

The Effect of Using Comic Strips on the Eighth Grade Students' Recount Writing Achievement at SMPN 1 Jember in the 2013/2014 Academic Year

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Abstract

*This research was a quasi-experimental research with post-test only design. The purpose of this research was to investigate whether or not there was significant effect of using comic strips on the eighth grade students' writing achievement. The research respondents were students of VIII H and VIII I of SMPN 1 Jember. In this research, the students of VIII H were assigned as the experimental group. They were taught using comic strips. Meanwhile, the students of class VIII I were assigned as the control group. They were taught without using comic strips. Before the research was conducted, the researcher had conducted a homogeneity test to know whether the population was homogeneous or not. The result showed that the population was homogeneous, so the researcher chose the respondents of the research randomly. The data collection method used was purposive method. The data included the students' writing scores as the primary data, and the results of interview as well as some documents as the supporting data. The primary data was analyzed using independent sample *t*-test. The result of the data analysis proved that comic strips had a significant effect on the eighth grade students' recount writing achievement. It was verified by the value of significant column of Lavene's test which was 0.036. Because it was lower than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted. Based on the explanation, it was concluded that there was a significant effect of using comic strips on the eighth grade students' recount writing achievement at SMPN 1 Jember in the 2013/2014 academic year.*

Keywords: *Experimental Research, Recount Writing Achievement, Comic Strips.*

Introduction

English has been regarded as one of international languages. It is the third most widely spoken language in the world after Chinese which is spoken by 1,197 million people and Spanish which is spoken by 414 million people (Lewis, et al. (eds.), 2014:7). Since English is one of the international languages, it is universally developed in various fields such as in economics, politics, business, internet, technology, science, and education. In Indonesia, English as a foreign language is learnt in the classroom. Thus, in the field of education, English is included as one of the subjects required to be learnt.

Based on the Institutional-Based Curriculum in 2006 (*Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan 2006*), the objectives of teaching English in Junior High School are: 1) to develop the communication competencies both in spoken and written forms to reach the level of functional literacy; 2) to raise the awareness of the nature and the importance of English to improve national competition in the global community; and 3) to develop the students' comprehension about the relation between language and culture (*Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan, 2006:278*).

In accordance with the illustration above, one of teaching objectives is to develop the English

communicative competence, that is, the ability to master and to use the language effectively in four language skills, which include: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Writing is a skill which must be taught and practiced. It is an essential feature of learning a language because it provides a very good means of fixing the vocabulary, spelling and sentence pattern. It becomes an important aspect of students' expression at a higher stage (Patel & Jain, 2008:125).

However, writing is the most painfully and formally learned of other areas of English in the National Curriculum (Fleming & Stevens, 2010:89). When a topic is discussed in an EFL class, the first problem occurs. EFL students tend to spend too much time in finding out an idea about the topic given to write because not all students have either the same experience with the topic or the ability to dig ideas very quickly. Furthermore, the following problem comes as it is not only difficult in finding out the ideas, but there is also a problem of writing dealing with grammar, vocabulary, and coherence because most of the EFL students do not get used to use English in their daily life. The problem is even greater when the difficulty of writing is supported by a problem of monotonous EFL classes. Based on the preliminary study done by the researcher while she was having a four-month-teaching practice at the

school, the fact stated that the teacher tended to use single pictures and even taught a writing class in a more traditional way; teaching writing without any media. These conditions of course led a class to be more monotonous. Problems occurred when the students felt bored to attend a class without media. Other problems raised in the product of their writing were not merely about grammatical errors, but also about an enrichment of ideas in writing. Single pictures, indeed, can help students to gain an illustration of the topic. However, the illustration is not as much as they need as the ideas to write. Therefore, the students need media to stimulate and to activate their thought in order to make a better piece of writing, and the media are expected to create a more interesting writing class.

