

THESIS ARTICLE

*Improving the Eighth Grade Students' s Sentence Writing Achievement  
by Using Word Cards at SMPN 3 Balung - Jember*

Adventia Putri Septianingrum, Sugeng Ariyanto, Asih Santihastuti  
Language and Arts Education Program, The Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Jember University  
Jln. Kalimantan 37, Jember 68121  
E-mail: adventiap92@gmail.com

**Abstract**

*Writing is still considered to be a hard work to do, especially for students. This research was intended to overcome the problem and to improve the students' sentence writing achievement and also their participation by using word cards. The design of this research was Classroom Action Research. The research subjects were the VIII C class students of SMPN 3 Balung – Jember in the academic year 2013/2014, which were selected based on some purposes. Before the research was conducted, there was a preliminary study to find the students' writing problems. This research was done in two cycles. Every cycle consisted of three meetings, including the sentence writing test. The target score for this research was at least 75% of the students actively participated during the lesson and passed the sentence writing test. In relation to the students' participation, the percentage of students' participation increased from 80,5% in Cycle 1 to 91% in Cycle 2. In relation to the students' sentence writing achievement, the percentage of the students who passed the test increased from 60,7% in Cycle 1 to 78,6% in Cycle 2. The results reached the target score so this research was considered to be successful. The conclusion of this research was word cards could improve the students' sentence writing achievement and also their participation during teaching and learning process.*

**Keywords:** Classroom Action Research, WordCards, Sentence Writing Achievement.

**Introduction**

Writing plays an important role in English language teaching (ELT). By writing, students can communicate each other in daily life. It can also be one of the media for students to learn something, for example to learn language and culture. According to DeVoss (2010:1), writing is still an important act and an essential tool for learning and social participation. As a tool for learning, people, including students, learn certain knowledge by writing it. They share their knowledge in their writings to be something useful to other people. As a tool for social participation, students write to communicate with each other. They build a social relationship by using their writings as the media. They have to learn how to write English well because they need it to build a better learning and communication. Langan (2004:5) states that any report, paper, review, essay exam, or assignment someone is responsible for should be written in the best standard English he can produce.

Unfortunately, according to my Teaching Practice experience at SMPN 3 Balung, most of the students still experienced difficulties to write in English. Most of them

seemed to work harder in writing sentences correctly. DeVoss (2010:1) states that writing is still understood to be hard work. This brings effect to the students' outcome and scores in English. The students' outcome was not yet satisfying, while the students' average scores still could not reach what was expected. Because writing is considered complex, including some components, it requires the students to master the written language and ability of how to organize the ideas so that it can be understood by all the readers (Byrne, 1979:1). Therefore, it is necessary for students to improve their writing skill.

According to Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP), Junior High School students mainly learn to write short functional texts, but every text must begin with a sentence. In other words, to make a good text, they have to learn how to organize their ideas into a sentence first. Learning to make sentence is the basic of learning to make a text. In writing a sentence, there are some aspects which have to be concerned, such as grammar or structure, mechanics or punctuation, and vocabulary. Knowing the traditional rules of grammar, punctuation, and usage will help students write clear sentences when communicating with others (Langan, 2004:3). If the students can make a

sentence correctly, it will be easier for them to arrange a paragraph or even a text.

Prior to this research, a preliminary study was conducted by interviewing the English teacher, doing an observation during teaching-learning process in class, and holding a pre-test. The result of this preliminary study showed that the students of eighth grade at SMPN 3 Balung had problem in sentence writing. Their mean score in writing pre-test was still low (60,9) and there were only 2 of 28 students (7%) got score  $\geq 75$ . Moreover, they did not participate actively during the lesson. The students still made many mistakes in the terms of sentence types, sentence patterns, grammar, spelling, and the use of punctuation. So, the researcher decided to focus on improving the students' sentence writing achievement.

To overcome the problem of teaching writing, one possible solution is to apply teaching aid in writing class. The media is called word cards. Teachers can use them to teach writing sentence with correct patterns and construction. Zainudin (1984:11) states that the use of word cards in teaching writing is easy to show the changes of the position of the words in term of statements and questions by moving around the cards. The students can remember the pattern more easily by remembering the movement of the word cards. They can stimulate the students' activeness because they are interesting for the students and they are fun to be used, especially for small group discussion. Wright (2006:87) adds that word cards can be used for teaching writing of many kinds of texts such as an article, a story, a joke, a poem, an essay, an argument, and many others. Therefore, word cards were chosen as the media to overcome the students' problem and to improve their achievement in sentence writing.

