

IMPROVING WRITING SKILL BY USING FREE WRITING TECHNIQUE

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Abstract

This research aimed at finding out whether the use of free writing technique could improve students' writing skill especially in writing descriptive paragraph or not. The quasi-experimental research design was applied in this research. This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Pasangkayu. The population was the eighth grade students, and the sample was class VIIIB as experimental class and VIIIC as control class. The instrument of data collection was a test which was administered twice called pre-test and post-test. The result of data analysis showed that the t-counted (7.49) was greater than the t-table (2.021) by applying 0.05 level of significance and the degree of freedom (df) was 40. In conclusion, the use of free writing technique can improve the students' writing skill particularly in writing descriptive paragraph.

Keywords: Improving; Writing Skill; Descriptive; Paragraph; Free Writing.

INTRODUCTION

Talking about English language skills, there are two divisions of these skills that determine the level of the students' mastery of the language. Language skill is divided into productive skills and receptive skills. In the curriculum of Junior High School, KTSP (2008), receptive skills cover listening skill and reading skill while productive skills cover speaking and writing skill. Related to this statement, the receptive and productive skills are very important to be taught for all levels of learners from the elementary up to university levels. In writing, many of learners might express their ideas, feelings, thoughts, desires and experiences written to the readers and the listeners, but there are also the learners who cannot express them in written form. This is caused by the learners who still get difficult to develop all of them.

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There are several elements of writing, including grammar, paragraph organization, and vocabulary. Also, there are mechanics of writing which are necessary in making a good writing. Those are punctuation, capitalization, spelling, cohesion, unity, and organization. These things are very important to be mastered in supporting our writing to be a good writing. Considering those elements of writing, there are several obstacles in making a good writing. Those obstacles are they lack of material or knowledge to write, they lack of vocabulary in making writing, they lack of ability to organize paragraph, they lack of confidence for choosing a topic and developing their ideas. As a result, they get stuck in the process of writing. These problems happened in SMPN 1 Pasangkayu. The writer conducted the research in SMPN 1 Pasangkayu particularly the students at the eighth grade to improve their writing skill. In this case, the writer focused on some of writing elements, they are vocabulary, grammar, and paragraph organization in writing descriptive paragraph.

The writer wanted to improve these elements because those elements make many students get confused in writing. Also, the writer ever did an interview to the teacher of English in SMPN 1 Pasangkayu that the students' problems in writing are about lack of vocabulary, grammar, and paragraph organization. To overcome the students' problem in writing, there are many techniques that can be used to create a good class atmosphere and to guide the students to the material that being taught.

Gerlach & Ely (1980:187) argue "The effective teacher has a multitude of techniques and must be prepared to select the ones which will be most efficient in leading the learner to desire terminal behavior". This statement is supported by Elbow (1998), he states that the best way to improve our writing is to do free writing exercises routinely. It might do about three times a week for ten minutes later on perhaps fifteen or twenty. Related to this statement, the writer used free writing technique to be applied in teaching writing especially in writing descriptive paragraph. The writer concluded that the aim of this technique was to help the students to be easy to get ideas and to give motivation for students such as always practice even though it just spends several minutes. Through this technique, the writer expected the students to be able to have a new side of thinking about a simple way which might help them to write easily.

In this research, the writer taught descriptive paragraph to support the application of free writing technique. Wardiman, Jahur, & Djusma (2008) explain that descriptive writing appeals to the senses, so it tells how something looks, feels, smells, tastes, and/or sounds. A good description is a word picture. The reader can imagine the object, place, or person in his or her mind. Descriptive writing or text is usually used to help writer to develop an

aspect of their work, e.g. to create a particular mood and atmosphere or to describe a place so the reader can create vivid pictures or characters, places, objects etc.

Free writing technique means you write whatever comes to your mind and your feelings. It can take you a lot of places. Free writing is a prewriting technique in which a person writes continuously for a set period of time without referring to spelling, grammar, or topic. It produces raw, often unusable material, but helps writers overcome blocks of apathy and self-criticism. This statement does not mean the students will not care to the elements of writing, such as good organization, spelling, grammar, and vocabulary. The students must pay attention to the elements because those are the most important things to understand in making a good writing. This technique purpose is that the students will be given a freedom to write everything that come in their mind and they will be easy to get their ideas which they will share in a paper, and then they will be given the direction how to make a good writing like as the elements of writing. Hogue (1996:24) points out:

Free writing is a way to get ideas. When you free write, you choose a topic, and then you sit down and write whatever sentences come into your mind about the topic, don't worry about grammar, spelling, or punctuation, and don't worry about putting the ideas in order.