As stated in the Institutional-Based Curriculum in 2006 (*Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan 2006*), students in the level of Junior High School are required to be able to understand and create various written texts, monologs, and essays in the forms of procedure, descriptive, recount, narrative, and report (*Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan, 2006:278*). The researcher conducted a thorough investigation towards writing, particularly recount writing because a recount text that involves characters and events is suitable with the features of comic strips that contained continuing characters involving in certain situations.

The researcher conducted this research by using a help of media, that is, comic strips. Comic strips have been believed to stimulate and activate students' thought in processes, particularly in a writing class. They remain to help the students gain as many ideas as possible regarding to the topic of the writing given.

In choosing comic strips as media in learning and teaching English, we have to ponder the language, context, and situations of the comic strips very carefully. Comic strips are commonly presented in the formal language, so the teacher should be better to set them as appropriate as possible based on the curriculum. The teachers can make them in either manual or digital ways by the use of technology, particularly digitally through the use of computer or taking from the internet by adjusting the characters, setting, etc. In this research, the researcher employed bitstrips.com to help her in making the comic strips. In this website, the choices of characters and situation are provided. Further, they are quite interesting since they are colorful.

Research Methods

1. Research Design

This research used a quasi-experimental design with post-test only design. There were two groups in this research, that is, the experimental and the control groups. The treatment, comic strip, was given to the experimental group and was not given to the control group. The difference of the teaching and learning English in the experimental and control groups was the use of media. The teaching and learning process in the experimental group was done by lecturing and giving assignment with the help of media, that is, comic strips; while the control group was taught by lecturing and was given assignment without the help of comic strips as media.

The illustration of the research design was as follows.

Treatment group	M	X	O_1
Control group	M	C	O_2

Note:

M : Matched group(s)

X : Treatment

C : Control group

O_1 : Outcome or posttest of the experimental group

O_2 : Outcome or posttest of the control group

(Fraenkel et al, 2012:275)

2. Area Determination Method

SMP Negeri 1 Jember was purposively determined to be the area of the research. Several reasons underlying this were: 1) comic strips had never been used to teach writing for the eighth grade students and 2) both the English teachers and the principal wanted to know the result of this research to vary the teaching and learning process.

3. Respondent Determination Method

The respondents of this research were taken from the population. The population was the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Jember in 2013/2014 academic year. Based on the homogeneity test, it was obtained that all groups were homogenous. Two groups were randomly chosen as the respondent of the research. Thus, the researcher applied cluster random sampling as the sampling methods (Bieger & Gerlach, 1996:98). In line with the statement, Fraenkel, et al. (2012:96) also state that a cluster random sampling is a way to obtain respondents by using groups as the sampling unit rather than individuals.

4. Data Collection Method

There were two kinds of data in this research, primary data and supporting data. The primary data were collected from students' writing scores. The writing score was obtained from the writing test administered at the end of the treatment. Meanwhile, the supporting data were gained

from the result of interview and some documents. The purpose of the interview in this research was to know the curriculum, the materials, the techniques, the media, and the writing tasks which the English teacher usually applied. The interview also covered other questions dealing with students' writing in the classroom, such as the problems they faced in writing. The documents consisted of the names of the eighth grade students obtained from the administration staff of the school.

3.5 Data Analysis Method

The primary data or the students' writing scores from the post-test was analyzed by means of independent sample t-test to know whether or not the mean difference of both the experimental and the control groups was significant by using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science).

Discussion

The result of the data analysis proved that comic strips had a significant effect on the eighth grade students' recount writing achievement. The significant value on the t-test was 0.036 while the significant (2-tailed) value was 0.000, which means that they were lower than 0.05. It was proven that there was a mean difference between the experimental and the control groups. Meanwhile, the degree of relative effectiveness analysis showed that the experimental group scored 4.21195% higher than the control group. It means that teaching recount writing by using comic strips was 4.21195% more effective than teaching recount writing without comic strips.