Based on the description above, the researcher decided to apply a classroom action research to improve the eighth grade students' achievement of writing sentence by using word cards at SMPN 3 Balung – Jember. The researcher chose classroom action research because there was a problem for the English teacher of SMPN 3 Balung to teach writing and for the students of SMPN 3 Balung to write well, and the fact that their sentence writing achievement was low. Therefore, the researcher wanted to solve the problem by using Classroom Action Research collaboratively with the English teacher. It was assumed that the problem of writing could be solved through the implementation of the research.

## Research Methods

This research was aimed at giving action to improve the eighth grade students' sentence writing achievement by using word cards. For this purpose, the researcher decided to apply Classroom Action Research as the design for this research. This research involved the students' participation, and the actions were done collaboratively with the eighth grade English teacher of SMPN 3 Balung, Jember.

This action research was conducted in cycles in which each cycle consisted of two meetings. Each meeting consisted of four stages covering: 1) the planning of the action, 2) the implementation of the action, 3) observation and evaluation, 4) reflection of the action (Elliot, 1991:69).

The research area of this research was SMPN 3 Balung, Jember, and it was determined by using purposive method. This school was chosen because of some reasons: the low students' writing achievement, the limited media which the teacher used, the agreement of collaboration with the teacher, and the permission given by the headmaster.

In this research, the research subject was the VIII C students of SMPN 3 Balung. The research subject was also determined by using purposive method. There were 28 students of the class. This class was chosen due to some reasons: the students' lowest score in English of all the classes, the students' low sentence writing achievement and participation in the class.

There were two kinds of data in this research: primary data and supporting data. The primary data were collected by using sentence writing test and observation, and the supporting data were collected from interview and documentation. The sentence writing test score was the primary data to know the students' achievement in writing sentence. Observation was used to get the primary data about the students' participation in the class. The indicators of the active participation in the class: making notes of the teacher's explanation, practicing using the word cards, participating in group work and discussion, and doing the tasks given by the teacher.

In this research, evaluation was divided into two parts: process evaluation and product evaluation. Process evaluation was done by conducting observation in every meeting in each cycle during teaching learning process by using word cards. Meanwhile, product evaluation was done at the end of each cycle to know whether or not word cards could improve the students' sentence writing achievement by administering sentence writing test. The results were used to evaluate the actions. The criteria of success for the evaluation were:

- a. At least 75% of the research subjects achieved the minimum standard score in sentence writing test which was 75.
- b. At least 75% of the research subjects actively participated in sentence writing teaching and learning process by using word cards.

The results of observation and sentence writing test were analyzed by using by using the quantitative formulation to find the percentage of success. To know the percentage of students' participation, the following formula was used:

$$E = \frac{n}{N} \times 100\%$$

Notes:

E = the percentages of the students who are active

$n$  = the total number of the students who are categorized as active students

$N$  = the total number of the students  
(Ali, 1993: 186)

To find the percentage of students' writing achievement, the scores were calculated by the following formula:

$$E = \frac{n}{N} \times 100\%$$

Notes:

$E$  = the percentages of the students who achieve  $> 75$  as the minimum score.

$n$  = the total number of the students who achieve  $> 75$  as the minimum score.

$N$  = the total number of the students  
(Ali, 1993: 186)

## Discussion

After conducting Cycle 1 and Cycle 2, the researcher got some results. Dealing with the students' participation during the teaching-learning process, teaching sentence writing by using word cards showed significant improvement. Before the actions were implemented, an observation was done on the students' participation during the lesson. It was known that their participation was still low (about 34%-36%). After Cycle 1 had been implemented, the students' participation improved but it still did not reach the target. The percentage of the two meetings in the first cycle were averaged and became 80,5%. It means that the actions in Cycle 1 were successful since it had reached the target score, which was at least 75% of the students actively participated during teaching and learning process.

