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Enhancing the Eighth Grade Students' Recount Paragraph Writing Achievement by Using Photographs at SMP Negeri 9 Jember

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FKIP, the University of Jember

Abstract: This research was intended to enhance students' recount paragraph writing achievement by using photographs. The research design was Classroom Action Research. The research subject and area were the eighth grade students at SMPN 9 Jember determined purposively by using purposive method. The data of this research were collected from interview, observation, test, and documentation. The results in cycle 1 showed that 64.2% of the students were categorized active and it increased to 77.4% in cycle 2. The result of test in cycle 1 showed that 66.7% students achieved the target minimum score, and it increased to 81% students in cycle 2 or more than 75% that was the research success criteria of this research. Therefore, the use of photographs could enhance the students' achievement and their participation in writing class.

Keywords: writing achievement, students' participation, photographs

Mastering a writing skill is in a broader sense very important in communication. As what Pillai (2002) notes that having the good communication skill in writing is pivotal for students opting for higher education. In other words, mastering writing skill is not easy since it is believed that writing is considered to be the complex skill. Writing might be a complex process that allows the writer to explore thoughts and ideas and make them visible and concrete. In fact, the process of writing put students into trouble as shown by errors made in organizing the composition and the language so that the students' writing topic cannot be stated correctly.

As found in the preliminary study at SMP Negeri 9 Jember the English teacher said that of all the eighth grade classes, the 8-C class had the lowest mean score in

writing, and this was supported in their previous writing scores. The previous mean score of the students in class 8-C was 70.6 which was less than 74 as the minimum requirement standard score of the English at SMP Negeri 9 Jember. There were only 16 students (38%) of 42 students in that class who got score 74 or more.

In teaching writing, the teacher also directly gave a topic to the students and asked them to write. The teacher never used media in teaching writing. Accordingly, the students faced some challenges at the moment they were starting to write. The challenges were finding ideas related to the topic, how and where to start writing, and organizing their sentences. Consequently, the students had poor writing products which were shown in the lack of grammar, mechanics, and context. Besides, the students became less participating in teaching learning process. Dealing with the problems, the English teacher agreed to conduct a classroom action research collaboratively with the researcher. The researcher considered that there should be media which may overcome the students' writing problem.

Photographs as one of the visual media were widely used in English language teaching, especially for teaching the writing skill. Many researches highly concerned the use of photographs in teaching and showed that photographs made students write effectively. In addition, according to Kellner (2008), photographs have a role in "spurring the students who are afraid to write, or are intimidated by the writing process" to construct idea into a meaningful piece of composition because photographs capture real people, place, and event. Moreover, Kellner (2008) urges, "photographs can be used to inspire either expository or creative pieces". Teachers should use photographs in teaching writing rather than other types of pictures since according to Kellner (2008) using photographs in writing, the students never again complain that they have nothing to write about. Principally,

photographs are “omnipresent in the daily lives of most students” (Viskochil, 1998:46). Students are might definitely be familiar with such media.

Furthermore, using photographs beneficially helps students to brainstorm ideas to write. As Calhoun (1999:68) says that using photographs can assist students to “develop their skills in beginning research and using their observation skills to base what they say and write on evidence”. The reason is that the authenticity of the information gives enough information for supporting materials presented in the class. The authentic information of the photographs exists because Jewell (2002) assumes that “photographs are images placed on paper from reality or from originals by a photocopying process.”

In addition, photographs allow students to describe things even if there is no word to do so. Viskochil (1998:50) explains, “Photographs are important windows into the past that can be appreciated both for their aesthetic attributes and for the incredible amounts of data that they may contain.” Considering the history contains behind it, photographs can work better when collaboratively used with text. It provides a balanced look at the history that the written, printed, or spoken word alone cannot provide. Photographs show the detail of real life content that attacks students’ attention as Lederle (2012) believes that the “real-world authenticity” contained in a photograph “can rivet students’ attention, spark inquiry and draw them into a writing topic or task.” Photographs are the best among other picture because it also can “stimulate creative and critical thinking while also helping students to mastering content.” Lederle (2012) The other role of photographs is that they can stimulate students’ imagination as Youra (2009:1) experiences that “Students’ comments and actions reflected increased insight as they began to see photography as rhetoric, as language, and to see the analogies between

photographic and verbal expression.” Accordingly, “it triggers the students to explore new possibilities in writing” (Youra, 2009:1).

