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JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING LEARNING AND LITERATURE

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TABLE OF CONTENT

Content *Page*

Students' Instrumental and Integrative Motivation in Learning English as A Foreign Language in Indonesia 1-11
PIPING RAHADIANTO, MOH. CHOIRUL HUDA, MUHAMMAD AL HADAAD
(Universitas Bhineka PGRI Tulungagung)

The Effectiveness of Using Personal Photograph as Media in Teaching Writing of Descriptive Text at SMK "Sore" Tulungagung 12-18
FASE MEIDA HANAS, ERNA DWINATA
(Universitas Bhineka PGRI Tulungagung)

The Effectiveness of Animated Video Towards Students' Ability in Writing Narrative Text 19-25
TASYA AZZAHRA, WILLY ANUGRAH GUMILANG
(Universitas Bhineka PGRI Tulungagung)

The Effectiveness of Animated Video To Teach First Grade Students of Starlight Tuition In Mastering Number 26-32
DINA KARTIKAWATI
(Universitas Bhineka PGRI Tulungagung)

Vocal (Vocabulary Adventure Land) Board Game Learning Media For Elementary School Students 33-41
SAYIDA RAHMA, SRI UTAMI DEWI
(STKIP PGRI Trenggalek)

Improving The Tenth Grade Students' Ability of Writing Descriptive Text Using Town Map at Sma Negeri 2 Trenggalek 42-53
RISMA AYU FIRDAYANTI, WAWAN PRASETYO
(STKIP PGRI Trenggalek)

Audio Storytelling To Teach Listening Skill For Vocational High School 54-62
SABRINA AZARIA, ASTRIED DAMAYANTI
(STKIP PGRI Trenggalek)

LinguA - LiterA
JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING LEARNING AND LITERATURE

Improving The Tenth Grade Students' Ability of Writing Descriptive Text Using Town Map at Sma Negeri 2 Trenggalek

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Abstract

The objective of the research is to know how Town Map can improve the tenth-grade students' ability of writing descriptive text at SMA Negeri 2 Trenggalek in the academic year 2012/2013. The research design used was collaborative action research. This research was conducted in two cycles and each cycle was divided into four stages, they are planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The subjects of this study were students of class X-G in the academic year 2012/2013 which consisted of 35 students. The research instruments used were tests, questionnaires, observation sheets, and field notes. Data collected with observation sheets were analyzed qualitatively, while data collected by tests and questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively. The result of this research showed that the use of Town Map can improve the writing ability of X-G class students of SMA Negeri 2 Trenggalek in writing descriptive text. This can be seen from the increase of the percentage in the pre-test, post-test in cycle one, and post-test in cycle two. The results of the pre-test showed that only 10 students (29%) out of 35 students successfully passed the writing test. Then, in the first post-test cycle there were 17 (49%) of 35 students passed and 30 students (86%) of 35 students succeeded and had achieved the success criteria in the second cycle.

Keywords: Descriptive text, Town Map, Writing Ability.

INTRODUCTION

English plays a very important role in the world. It has a lot of influence such as in education, business, technology, science, finance, and medicine. In learning English, students should be trained in the four language skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Beside the language skills, English language also has some components such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and structure. Every English student also has to master both of English language skill and its components.

From preliminary study conducted by the researcher, there were some problems faced by the tenth class of SMAN 2 Trenggalek in learning writing. The problems were: 1) Students got difficulties to express their idea on writing. 2) They felt writing was very

difficult. 3) The teacher did not use various strategies in teaching writing. The teachers need more creativity and have to make a new motivation in learning process to help their students to learn English and lessen the students' boredom. One of ways that can be done by the teacher is by using teaching media. There are so many kinds of media and one of them is Town Map.

Town Map is media that is used by teachers and students whatever the emphasis of the lesson. English teachers can employ Town Map as their instructional aids in teaching writing. Wiegand (2006: 1) states that free or low-cost supply of hard copy maps and digital data to schools from national mapping agencies has increased the availability of teaching materials and raised student motivation. He also added that there is evidence that map based activities are spreading to other parts of the curriculum. Using Town Map can be used in drafting students' writing not only provide them with a lot of text to write, they can be also easily varied according to the students' level and what is most important, they can be practically used in the lessons and gives the teacher a different way how to provide the language. The result of the teaching grant project shows three important things. First, the use of town map improves the teaching writing in the class. Second, the use of town map improves the students' ability in writing essay in an interesting way. Finally, the students are trained to make their own sentences based on the town map without banded and to receive feedback from their classmates and their teacher.