Although it was successful, there were some problems which were found in this cycle related to the students' participation. There were some indicators which were not fulfilled by the students. There were many students, especially male students, did not make note of the materials given. In fact, writing is an important act and an essential tool for learning (DeVoss, 2010:1). They did not write the materials and the sample sentences given, so they had lost one tool of learning. Some of the students did not do the tasks given at all, or did the tasks incompletely. This could give effect to the students' sentence writing achievement.

In Cycle 2, the percentage of the two meetings were averaged and became 91%. It improved so much than the first cycle. The target was at least 75% of the students actively participated in teaching learning process. It means that the actions in Cycle 2 were successful and the results of this cycle had achieved the objective of the research.

The improvement was due to some revisions done in Cycle 2. The biggest improvement was given by the revision that the researcher checked the students' notes after the class. This made the students more motivated to make a note of the researcher's explanation. The other revision was that the researcher collected the students' worksheet and

scored the worksheet or asked the students to exchange their worksheet to be scored by their friends. It made the number of the students who did not do the tasks given decreased.

Dealing with the students' sentence writing achievement, a sentence writing test was administered in the class, and the average score of the test in Cycle 1 was 74,6. It increased than the students' previous average score. The score increased so much comparing to their previous score. It means that the students had improved their achievement. Unfortunately, after being calculated and analyzed, it was known that the actions of teaching sentence writing in Cycle 1 were unsuccessful. There were only 17 students or 60,7% of the students reached the target score. Therefore, Cycle 2 was necessarily conducted.

There were still some problems which were found in the test, especially for the students who still got low score. Some students did not use punctuations and capital letters. In fact, Heaton (1990: 135) states that one of the skill which the students had to have was mechanical skill, dealing with the use of punctuation and capital letter. It might have become their habit not to use punctuations and capital letter. So, it was rather difficult to change their habit. There were still some problems with the use of grammar, sentence structure, and vocabulary. Many students still did not change the verb into simple past tense. There were also some students who wrote incorrect sentence structure and incorrect uses of vocabulary which made the sentence meaningless.

In relation with the teaching and learning activities during the cycle, there were some factors which made this cycle unsuccessful. It was because there were many students did not make their notes and did not do all the tasks given. In fact, by writing the note and do the tasks given, they learn the materials and it would help them with the sentence writing test. DeVoss (2010:1) states that writing is an important act and an essential tool for learning. Therefore, the students should be encouraged in writing their note and do all the tasks given. Some revisions based on these problems were done in Cycle 2.

In Cycle 2, the action done was also teaching sentence writing by using word cards but with some revisions. After the actions had been implemented, a test was administered. The average score of the test was 79,5. It increased much than the average score of the first cycle. The students who got score  $\geq 75$  were 78,6% of the students. It also increased than the first cycle. It means that the actions in cycle 2 were successful and the results of this cycle had achieved the objective of the research.

Based on the results of the sentence writing test, the students were better in using punctuations and capital letter. Their grammar, sentence structure, and vocabulary also got better than the first cycle. The students who always did not use punctuation and capital letters started to use them in their writing. Most of the students also used correct verbs in the term of simple past tense, correct sentence structure, and correct use of vocabulary which made their



sentences meaningful. There were still some mistakes but it was less than the first cycle. Most of the students got good score in each part of the test.

In relation with the students' participation, the number of students who did all the tasks given and made a note of the explanation increased. It helped them in doing the test and gave good effect on their sentence writing test score. The improvement of the students' score can be seen in the following chart.

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the use of word cards could improve the students' sentence writing achievement. The use of word cards in teaching sentence writing really brought significant effect to the students' achievement. Wright (2006:87) states that word cards can be used for teaching writing of many kinds of texts such as an article, a story, a joke, a poem, an essay an argument, and many others. Word cards have proven their ability to help the students with their problems in sentence writing, especially in relation with the sentence structure. Karim and Hasbullah (1986: 5.21) states that the use of word cards as media is important to teach sentences, such as declarative sentence, interrogative sentence, the change of active sentence into passive sentence, etc. Students learn the structure and the change of the sentence by moving around the word cards. In line with this, Zainudin (1984:11) also states the use of word cards in teaching writing is easy to show the changes of the position of the words in term of statements and questions by moving around the cards. Word cards could be moved around and could be arranged become a sentence in any types.