Some writers use the technique to collect initial thoughts and ideas on a topic, often as a preliminary to formal writing. Christenson (2002) states that free writing involves everything the student does before beginning actual task of writing, including background knowledge, generating ideas, and making plans for approaching the writing task. Getting started with a writing assignment, no matter whether the students assign or choose the topic, can be the most challenging part of the task for Junior High School students. It can also be challenging for teachers who want the students' experience to be positive, energizing, and constructive. Related to the statement above, free writing can become training or warming up for students in making writing in which very suitable with the beginner in sharing their knowledge in the form of writing. In this research, the writer asked the students to wrote down the sentence about whatever they wanted to wrote and the writer just remained to the students to give attention to the elements or the mechanics of writing when they are doing free writing exercises. Also, it offers a student center activity that can be very beneficial for writing class.

Brown (2001:350) explains:

You may follow these steps of how to make a free writing:

1. From your list of changes, choose one idea that interested you.
2. Write the idea at the top of a clean sheet of paper.
3. For ten minutes, write about this topic without stopping. This means that you should be writing something constantly.
 - a. Write down everything that comes to your mind.
 - b. Do not judge your ideas.
 - c. Do not worry about your spelling and grammar.
 - d. If you run out of things to say, continue writing whatever comes to your mind.

This process is called free writing. It is designed to help in writing free ideas that you might not realize. An important aspect of free writing is that you write without being concerned about spelling, punctuation, or grammar.

Clarkson (2009) explains several advantages of free writing technique, as follow:

- a. It makes you more comfortable about writing.
- b. It helps you get around your inner critic, the one telling you cannot write.
- c. It helps release inner anxiety.
- d. It helps you discover topics to write about.
- e. It helps you improve your formal writing.
- f. It is fun.

The writer chose the eighth grade students of SMPN 1 Pasangkayu as the sample of this research because she wanted to help them to solve their problems in writing. Besides, she also wanted to prove whether students' skill in writing descriptive paragraph, covering paragraph organization, grammar, and vocabulary by using free writing technique could be improved or not. Then, the researcher formulated the problem statement as follows: *Can the use of free writing technique improve writing skill at the eighth grade students of SMPN 1 Pasangkayu?* It was to verify that free writing technique could improve writing skill at the eighth grade students of SMPN 1 Pasangkayu.

METHODOLOGY

The writer applied quasi experimental research design. The sample consisted of two classes: experimental and control class. The writer gave pre-test and post-test to both classes, but treatment was applied only to the experimental class. Then control class was

taught by using the conventional material. The design of this research is proposed by Hatch and Farhady (1982:22) as follows:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} G_1 = T_1 & X & T_2 \\ G_2 = T_1 & & T_2 \end{array}$$

Where:

G_1 = experimental class

G_2 = control class

T_1 = pre test for experimental/control class

T_2 = post test for experimental/control class

X = treatment

The population of this research was the eighth grade students of SMPN 1 Pasangkayu. Population is very important for the research because it could be a tool to support her research. Gay (1996:112) describes “The population is the group of interest to the writer, the group to which she or he would like the results of the study to generalizable”. Related to the statement above, the writer took the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Pasangkayu as the population. The research was supported by having sample. It consists of five parallel classes. They are VIIIA, VIIIB, VIIC, VIID and VIIE. Each class consists of 21 up to 22 students. The total number of the population is 107.

In this study, she used two variables presented. They were dependent and independent variables. The dependent variable was the students’ writing skill in descriptive paragraph. Meanwhile, independent variable was the use of free writing technique.

The writer used one kind of research instrument to collect the data, namely test. The test consisted of pre-test and post-test. Pre-test was the test given to the students to measure the students’ pre-ability. It was conducted before treatment given while post-test was the test given to the students by the writer to measure the students’ ability after getting the treatment. The test was used to measure the students’ skill in writing descriptive paragraph.

Before conducting the treatment, the writer administered a pre-test to measure their ability in understanding about descriptive paragraph. The pre-test was about writing a descriptive paragraph. The writer gave a picture and some clues/key words and asked the students to construct them into a paragraph based on the picture and clues given. The students had to do this test individually. The scoring system was presented in the following table:

Table 1
Scoring Rubric of Writing

No	Writing Elements	Score	Explanation
1.	Organization	3	Overall shape and internal pattern clear. Organizational skills adequately controlled.
		2	Some organizational skills in evidence, but not adequately controlled.
		1	Very little organization of content. Underlying structure not sufficiently controlled.
		0	No apparent organization of content.
2.	Vocabulary	3	Almost no inadequacies in vocabulary for task. Only rare inappropriacies and/or circumlocution.
		2	Frequent inadequacies in vocabulary for the task. Perhaps frequent lexical inappropriacies and/or circumlocution.
		1	Frequent inadequacies in vocabulary for the task. Perhaps frequent lexical inappropriacies and/or repetition.
		0	Vocabulary inadequate even for the most basic parts of the intended communication.
3.	Grammar	3	Almost no grammatical inaccuracies.
		2	Some grammatical inaccuracies.
		1	Frequent grammatical inaccuracies.
		0	Almost all grammatical patterns inaccurate.

