

IMPROVING WRITING SKILL OF THE EIGHT GRADERS THROUGH COMIC STRIP

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Abstract

This research was conducted in order to prove whether the use of comic strip was effective or not to improve the eighth graders of SMP Negeri 9 Palu in writing narrative text. The researcher used a pre-experimental research design. The population of this research was the eighth grade students and the researcher took Class VIII C to be the sample by using purposive sampling technique. The data of the research were collected by using test. The test included pre-test and post test. Based on the result of the pre-test and post-test, the researcher found that the t-counted was 7.41 by applying 0.05 level of significance with 27 degree of freedom ($df = 28 - 1 = 27$), the researcher found that the t-table value was 1.703. It shows that the t-counted value is higher than the t-table. In short, the use of comic strip is effective to improve the students' skill in writing narrative text.

Keywords: Writing, Narrative Text, Comic Strip

INTRODUCTION

The importance of learning English could be seen from the fact that most books on sciences are written in English and the students are supposed to comprehend those books. Language is divided into four skills, they are reading, speaking, listening, and writing. All of those skills should be mastered equally in order to master English. One of those skills is writing which is considered as one of the most important skill to be acquired. Writing becomes important to learn because by writing people can communicate indirectly, without face to face interaction.

Writing is a medium for communication by which students can express their ideas in written form. For students, the skill in writing is needed when they want to express their feeling or their daily activities such as writing letters, reports, and necessary tasks. Nunan (1988) states that writing is not natural activity all physically and mentally people learn to speak a language, yet all people have to be taught how to write. Similarly, Troyka (1987) argues that writing can create a permanent and visible record of ideas for readers. More

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specifically, Raimes (1983) asserts that writing is considered as a tool in learning due to three reasons. Firstly, in the process of writing, students are applying their knowledge of grammar, idioms, and vocabulary. Secondly, they have an opportunity to be exploratory with the language. Thirdly, they become very much involved with the new language.

Writing has some elements that are very important to be acquired by any writer in order to produce a good and concise writing product. They are vocabulary, organization, grammar and mechanics. But in this case, the researcher only focus on grammar and mechanics in her research. We can learn a language because there are a number of words called vocabulary. Vocabulary is essential in language instruction. It means that when we learn a language, of course we learn the vocabulary of that language. Napa (1991:6) defines, “Vocabulary is one of the components of language and that no language exist without words are signs or symbol for ideas”. Based on that definition, the researcher concludes that vocabulary is the total number of words, which exists in a language.

A good paragraph is made by a good organization. The organization contains many kinds of transition signal. The use of transition signal can guide readers to follow the ideas easily. Oshima and Hogue (2005) state that think of transition signals as traffic signs that tell the reader when to go forward, turn, slow, down, and stop. There are several transition signals used in writing paragraph: *first/first of all, second, third, after that, next, then, and last/finally*.

In writing simple paragraph, the writer should use the correct grammar with clear and right meaning in order to get right messages or ideas in the paragraph itself. Grammar is talking about structure/form/pattern of language. It is very important in learning writing skill. Swan (1998:19) explains “Grammar is the rule that says how words changed to show different meaning, and they are combined into sentences.”

The last element of writing is mechanics. Mechanics are particularly component in writing. According to Kane (2000:15), “In composition mechanics refers to the appearance of words, to how they are spelled or arranged on paper. Mechanics of writing covers punctuation and capitalization, and spelling.

Narrative has many definitions. Simply, it tells a story whether it tells a true story or fiction. Anderson (1997:8) states “narrative is a piece of text tells a story and, in doing so, entertains or informs the reader or listener”. Students are expected to retell familiar stories, develop sequel for stories they have read, write stories about events related to their own lives, and create original stories.

Comic strip combines art and writing. McCloud (1993) state that juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence intended to convey information and/or to produce and aesthetic response in the viewer. Sequences of panels are used to tell a story and show images. The things that make comic strip different from ordinary picture, there are plots of story that join the continuity of each picture, and then dialogues in the shape of balloon that pops above the head of characters. Comic strip is a combination of cartoon with a story line, laying out in a series of pictorial panels across a page and concerning a continuous character or set of characters, who thought and dialogues are indicated by means of “balloons” containing written speech. The comic strip form can be employed to convey a variety of messages.

As one of media that can be used in language learning, comic strips can be applied in writing class. In writing process, comic strips can help students to generate ideas. Generating ideas is important for the students because this is one of the steps in prewriting. It is difficult for the students to start writing because they cannot generate their ideas. Comic strip is a series of pictures that tell a story. The series of picture are really serviceable in teaching writing because they provide complete ideas to stimulate students’ imagination. The story in comic strips consists of the elements of narrative which is useful for students in pre-writing process where the students compose their writing. In the line with Wright (1989) who argues that comic strips are sequence of pictures which are related to a narrative text. In addition, comic strip helps the students to reach their vocabulary.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher formulated a research question as follows: *Can the use of comic strip improve the skill of the eighth grade students at SMP Negeri 9 Palu in writing narrative text?*. The objective of the research was to find out whether the use of comic strips can improve the skill in writing narrative text of the eighth graders’ at SMP Negeri 9 Palu or not.