Teaching writing by using comic strips in the experimental group brought more enthusiasm than teaching writing by using the lecturing technique without using comic strips in the control group. While doing the teaching learning process in the experimental group, the researcher used comic strips in the set induction and main activities. The students in both experimental and control groups were enthusiastic in the first meeting because they were keen to learn to write from a different teacher. However, the students in the control group were less enthusiastic than they were in the first meeting because there were no particular media used in the group. Learning without using comic strips might lead them to boredom. The students in the experimental group were excited to know what comic strips that would be shown time by time. They were eager in the discussion and they were extremely excited when they were composing their piece of writing. Thus, comic strips might influence the students' performance as well.

Some experts believe that comic strips are meaningful in teaching and learning, especially in a writing class. Smith (2006:6) mentions that comics, especially comic

strips, can provide a powerful medium between literature and visual entertainment. They are believed to be meaningful as the illustrations to enhance the students' analysis of the literature that is the topic learned and reinforce the power of words. Furthermore, devices such as panels and word balloons in the comic strips work to elaborate and extend characters by placing them in narratives and supplying them with voices (Gordon, 1998:14). They will help the students get used to imagine the ideas discussed creatively.

Comic strips have been analyzed in terms of their uses as instructional tools as comic books (William, 1995) and short strips (Purnell & Solman, 1991) in Ali (2013:54). They have been believed to stimulate the students' higher level of thinking in the writing class. They can help the students gain as many ideas as possible dealing with the topic given. Words and images in the comic strips will help them in understanding the ideas of the story.

However, the result of the research might not be purely the effect of the treatment. Some extraneous variables might involve. If the research was conducted longer, it would have been better to give the treatment more than twice. Nevertheless, there was still a higher possibility of extraneous variable since the subjects of the research were human beings. Having a writing class in every meeting might lead to boredom. Their enthusiasm would not be a guarantee to exist in the third or fourth meeting.

Although the experimental research showed a successful result, there were some weaknesses found in this research. In accordance with the students' writing in the first and second meetings, some students were still careless in using verbs in the past form. They often wrote some verbs in the present form. As it was a recount writing instruction, they should have written the verbs in the past form. Some students often also did not have any idea to differentiate between a verb and an adjective. A clause including a subject and a verb was sometimes forgotten by some students. They often made a sentence without a verb.

Apart from the weaknesses, the research result proved that using comic strips was appropriate for teaching recount writing and the analysis showed that there is a significant effect of using comic strips on the eighth grade students' recount writing achievement at SMPN 1 Jember in the 2013/2014 academic year.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Regarding to the hypothesis verification and the earlier part of the discussion, it can be concluded that there was a significant effect of using comic strips on the eighth grade students' recount writing achievement at SMP Negeri 1 Jember. Moreover, the DRE (Degree of Relative

Effectiveness) analysis showed that comic strips in teaching writing was 4.21195% more effective than the teaching learning process without comic strips at SMP Negeri 1 Jember.

Since there is a significant effect of using comic strips on the eighth grade students' recount writing achievement, they can be applied to teach writing. Hence, the researcher delivers some suggestions as follows.

1. The English Teachers

Learning writing is essential for the eighth grade students. Apart from the difficulties in teaching writing or obstacles found in the writing class, the English teachers should teach the students in writing more regularly. The researcher suggests the English teachers at SMP Negeri 1 Jember that they apply comic strips in teaching writing. Consequently, the media used in teaching writing are necessarily varied. Various media in teaching learning process would lead to more enthusiasm.

2. The Students

The students of SMP Negeri 1 Jember are suggested to actively involve themselves in the teaching learning process. They can start searching similar comic strips from the internet or can even make comic strips by themselves. Afterwards, they can practice writing based on the comic strips and dig the richer ideas from them. Applying learning by using comic strips is also recommended for other skills, e.g. speaking by retelling the story on the comic strips.

3. The Other Researchers

The researcher suggests the future researchers to insert more comic strips in every single activity done in the research, so comic strips will be optimally useful. However, the future researcher should ponder the more detailed instruction on how the comic strips can be turned into a piece of writing. It is better to create a step-by-step exercise, so the students can easily understand what to do.

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