Adapted from Assessing Writing by Weir in Weigle, C.S (2002)

After giving pre-test to the students, the writer applied her treatment. It would be given to the experimental class only. The writer would give eight meetings for the treatment and 2 meetings for test (pre-test/post-test). In control class, the students did not get treatment of the application of free writing technique as what the experimental class got, they were given the materials from the book only. It refers to material about descriptive paragraph.

In order to assess the progress of the students' writing skill after the treatment, the writer gave post-test at the last meeting. The post-test was designed in the same form as the pre-test.

To know the ability of students, the writer firstly computed the individual score by using the formula by Purwanto in Muriadi (2011: 25) as follows:

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

Where:

NP = the percentage of students score
R = obtain score
SM = maximum score

Then the writer computed the mean score of students by using the formula proposed by Hatch and Farhady (1982:55) as follows:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

Where:

\bar{x} = average scores
 $\sum X$ = value achieved
N = total number of students

After getting the mean score of both experimental and control class, the writer computed the mean score of the deviation. The writer used a formula proposed by Arikunto (2006:312) as follows:

1. The formula used for experimental class:

$$\sum x^2 = \sum x^2 - \frac{(\sum x)^2}{N}$$

2. The formula used for control class:

$$\sum y^2 = \sum y^2 - \frac{(\sum y)^2}{N}$$

The last, the writer analyzed the data to know the significant difference or testing hypothesis by using t-count formula as proposed by Arikunto (2006:311) as follow:

$$t = \frac{M_x - M_y}{\sqrt{\left(\frac{\sum x^2 + \sum y^2}{N_x + N_y - 2} \right) \left(\frac{1}{N_x} + \frac{1}{N_y} \right)}}$$

Where:

t = significance difference between experimental and control class

M_x = mean score of deviation of experimental class

M_y = mean score of deviation of control class

$\sum x^2$ = sum of square deviation of experimental class

$\sum y^2$ = sum of square deviation of control class

N_x = number of students in experimental class

N_y = number of students in control class

FINDINGS

The data from pre-test and post-test were analyzed statistically. The writer gave the pre-test and post-test to experimental and control class. The aim of the test was to measure the students' skill in writing descriptive paragraph. The result of both classes can be seen in the following tables:

Table 2

The Deviation of Pre-Test and Post-Test Score of Experimental Class

No	Initials	Students' Score		Deviation ($X_2 - X_1$)	X^2
		Pre-test (X_1)	Post-test (X_2)		
1	NML	44.44	88.89	44.45	1975.80
2	INB	33.33	88.89	55.56	3086.91
3	MA	55.55	88.89	33.34	1111.55
4	SRY	11.11	66.67	55.56	3086.91
5	ND	11.11	88.89	77.78	6049.73
6	MDH	55.55	66.67	11.12	123.65
7	SNR	44.44	77.78	33.34	1111.55
8	FKR	44.44	88.89	44.45	1975.80
9	NA	11.11	88.89	77.78	6049.73
10	SP	11.11	77.78	66.67	4444.89
11	NB	66.67	88.89	22.22	493.73
12	SMG	22.22	88.89	66.67	4444.89
13	DHA	55.55	88.89	33.34	1111.55
14	RA	22.22	55.55	33.33	1110.89
15	ITH	55.55	88.89	33.34	1111.55
16	RSN	0	77.78	77.78	6049.73
17	NES	44.44	88.89	44.45	1975.80
18	SW	11.11	77.78	66.67	4444.89
19	NMM	55.55	88.89	33.34	1111.55
20	MJ	44.44	77.78	33.34	1111.55
21	STK	33.33	55.55	22.22	493.73
Total		733.27	1700.02	966.75	52476.38

Regarding to the data above, the writer presented the students' main score of the pre-test in the experimental class, she computed the score as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{x} &= \frac{\sum X}{N} \\ &= \frac{733.27}{21} \\ &= 34.92\end{aligned}$$

After computing the students' score, the writer computed the mean score of the experimental class in post-test by using formula:

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{x} &= \frac{\sum X}{N} \\ &= \frac{1700.02}{21} \\ &= 80.95\end{aligned}$$