Word cards could also show the use of mechanics, which were punctuation and capital letter, and also the use of grammar in a sentence. Word cards helped the students in learning grammar, punctuation and other components of writing. Langan (2004:3) states that knowing the traditional rules of grammar, punctuation, and usage will help students write clear sentences when communicating with others. Therefore, the students' sentence writing achievement increased so much.

In relation to the students' participation, the use of word cards also gave a significant effect. Students like to work in groups, and word cards as media are suitable to be used in groups or pairs. Word cards are recognized as a fun and effective way to learn, reinforce, test, and retain information (Nation, 2008:66). Fun activities done in class could make the students motivated and it make the students' participation improved. Word cards were also attractive media to be used in the class and could increase the students' motivation to study. The attractiveness of word cards could give good effect to the students' participation. In line with this, Doff (2000:106) states that using word cards makes more impact on the class. Word cards could be used in any kind of activities, such as arranging sentences and learning new vocabularies. Word cards could also be used during the explanation and the group work or pair work. In line with this, Doff (2000:106) states that word cards make the activity flexible. Therefore,

word cards can be said as an effective way to improve the students' participation during the teaching learning process.

By using word cards in teaching, students were motivated to make a note of the materials given. According to DeVoss (2010:1), writing is still an important act and an essential tool for learning. By writing the materials and the sample sentences given, the students had been used one tool of learning. Their note could help them in studying the materials to prepare for their test. Therefore, their sentence writing test score increased.

The improvement of the students' sentence writing achievement and participation due to the use of word cards in this study confirms the result given by the previous researcher, Hermayanti (2011). The mean score of the students' writing test increased up to 72,98% and the students who got score  $\geq 65$ , which was the passing grade at that time, are 76,92% of the students (40 students). Teaching sentence writing by using pocket chart and its word cards could also increase the percentage of the students' active participation become 80,77% (42 students). The same improvement happened in this research.

In summary, the use of word cards could improve the students' sentence writing achievement and participation. Thus, the research findings proved the research hypotheses that say "The use of word cards can improve the eighth grade students' participation in learning process at SMPN 3 Balung – Jember" and "The use of word cards can improve the eighth grade students' sentence writing achievement at SMPN 3 Balung – Jember".

## **Conclusion and Suggestions**

Based on the data analysis and discussion of the research results, some conclusions and suggestions can be drawn. Based on the results of data analysis and conclusion, it can be concluded as follows.

1. The use of word cards could improve the eighth grade students' participation in learning process at SMPN 3 Balung – Jember. The improvement can be seen from the results of observation which was done in each cycle. In the first cycle, the result was 80,5% of the students actively participated in the teaching learning process. In the second cycle, the result was higher than the first cycle. There were 91% of the students actively participated in the teaching learning process. The results showed that teaching sentence writing by using word cards could improve students' participation during teaching and learning process.
2. The use of word cards can improve the eighth grade students' sentence writing achievement at SMPN 3 Balung – Jember. The improvement can be seen from the results of writing test in each cycle. In the first cycle, the result was 60,7% of the students got score at least 75. It was higher than the previous students' score which was only 7% of the students got score at least 75. In the second cycle, the result was higher than the first cycle.

There were 78,6% of the students got score at least 75 in the test. The results showed that teaching sentence writing by using word cards could improve students' sentence writing achievement.

Considering the results of the research, some suggestions are given to the English teacher, the students, and the future researchers as follows:

a. The English teacher

The English teacher is suggested to use word cards in teaching writing due to the improvement of students' sentence writing achievement and participation in teaching learning process by using word cards. The teacher is also suggested to use word cards in games so that the students can be more motivated. The teacher can also modify the word cards become sentence cards to teach paragraph or text writing. The English teacher was also suggested to teach sentence writing by using word cards with other teaching techniques or methods.

b. The students

The students should be more relax during the teaching and learning process so that the process can be more enjoyable. They should evaluate their own mistakes in the lesson and correct them to get better achievement, especially in writing. They should be more motivated to study and participate during the class so that they could achieve good scores in English and other subjects.

c. The future researchers

The other researchers who have the same problems in teaching writing are suggested to use this research as information and reference to conduct a further research for teaching writing or other skills with the same design, by focusing on more meaningful and interactive activities in the class. The other researchers are also suggested to widen the range of study become paragraph writing by modifying the word cards and to use other teaching techniques or methods in implement the actions of the research.

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