70	84
4.	ART	50	68	85
5.	BCM	66	78	85
6.	DAK	41	60	68
7.	DP	45	60	75
8.	FBB	55	61	75
9.	FWS	53	60	75
10.	GRG	53	70	80

11.	GV	56	73	83
12.	HI	51	70	78
13.	IHL	53	75	86
14.	IS	56	73	80
15.	KFA	56	70	83
16.	KH	53	70	77
17.	KL	50	73	80
18.	LSD	53	63	73
19.	MK	55	70	80
20.	MN	48	61	73
21.	NIF	51	73	80
22.	NKK	62	80	83
23.	NA	48	68	80
24.	NP	45	68	73
25.	NS	57	75	85
26.	NV	66	78	76
27.	PP	61	75	85
28.	RF	67	78	85
29.	RR	45	70	83
30.	RTS	53	75	85
31.	SN	53	73	83
32.	SNH	50	70	80
33.	SNN	66	78	85
34.	SR	50	75	83
35.	YA	53	76	85
36.	WFO	56	73	78
37.	WRL	40	50	68
Total		$\sum x=1995$	$\sum x=2600$	$\sum x=2963$
Mean		$\overline{X}=53,92$	$\overline{X}=70,27$	$\overline{X}=80,08$

From the data above, it can be said that the mean of students' writing scores after studying descriptive text through Collaborative Writing increased from 53.92 to 80.08. Based on the data analysis, it could be concluded that all the students got improvement in their scores even though they got different improvement.

The indicator of successful achievement of students was that they got score up to 75. The researcher applied the following formula:

$$P = \frac{R}{T} \times 100\%$$

where:
- P = the percentage of the number of the students
- R = the number of those who get the scores.
- T = the total number of the students

In Test I, there was 1 student (0%) who got up to 75 point. In Test II, there were 12 students (32.4%) who got up to 75 points and in Test III, there were 32 students (86.5%) who got up to 75 points. The range of the first test (0%) and the third test (86.5%) was 86.5%. It had been proved that the applying of Collaborative Writing in teaching learning activity helped the students improve their achievement in writing descriptive text.

The writer also analyzed the qualitative data to support this research finding. The qualitative data were taken from diary notes, observation sheets and questionnaire sheets to know how Collaborative Writing could improve the students' ability in writing descriptive text.

The diary notes indicated that the situation of teaching and learning process was better from the first to the last meeting. The students were interested, enthusiastic, and active when teaching learning process was running. They paid full attention and did the assignments seriously.

From the observation sheets, there was significant progress that was shown in every meeting, especially in the second cycle, the students were enthusiastic, active and interested in studying. Their attention became better and their mistakes were decreased.

And then, the questionnaire sheets showed that most of the students' understanding about hortatory exposition text became improved by using Collaborative Writing. Based on the students' comments written on questionnaire sheets showed that Collaborative Writing could create their creativity in writing because they could elaborate the ideas provided by Collaborative Writing. The steps on Collaborative Writing helped the students write systematically and make them active.

Based on the results of quantitative and qualitative data, it was found that the use of Collaborative Writing had successfully improved descriptive text writing achievement.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

After analyzing the data, it was found that the students' writing scores improved from the cycle I until the cycle II. The improvement was shown by the mean of the students' scores from the first test (orientation test) 53.92, the second test (in the last meeting of cycle I) 70.27 and the last test (in the last meeting of cycle II) 80.8. The students' scores continuously improved in each writing test. The percentage of the

students who were competent in writing descriptive text was also improved, where in Test I, there was 0%, in Test II 32.4% and in Test III, the percentage was improved to be 86.5%.

From the data, it can be concluded that teaching descriptive text writing by using Collaborative Writing helps the students to improve their achievement in writing descriptive text.

Suggestions

This study shows that the application of Collaborative Writing improves the students' achievement on writing descriptive text. Due to the conclusion above, there are some points suggested as follows:

1. to the students, to use Collaborative Writing while writing in the class so they can write descriptive text easily.

2. to the teachers, to apply Collaborative Writing so that they can improve their students' achievement in writing descriptive text; and

3. to all the readers, may this research bring them into good understanding how to improve the students' writing ability through Collaborative Writing.

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APPENDIX

The Mean of Students' Scores

In Test I, the students' total score was 1995 and the number of the students was 37. The mean was:

$$\bar{X}1 = \frac{1995}{37} = 53,92$$

In Test II, the students' total score was 2600 and the number of the students was 37. The mean was:

$$\bar{X}2 = \frac{2600}{37} = 70,27$$

In Test III, the students' total score was 2963 and the number of the students was 37. The mean was:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{2963}{37} = 80,08$$

The Number of Competent Students

The percentage of the improvement of students' descriptive writing achievement in Test I:

$$P1 = \frac{0}{37} \times 100\,\% = 0\%$$

The percentage of the improvement of students' descriptive writing achievement in Test II:

$$P2 = \frac{12}{37} \times 100\,\% = 32.4\%$$

The percentage of the improvement of students' descriptive writing achievement in Test III:

$$P3 = \frac{32}{37} \times 100\,\% = 86.5\%$$