Table 3

The Deviation of Pre-Test and Post-Test Score of Control Class

No	Initials	Students' Score		Deviation (Y ₂ -Y ₁)	Y ²
		Pre-test (Y ₁)	Post-test (Y ₂)		
1	NFH	44.44	55.55	11.11	123.43
2	AJL	33.33	55.55	22.22	493.73
3	WDN	33.33	44.44	11.11	123.43
4	RMT	22.22	33.33	11.11	123.43
5	ZHW	44.44	66.67	22.23	494.17
6	FRD	44.44	55.55	11.11	123.43
7	ICL	11.11	0	-11.11	123.43
8	AF	44.44	33.33	-11.11	123.43
9	LSN	33.33	66.67	33.34	1111.55
10	CN	44.44	55.55	11.11	123.43
11	ADR	44.44	44.44	0	0
12	AM	44.44	33.33	-11.11	123.43
13	MA	44.44	66.67	22.23	494.17
14	AF	66.67	66.67	0	0
15	HMN	22.22	33.33	11.11	123.43
16	ADN	22.22	22.22	0	0
17	SCI	22.22	44.44	22.22	493.73
18	AND	22.22	33.33	11.11	123.43
19	SNK	33.33	33.33	0	0
20	SKN	0	11.11	11.11	123.43
21	IS	33.33	44.44	11.11	123.43
Total		711.05	899.95	188.9	4568.51

After finding the students' mean score of experimental class on pre-test, the writer also calculated the pre-test mean score of the control class by using formula:

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{x} &= \frac{\Sigma X}{N} \\ &= \frac{711.05}{21} \\ &= 33.86\end{aligned}$$

Then, the writer computed the mean score of the post-test of control class as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{x} &= \frac{\Sigma X}{N} \\ &= \frac{899.95}{21} \\ &= 42.85\end{aligned}$$

Next, the writer computed the sum-squared deviation of pre-test and post-test of both classes.

$$\begin{aligned}\Sigma x^2 &= \Sigma x^2 - \frac{(\Sigma x)^2}{N} & \Sigma y^2 &= \Sigma y^2 - \frac{(\Sigma y)^2}{N} \\ \Sigma x^2 &= 52476.38 - \frac{(966.75)^2}{21} & \Sigma y^2 &= 4568.51 - \frac{(188.9)^2}{21} \\ \Sigma x^2 &= 52476.38 - \frac{934605.56}{21} & \Sigma y^2 &= 4568.51 - \frac{35683.21}{21} \\ \Sigma x^2 &= 52476.38 - 44505.02 & \Sigma y^2 &= 4568.51 - 1699.20 \\ \Sigma x^2 &= 7971.36 & \Sigma y^2 &= 2869.31\end{aligned}$$

The result of the sum-squared deviation of experimental class was 7971.36 and the sum-squared of control class was 2869.31.

To see whether there was a significant difference between the mean score of the two classes, the writer compared them by using statistical formula as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}t &= \frac{Mx - My}{\sqrt{\left(\frac{\Sigma x^2 + \Sigma y^2}{Nx + Ny - 2}\right) \left(\frac{1}{Nx} + \frac{1}{Ny}\right)}} \\ t &= \frac{46.03 - 8.99}{\sqrt{\left[\frac{7971.36 + 2869.31}{21 + 21 - 2}\right] \left[\frac{1}{21} + \frac{1}{21}\right]}}\end{aligned}$$

$$t = \frac{37.04}{\sqrt{\left[\frac{10840.67}{40}\right] [0.09]}}$$

$$t = \frac{37.04}{\sqrt{[271.01] [0.09]}}$$

$$t = \frac{37.04}{\sqrt{24.3909}}$$

$$t = \frac{37.04}{4.94}$$

$$t = 7.49$$

DISCUSSION

In relation to the result, the writer would like to present discussion. Related to the result of pre-test, it showed that the students had some problems in some elements of writing, such as paragraph organization, vocabulary, and grammar, but two of those elements, paragraph organization and vocabulary were the most difficult things that the students got based on the result. Concerning students' problem in writing above, the researcher relates to the previous studies that have been discussed in Dickson's (2001) and Ferial's study (2013). The first study found that many students still got problems of their reticence and motivation about making a writing. They thought that doing a writing became one of problems in learning language skill, while the second study found that many students still did not know how to use the correct punctuation in sentences. In this case, the writer wanted to know the students' ability in using some of them. These punctuations covered full stop, comma, apostrophe, quotation mark, question mark, and capitalization. These types of punctuation are commonly used in writing sentences. In Dickson's study, the writer wanted the students to prove free writing technique could give a student-centered activity that become benefit writing class significantly. At the same time, the students increase their sense of motivation to write in English, while in Ferial's study, she used free writing technique to improve students' ability in using some punctuations that have been explained above.