Town map is one of alternative media that can be used in English classes and that students will enjoy. By using Town Map within the CTL approach in teaching descriptive texts, both of the writing process and purposeful writing will be able to be integrated. The students will be interest and strengths could be raised up. According to Wiegand (2006: 43), two sets of studies shed light on children's ability to identify a route using a map. First, children are asked to describe a route from map information. Second, children are asked to follow a real world route indicated on a map. It is very useful in writing activities because it can help the writers to generate, visualize, structure and classify idea which can help the students to be better in writing a descriptive text.

As we know that a map is a visual representation of an area – a symbolic depiction highlighting relationships between elements of that space such as objects, regions, and themes (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Map). According to Winston (1984) in Wiegand

(2006: 112), sub-skills in map can also be identified: finding location, orienting and using directions, using scale and finding distance, and selecting media.

Writing is the most difficult skill to learn which involves many components to consider, such as content, rhetoric, vocabulary, grammatical structure, and writing mechanics. Dixon & Nessel (1983: 83) say that it is generally accepted that writing is more difficult than listening, speaking or reading. Producing meaning through writing requires more effort than recognizing meaning through listening or reading. What can be said aloud cannot be expressed as easily or quickly in writing. The writer must follow the conventions of spelling and punctuation that will make the message understandable to others.

It can be said that writing is a process in which the writer discovers, organizes, and communicates his or her thoughts to the readers by using words and symbols which are put together in the written form. Writing is not such a simple process. Even professional writers rewrite and rewrite because it takes many attempts to produce the perfect, finished copy that clearly communicates their ideas (Oshima, 1988: 88). Writing is a key method of communication for most people, and it's one that many people struggle with (http://www.omiglot.com/writing/definition.htm). It is a way to express someone's feeling, although, there is no denying that writing is often considered as the hardest skill to be acquired for many people. They want to express their feeling, thoughts and experiences, but they get difficulties in finding out precise words to reveal their feeling.

Harmer (2004: 4) suggests the process of writing into four steps, they are planning, drafting, editing (reflecting and revising), and final version.

The first step is planning. In this step, the writers try and decide what it is they are going to say. Next, the writers have to think about three main issues. The three main issues are they have to consider the purpose of their writing, think of the audience they are writing for, and have to consider the content structure.

The second step is drafting. Drafting refers to the first version of a piece of writing as a draft. This first go at a text is often done on the assumption that it will be amended later. As the writing process proceeds into editing, a number of drafts may be produced on the way to the final version.

The next step is editing that contain of reflecting and revising. Reflecting and revising are often helped by other readers (or editor) who comment and make

suggestions. Another reader's reaction to a piece of writing will help the author to make appropriate revisions.

The last is creating the final version of writing product. Once writers have edited their draft, making the changes they consider to be necessary, they produce their final version. This may look considerably different from both the original plan and the first draft, because things have changed in the editing process. But the writer is now ready to send the written text to its intended audience.

Descriptive text is a kind of text which explains about something looks like, how it feels, smells, sounds or tastes like. The function is to describe or illustrate a particular thing, a person, a place or a condition. Descriptive texts include an introduction followed by an ordered outline of features of the thing being described and there may be evaluative comments throughout. A concluding comment may sum up the description. The particular language features used in descriptive texts are: particular nouns, factual adjectives or adjectives which classify or present an opinion, and relating feeling and action verbs, similes and metaphors can also be used to enhance the text (June, 2009: 9).

According to Anderson & Anderson (1998: 26), grammatical features of a factual description are: (a) verb in the present tense, (b) adjective to describe the feature of the subject, (c) topic sentence and organize the various aspect of the description. Generic structure of descriptive text: (a) identification: identifies the phenomenon to be described, (b) description: describes parts, qualities, characteristics. Descriptive text include: (a) descriptions of a particular building, (b) descriptions of particular animal, (c) descriptions of a particular place, (d) descriptions of a specific person. Descriptive paragraph is to entertain, to gain and hold a readers' interest.