Several relevant researches with the same topic were conducted and revealed satisfying results. One of them was Indah (2010) in her research found that there was significant difference between students’ ability in writing recount taught by using photographs and without using photographs. Furthermore, Nafisah (2013) in her research found that there was the enhancement of the students’ activity in teaching writing recount text by photographs in every cycle, and Sadiq (2013) also showed that there was a positive result of how photographs can enhance teaching learning process.

Research Design

The design of this research was classroom action research because it was intended to enhance students’ recount paragraph writing achievement and active participation by using photographs. This is in line with what Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, and Razavieh (2010:514) note that action research is a process to improve education by incorporating change and involving educators to work together to improve their own practice. The research area was SMP Negeri 9 Jember determined by purposive method. The subject of this research was the students of grade 8-C at the school because the result of the interview with the English teacher in the preliminary study showed that the students of class 8-C got the lowest score in writing tests and assignments. In other words, they still experienced difficulties in writing a paragraph.

This classroom action research was conducted in collaboration with the English teacher of the eighth grade with a cyclical model consisting of four stages, as

proposed by Elliot, (1991:70): (1) planning the action, (2) implementing the action, (3) observing and evaluating, and (4) analyzing the data and reflecting the action. The data of this research was collected by interview, documentation, observation, and test. Interview and documentation were carried out in the preliminary study. Meanwhile observation was used to collect the data of students' participation during the teaching learning process. The writing achievement test was used to get data about the students' writing achievement after they were taught by using photographs. The collected data from both the test and observation checklist were analyzed statistically with the percentage formula (Ali, 1993:186)

Research Findings

There were two cycles in this research conducted in May 2015. The research results in cycle 1 showed that the students' participation increased in every meeting, but the average percentage of the students' participation did not achieve the research target requirement yet. The average percentage of students' participation was 64.2% which was less than 75% as the target requirement in this research. The result of students' writing achievement test in cycle 1 indicated that the percentage of students who got score 74 or higher did not achieve the target requirement in this research because the percentage of the students who got 74 or higher was only 66.7% or less than 75%. Accordingly, the cycle was continued to the second cycle.

The result in cycle 2 showed that the average percentage of the students' participation achieved the target percentage requirement (75%), namely 77.4%. Similarly, the percentage of students who got 74 or higher was 81% or more than 75%. This means that in cycle 2, the percentage of students' writing achievement test achieved the research success criteria. Therefore, using photographs could enhance the students' participation during the teaching learning process.

Discussion

Based on the research findings, the result of the students' participation and writing achievement improved in cycle 2 as the result of using photographs in English teaching and learning process. This supported the theories stating that using photographs can enhance students' achievement and participation writing classes. This is because photographs "instantly help them experience success and have a sense of empowerment in their learning process" (Friesen, 2012:39) and "develop their skills in beginning research and using their observation skills to base what they say and write on evidence" (Calhoun (1999:68)

The students could compose personal recount from their own photographs, but the students who did not bring photographs could also compose factual and/or imaginary recount. It was because real-world authenticity contained in photographs unconsciously helped students to force themselves to write recount based on contents in photographs. This supported what Lederle (2012) said that photographs could to "stimulate creative and critical thinking while also helping students to mastering content." Moreover, some students, who could not bring any photographs, composed imaginary recount. They added fictional events into their writing. As they thought they did not know anything about the photographs they got, they started to imagine what could happen. This is similar to what Youra (2009:1) note that photograph "triggers the students to explore new possibilities in writing".

Conclusion

Based on the research results and the pedagogical implication of the research findings, it is evident that using photographs improved the eighth grade students' recount paragraph writing achievement at SMPN 9 Jember. Therefore, the English

teacher at the school should apply photographs more frequently as the media in teaching learning process of writing and other skills in English. This is due to the fact that using photographs could enhance the students' writing achievement and their participation.

The students are suggested to familiarize themselves to use photographs as alternative media of generating their ideas in their writing practices. Besides, the result of this research can be used as a reference or information for the future researchers who want to conduct further research.

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