METHODOLOGY

Pre-experimental design was used in this research. In this design, the researcher employed one group and there is no control group. This type of research was designed to verify that comic strip is an appropriate medium to improve the skill of the eight grade students of SMP Negeri 9 Palu in writing narrative text. The research design used was Arikunto’s model (2006:85) as follows:

O1	X	O2
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Where:

01: pre-test

X : treatment

02: post-test

Creswell (2005:145) defines “Population is a group of individual who have the same characteristic.” In this research the population that the researcher chose was the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 9 Palu. The population consisted of three classes. The classes could be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Population Distribution

No	Classes	Number of Students
1	VIII A	29
2	VIII B	27
3	VIII C	28
TOTAL		84

Best (1981:8) defines “Sample is a small proposition of a population selected for observation and analysis.” The researcher chose one class as the sample because only Class VIIC was available for the researcher to be sample of the research. The sample of this research was selected from the number of population by applying purposive sampling. Furthermore, the English teacher at SMP Negeri 9 Palu, recommended the researcher to conduct a research in that class because they had problems in learning English, especially in writing.

Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen & Walker (2002:35) point out “Independent variables are antecedent to dependent variable and are known or are hypothesized to influence the dependent variable, which is the outcome. The treatment is the independent variable and the outcome is dependent variable.” Based on the statement, the researcher took a conclusion that every research must have variables. Hence, in this research, there were two variables which were categorized into dependent and independent variable. Therefore, improving the skill in writing narrative text is the dependent variable and comic strip is the independent variable of this research.

In conducting this research, the researcher used observation and test as the instrument. The test consisted of pre-test and post-test. The pre-test was conducted before giving the treatment to find out the students’ writing skill while the post-test was used to measure and to find out the students’ writing skill after the treatment.

Table 2. Scoring System

No	Criteria	Score
1	Correct grammar, correct vocabulary, correct punctuation, and correct capitalization	5
2	Correct grammar, correct vocabulary, correct punctuation, and incorrect capitalization	4
3	Incorrect grammar, correct vocabulary, correct punctuation, and correct capitalization	3
4	Incorrect grammar, incorrect vocabulary, correct punctuation, and correct capitalization	2
5	Incorrect grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and capitalization	1
6	Every unanswered item	0

Adopted from Depdiknas (2007)

The researcher computed the individual score to analyze the gained data by using formula recommended by Purwanto (1991:102) as follows:

$$NP = \frac{R}{SM} \times 100$$

Where:

NP = students' score

R = score obtained

SM = maximum score of the test

100 = constant number

After obtaining the individual score, the researcher counted students' mean score. Therefore, the researcher used a formula proposed by Sukardi (2009:88) as follows:

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

Where:

M = the mean score

$\sum x$ = total score

N = number of student

Next, the researcher then applied a formula by Sukardi (2009:90) to find the mean deviation of the pre-test and the post-test difference from each student as follows:

$$D = \frac{\sum \text{Posttest}(X2) - \sum \text{Pretest}(X1)}{N}$$

Where:

D = deviation score

N = number of students

Finally, the researcher calculated the data in order to find out the significance between the pre-test and the post-test or the effectiveness of the treatment. The researcher used formula proposed by Sukardi (2009:91) as follows:

$$t = \frac{D}{\sqrt{\frac{\sum D^2 - \frac{(\sum D)^2}{N}}{N(N-1)}}$$

Where:

t = the value of t-counted

D = deviation score

$\sum D$ = sum of deviation score

1 = constant number

N = number of students

FINDINGS

In order to get the main data, the researcher gave a test to the sample of the research especially the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 9 Palu. Being the sample, the group was given the pre-test and post-test by the researcher, while the treatment was applied after the pre-test. In other words, after finishing the treatment, the researcher gave post-test to the students in order to measure whether the use of comic strip was effective in improving students' skill in writing narrative text or not.

The mean score of pre-test was computed by using formula as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} M &= \frac{\sum x}{N} \\ &= \frac{1276}{28} \\ &= 45.6 \end{aligned}$$

Furthermore, the researcher then calculated the mean score of post-test by using formula as follows:

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

$$= \frac{1695.9}{28}$$

$$= 60.56$$

Moreover, the researcher computed the deviation and square deviation of the students' score between the pre-test and the post-test. The result is presented as follows:

Table 3. Deviation of the Pre-test and the Post-test Scores

No	Initials	The Students' Score		Deviation (D)	Square Deviation
		Pre-test (X1)	Post-test (X2)	(X2-X1)	(D)2
1	OKT	33.3	66.6	33.3	1108.89
2	ALF	40	50	10	100
3	WIA	43.3	63.3	20	400
4	AIN	46.6	63.3	16.7	278.89
5	RDI	43.3	53.3	10	100
6	RFK	43.3	60	16.7	278.89
7	ARD	53.3	60	6.7	44.89
8	OCA	33.3	63.3	30	900
9	YSF	43.3	60	16.7	278.89
10	AND	40	70	30	900
11	RCN	46.6	46.6	0	0
12	BTK	70	80	10	100
13	KKT	40	46.6	6.6	43.56
14	LNE	46.6	53.3	6.7	44.89
15	CHT	33.3	56.6	23.3	542.89
16	SFR	50	73.3	23.3	542.89
17	RFI	30	56.6	26.6	707.56
18	AGN	60	60	0	0
19	WRA	56.6	83.3	26.7	712.89
20	CNT	30	36.6	6.6	43.56
21	NND	56.6	66.6	10	100
22	STI	50	53.3	3.3	10.89
23	SRI	46.6	50	3.4	11.56
24	VNA	60	60	0	0
25	RHM	70	80	10	100
26	JGJ	50	63.3	13.3	176.89
27	BDI	30	63.3	33.3	1108.89
28	RIA	30	63.3	33.3	1108.89
Total				426.5	9745.81

The researcher computed the mean deviation for the group as shown as below:

$$D = \frac{\sum \text{Posttest}(X2) - \sum \text{Pretest}(X1)}{N}$$

$$\begin{aligned} D &= \frac{X2 - X1}{N} \\ &= \frac{1695.9 - 1276}{28} \\ &= \frac{419.9}{28} \\ &= 14.99 \end{aligned}$$

Moreover, the researcher needed to analyze the data statistically in order to know the difference between the result of the pre-test and the post-test. The computation is presented as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} t &= \frac{D}{\sqrt{\frac{\sum D^2 - \frac{(\sum D)^2}{N}}{N(N-1)}}} \\ t &= \frac{14.99}{\sqrt{\frac{9745.81 - \frac{(426.5)^2}{28}}{28(28-1)}}} \\ &= \frac{14.99}{\sqrt{\frac{9745.81 - \frac{181902.25}{28}}{28(28-1)}}} \\ &= \frac{14.99}{\sqrt{\frac{9745.81 - 6496.5}{28(28-1)}}} \\ &= \frac{14.99}{\sqrt{\frac{3249.3}{783}}} \\ &= \frac{14.99}{\sqrt{(4.1)}} \end{aligned}$$

$$= \frac{14.99}{2.024}$$

$$= 7.41$$

DISCUSSION

In doing the research, the researcher focused on two elements of writing. They were mechanics and grammar. The researcher gave pre-test for the students to test their entry level in writing skill. The data collected shows the percentage of students' error in constructing grammar (71.42 %) while in mechanics (21.42 %).

After giving the pre-test, the researcher gave treatment to the students. In the process of treatment, the researcher taught the material about narrative text which tells a story, whether it tells a true story or fiction. In narrative text, students make a story created in a constructive format that describes a sequence of fictional or non-fictional events. Anderson (1997:8) states, "Narrative is a piece of text which tells a story and, in doing so, entertains or informs reader or listener". Students are expected to retell familiar stories, develop sequel for stories they have read, write stories about events related to their own lives, and create the original stories. The researcher explained that narrative text has generic structures. They are orientation, evaluation, and complication.

Moreover, the researcher, when teaching about the material to the students, used comic strip as the medium. Consequently, she found that the students got easier to understand the explanation about the material because comic strip consists of the elements of narrative expressed in the sequence panels of images.

Having given the treatment, the researcher finally administered the post-test to the students in order to measure their progress. Based on the result of the post-test, it is easy for the students to make narrative story of the comic strip. However, some of the students still make mistakes slightly in constructing the grammatical sentence correctly. The result shows the difference of improvement (14.99). It is also supported by the finding of the percentage of the students' error in constructing grammar (10.71 %) while in using mechanics (14.28 %).

The research about comic strip by focusing on grammar and mechanics in improving writing skill had been conducted by some researchers previously. Lutfifati (2011) becomes one of the researchers who elaborated the use of comic strips to improve the eighth grade students' ability in writing narrative text at SMPN 9 Malang. She used a collaborative classroom action research. The result of her research shows that comic strips successfully improved the students' ability in writing narrative texts. On the contrary, since the current

research is pre-experimental research, the researcher applied comic strip as a medium and focused the research only on grammar and mechanics. Consequently, the researcher found that the students were still confused to make a narrative story by using grammar and mechanics correctly. That fact was concluded by the researcher after finding the result of the pre-test and the post-test from the students. Yet, after applying the medium in the treatment, the researcher found that there is a significant difference between pre-test and post-test. As a result, the researcher concludes that comic strip can be considered as one of the effective media in improving students' skill in writing narrative text.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that the use of comic strip can improve the skill of the eighth grade students at SMP Negeri 9 Palu in writing narrative text. It could be seen from the mean score of the pre-test (45.6) and the post-test (60.8). It indicates that the writing skill of grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 9 Palu improved.

The researcher would like to suggest for the improvement of the quality of teaching English. Teaching and learning process can make the students bored without different techniques. By applying this technique in teaching writing especially narrative text, the students can enjoy, get motivated, get many ideas and stock of vocabulary. Moreover, for anyone who is interested to conduct a study in the same field with this study, it is better to find other effective ways to implement comic strip to the students. To create an effective teaching learning process of writing skill through comic strip, further study is needed to interview the students to find out what the students are interested in.

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