METHOD

The research design of this study is classroom action research. Classroom action research is a method for improving and modifying the working system of a classroom in school (Singh, 2006: 261). Further, the researcher employs the collaborative action research design. The researcher works together with the English teachers to solve the writing ability problem in the class. The researcher is the observer,

on the other hand, the English teacher leads the teaching and learning process of writing.

This research was conducted at SMA Negeri 2 Trenggalek which is located at Jln. Soekarno-Hatta Gg. Siwalan Trenggalek. The subjects of this research are the students from X-G class in the academic year 2012/2013 which consisted of 35 students. The researcher only chooses one class that is the tenth G class based on some considerations: 1) this class has lower scores; 2) the students had less motivation or were not interested in teaching and learning writing process.

Before starting the action research, the researcher conducted a preliminary study. This preliminary study aims to see what problems really exist during teaching and learning writing. In this stage, the researcher conducted the pre-test to measure the students' writing ability before the researcher taught the material. It was done in the X-G students of SMAN 2 Trenggalek on March 25th, 2013. The result showed that the students still performed poorly in writing descriptive text. It was because the students were not motivated in writing and they lacked writing practice.

In conducting action research, the researcher used cyclical process. Kemmis and Taggart revealed that classroom action research has two cycles and each cycle consists of four stages, they are planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. In the planning stage, the researcher designed the lesson plan, designed the research instrument, and set up the criteria of success. Next, in the acting stage, the researcher implements the Town Map application as a media to help the students generate their ideas in the pre-writing step. Then, in the observing stage, the researcher observes the teaching and learning process of writing in the classroom. Lastly, in the reflecting stage, the researcher reflects and analyzes whether the teaching-learning process is done successfully or not to reach the objectives of the lesson plan in each cycle.

The instruments used in this research to collect the data are tests, questionnaires, observation checklist, and field notes. The test instrument consists of pre-test and post-test. Pre-test is given to the subject of the study before the implementation of the technique while post-test is given after the implementation of the technique to measure the students writing ability after they taught by using Town Map. Next, in this study, there are two types of questionnaires used. The first questionnaire is used to know the students' attitudes toward writing activities and their problems in

writing descriptive texts in the preliminary study and the second questionnaire is used to know the students' responses on the application of Town Map in writing activity to drafting their writing in the last cycle. Further, observation checklists are used to collect information about the students' activities during the teaching and learning process also to collect the information related to the teacher's activities during the process of teaching writing. Furthermore, field notes are used to record phenomenon and essential features in the classroom during the action that are not able to be covered by the observation sheets.

The data that has been collected is analyzed using qualitative and quantitative techniques. Data collected through observation sheets are analyzed qualitatively. Meanwhile, the data on students' writing scores and questionnaires are analyzed quantitatively. The Guttman scale is used to analyze the answers to the questionnaire. The answer "Yes" is given a score of 1 and the answer "No" is given a score of 0 (Riduwan, 2007:17). The researcher analyzes each item and finds the percentage of the score using the following formula:

$$\%S = \frac{1 \times Y}{1 \times N} \times 100\% \quad (1)$$

Description:

%S = percentage of score

Y = number of students who answer "Yes"

N = total of students

FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the data obtained from the observation of students writing ability there was significance improvement from preliminary study to first and second cycle.

In preliminary study, the researcher delivered questionnaire to the students in order to know the students' attitude toward writing activities and their problems in writing descriptive texts. In brief, based on the data gained from questionnaire, more than half of tenth grades students did not have interest in writing a composition, especially a descriptive text. Most of them had some problems in writing. As ordered to the most difficult problem to the difficult one, the problems were related to the grammatical

structure, idea development and organization, and vocabulary. Therefore, they still performed poorly in writing.

The researcher also gave pre-test to the students to measure students' writing ability in descriptive text. The result of students' writing test score in preliminary study is did not meet the criteria of success yet; the minimum criteria of success reached 75%, there were only 10 (29%) students were passed the test, while the other 25 students (71%) were failed. It means that the research was unsuccessful. The students still confused in arranging words into good sentences. They did not know how to write a good descriptive text.

The first cycle was carried out through four stages, they are planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

In the planning stage, the researcher made some preparations for the action. The researcher designed the lesson plans used to teach how to write descriptive text as a part of teaching writing. Besides, the research prepared students' worksheet containing the model of the descriptive text and the generic structure of descriptive text for the students. The researcher also carefully prepared other things needed in conducting the research, including preparation of research instruments in writing mastery and got information of the criteria of success from the English teacher, so the researcher would know when to stop the research. The scoring rubric was also prepared to assess the students' writing.