Regarding the findings, those problems are able to be solved by using free writing technique. Those were supported by Dickson's and Ferial's study (2013). Dickson's study showed that the percentage of students' activity in writing English was improved from 48%

to 67%. It means that there was an improvement value after applying the free writing technique about 19%, while in Ferial's study (2013), it showed that there was a significant difference of mean score in the post-test between the experimental class and control class after receiving the treatment. It can be proved from the data collected where in pre-test there were 18 students (72%) in experimental class did not know how to use the correct punctuation in making a writing. It means that 7 students (28%) were able to use or to know how the correct punctuation. After the students receiving the treatment and doing a post test, the data were showed that there were 25 students (100%) knowing in using punctuation correctly. The writer concluded that there was about 72% significant improvement after applying the free writing technique.

Referring to the result of both studies above, the writer presented the result's pre-test of the elements of writing. It could be seen from the percentage of the students' experimental class score. The number of students who were correct in the paragraph organization was 33.33%, while those who were correct in the use of vocabulary were 33.33%. The last was 36.50% students who were correct in grammar. In control class, the students who were correct paragraph organization were 31.74%, while those who were correct in vocabulary were 38.09%. There were 49.20% students who were correct in grammar. After getting the result of pre-test and seeing the students' problem, the writer wanted to give a solution of the students' problem in writing skill especially for three of the elements of writing by using free writing technique. In this technique, the students wrote a paragraph about things that come in their mind based on the topics and pictures given, but they must pay attention to paragraph organization, vocabulary, and grammar based on the scope of this research.

After conducting the treatment to the experimental class, the writer gave post-test about descriptive paragraph for both classes. The purpose of the post-test given was to measure the students writing skill, particularly using the elements of writing in making a paragraph. In control class, the percentage of the students who were correct in paragraph organization were 49.20%, while those who were correct in vocabulary were 44.44%. There were 53.96% students who were correct in grammar. In experimental class, the students who were correct in paragraph organization were 82.53%, while those who were correct in vocabulary were 74.60%. There were 85.71% students who were correct in grammar.

Related to those result, the writer wanted to show that this research also had a significant improvement particularly in the elements of writing. It could be seen from the

data of paragraph organization improved into 49.2%, vocabulary was increased to 41.27%, and grammar got 49.24%.

Regarding results of both tests, the writer compared the result of pre-test and post-test in experimental class with the standard score of the school which was 75. Indeed, it can be said that the students writing skill was very poor. In pre-test, there was no students (0%) who could achieve the standard score, whilst in post-test there were 17 students (80.95%) who could achieve the standard score. It was caused by the influence of applying free writing technique in experimental class.

Those may conclude that both previous studies have the same result as this research. Even though both researches above were different from the kinds, problems, and scopes of research. The results demonstrated that the use of free writing technique could give an improvement to the students, and could help the students' problem in writing. Thus, the significant difference indicates that free writing technique is an effective technique to be applied in improving students' writing skill.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

After conducting and analysing the research, the writer concludes that the use of free writing technique can improve the students writing skill in writing descriptive paragraph particularly in learning the elements of writing such the paragraph organization, vocabulary, and grammar. It was proven after conducting the treatment for eight meetings. Firstly, the result showed that using free writing technique can improve students' writing skill by looking at the mean score of experimental class' post-test (80.95) and control class' post-test (42.85). It indicated that the writing skill at the eighth grade students of SMPN 1 Pasangkayu was improved after getting the treatment. Secondly, there was a significant difference between the mean values of score in the experimental class' post-test and control class' post-test. It was proven that the result of t_{counted} (7.49) was greater than t_{table} (2.021). It means that the research hypothesis was accepted.

Based on the conclusions, the writer would like to give some suggestions for the English teachers, the students and the readers or other researchers. Firstly, it is suggested that the teachers of English should try free writing technique as one of techniques which can be used in improving students' skill in writing English descriptive paragraph. The teacher also should make some variations in teaching English. S/he might provide some techniques, media, or teaching games that could raise students' enthusiasm. Secondly, the students should be given more exercises and practices concerning to the material. Furthermore, she

suggested the students can start writing without thinking too much to the grammatical sentences in sharing their ideas in paper. It might make the students be comfortable in doing writing. Then, it is suggested for the readers and the other researchers that they should know free writing technique can be used not only to improve students writing skill but also to improve other skills or components in different genres and elements in teaching English.

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