The acting stage of cycle one consisted of three meetings. Here, the researcher worked with the observation sheet to record the teaching learning activities and the students' attitude. The first meeting was held on Wednesday, March 27th, 2013, at 09.15 am until 11.00 am. In the first meeting, the teacher explained about descriptive text in detail. After making sure that all of the students had received the handouts, the teacher asked the students to read the texts and asked students to answer the questions about the text and identify the characteristics of generic structure used. The teacher asked the students to make the outline based on the town map given individually and ask them to develop it to be draft. Then, asked the students to develop the draft to be descriptive text. The second meeting was carried out on Monday, April 1st, 2013, at 11.00 a.m - 12.30 p.m. The meeting was focused on reviewing the lesson. the teacher delivered handout to the students. In the main activities, the teacher explained to the students how to write the descriptive text by using town map they have

learned and identify the characteristics of generic structure used. The teacher asked the students to make the outline based on the town map given individually and ask them to develop it to be a draft. Then, asked students to develop the draft to be descriptive text. The third meeting was focused on getting score from the students and it was held on Thursday, April 4th, 2013, at 10.15 a.m until 11.00 a.m. The post-test formed in completing the blank paragraph using the word given and composing descriptive paragraph using Town Map. The teacher delivered the post-test to the students. The teacher walked around the class while observing the students' activity in doing the post-test.

The researcher found that the students' ability in writing descriptive text had increased. There were 17 students (49%) out of 35 students who could pass the writing test, while 18 students (51%) were still failed. They faced difficulties to write the text. The students still confused in completing the paragraph beside they did not know how to write a good descriptive text. The students' score of the test was under the standard which has been determined. This research was unsuccessful and needed to be improved in the next cycle.

Then, the researcher made reflection. In cycle one, the students made the outline without focused in generating their ideas. Thus, in cycle one, the teacher taught them how to organize their idea by applying other themes and more of town map to help them organize their ideas. Then, the researcher designed the lesson plan. It made in order to help the teacher knowing the students' need and to motivate the students in following the lesson in the class. From the reflection of cycle one, the researcher had found some problems. Actually, students gave positive responses. Besides, they were excited when they wrote, but they did not know how to write a good descriptive text and confused in arranging words.

Improvement of action in cycle two was needed to solve the problems have been found in the cycle one. The planning of action in cycle two was by revising the lesson plan in cycle one in consideration to the students' weakness in the action of teaching learning process.

Same as cycle one, the acting stage of cycle two was also held for three meetings. The first meeting was done on Monday, April 8th, 2013, at 11.00 a.m. –until 12.30 p.m. The teacher asked the student about the difficulties found in the last meeting. After that, to stimulate students' interest on the topic would be studied, the

teacher asked some questions related to the topic. The teacher demonstrated the way to make descriptive text based on Town Map. After that, the teacher distributed the handout for the students' exercises. She asked the students to make a draft from the Town Map presented before. Having finished making a draft, she asked the students to develop the draft to be final composition of descriptive text. The second meeting was done on Wednesday, April 10th 2013 at 10.15 a.m until 11.45 a.m. In the beginning of this meeting, the teacher reviewed last topic for about 10 minutes. Next, she gave an opportunity to the students to ask if they get difficulties in writing the topic. Then, the teacher discussed the problem faced by students in writing descriptive text. After that, the teacher explained how to make descriptive text using Town Map with the adverbial of place in order to make a good composition. Just the same as what they did in meeting 1, the teacher gave another Town Map with another theme and asked students to make an outline, draft then compose it into the final composition of descriptive text using adverbial. The third meeting was conducted on Thursday, April 11th 2013, at 10.15 a.m until 11.00 a.m. The meeting was focused on measuring the students' improvement on writing descriptive text after integrated with Town Map in teaching learning process. The post-test formed in composing descriptive paragraph using Town Map which was like the lesson before and adding with adverbial.

The researcher also gave some items in the questionnaire to know the students' responses of the media. The result showed that 94% of students were excited to follow the course. Second, 86% of students felt more active in teaching and learning process through Town Map. Third, 80% of students revealed that they could implement Town Map in teaching and learning process. Fourth, 89% of students think they could write descriptive text easier by using Town Map. Fifth, 97% of students state that they could use Town Map to improve their writing ability. So, generally, it could be concluded that the students were interested and excited to follow the activity. Consequently, their ability on writing subject could be improved and developed.

The result of cycle two showed that 30 students (86%) out of 35 students were successful and it had achieved the criteria of success. Only 5 students (14%) out of 35 students were unsuccessful and had achieved the criteria of success. It means that the students' ability in writing descriptive text through Town Map is improved. So, the researcher stops the research.

The precentage of students' score in pre-test, post-test 1 and post-test 2 could be seen in this following diagram:

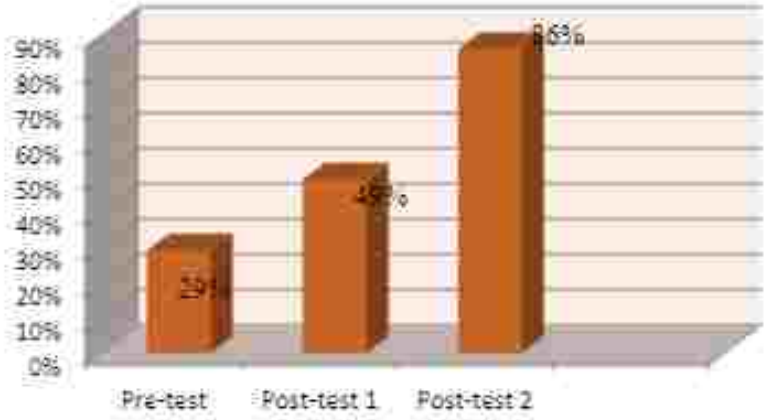

Figure 1. The precentage of sucess in pre-test, post-test 1 and post-test 2

From the diagram above, it can be seen that the score of the students' writing ability had improved. It means that the integration of using Town Map in the teaching of writing descriptive was implemented successfully in X-G to help the students improve their writing ability.

The improvement of student's score in writing descriptive text could not be separated with the use of town map. The use of town map in learning writing gave many advantages for the students. First, the use of town map improves the teaching writing in the class. Second, the use of town map improves the students' ability in writing essay in an interesting way. Finally, the students are trained to make their own sentences based on the Town Map. It is supported by Wiegand (2006: 1) that free or low-cost supply of hard copy maps and digital data to schools from national mapping agencies has increased the availability of teaching materials and raised student motivation. There is evidence too that map-based activities are spreading to other parts of the curriculum. From the explanation above, it could be said that the implementation of town map in writing process can improved the X-G students' writing achievement in writing descriptive text at SMA Negeri 2 Trenggalek.

This finding was also suported by the previous research which had been conducted by Yunitasari (2012) and Sa'diyah. The result of Yunitasari's research entitled "Improving the Tenth Grade Students' Ability of Writing Descriptive Text Using a Direction Picture at SMA Negeri 1 Durenanin Academic Year 2011/2012" showed that the students' writing ability was improved after being taught using direction picture. Meanwhile, the result of Sa'diyah's research entitled "Improving Students' Ability in Writing Descriptive Texts through a Picture Series Aided Learning Strategy" showed that this media can improve students' writing ability.

CONCLUSION

After the implementation of the strategy, the researcher finds the students' writing ability can be developed. It can be seen by the increase of the students' test results from the preliminary study, to cycle 1 and cycle 2. It can be concluded that the integration of Town Map in the teaching of descriptive texts as a media to help students in making outlines and drafts was effective to improve students' writing achievement and interest in following the subject.

The use of Town Map made the students could explore their imagination. Therefore, from their imagination the students could develop their writing of descriptive text. Finally, the students' attitude towards writing activities had improved from the preliminary study to cycle 1 and cycle 2 and they met of the criteria of success.

In order to improve the students' achievement in writing a descriptive text, English teachers are suggested to integrate Town Map in the teaching of writing. Besides, the teacher should master in the curriculum, media, method, and teaching-learning process must suitable to the students' ability and capacity and the situation of the class. The students are suggested to use Town Map as media in drafting their ideas in the prewriting stage. Thus, they will be able to explore their ideas and include the ideas in their descriptive texts more easily. They could explore what they want to write. Next, for future researchers, this study also can be used as a reference to conduct further research dealing with the implementation of Town Map in the teaching and learning process of writing.

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