Intan Cahyaning Palupi Arifin *et al., Improving Class VII B Students' Descriptive Writing Achievement by Using Pictures of Famous People at SMPN 2 Mumbulsari in the Academic Year of 2012/2013*

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IMPROVING STUDENTS' DESCRIPTIVE WRITING ACHIEVEMENT BY USING PICTURES OF FAMOUS PEOPLE AT SMPN 2 MUMBULSARI JEMBER

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Abstract

This research was intended to improve the class VII B students' descriptive writing achievement by using pictures of famous people at SMPN 2 Mumbulsari. The primary data of this research were obtained from the students' scores of descriptive writing achievement test and the observation of students' active participation during the lessons. The data were analyzed by describing the precentage of students who achieve the minimum score requirement. The result of this research showed that the students' paragraph writing achievement increases from the first to the second cycle. The students also participate actively during the lessons. These means that the use of pictures of famous people can improve the students' descriptive writing achievement of SMPN 2 Mumbulsari Jember and the use of pictures of famous people can improve the students' active participation in descriptive writing achievement of SMPN 2 Mumbulsari Jember

Keywords: single pictures, descriptive paragraph, writing achievement

INTRODUCTION

Most students said that writing in a foreign language is very difficult to do. According to Richards (1990: 100), "Learning to write, in either a first or second language, is one of the most difficult tasks a learner encounters and one that few people can be said to fully master. He also adds that learning to write well is a difficult and lengthy process." writing for students is not an easy work to do, because they need a special ideas and certain processes to write on piece of papers.

Those facts happen to most students in the world. When students start their writing, sometimes they face some difficulties in doing it. They want to write something, but in the middle of their writing, they face some problems and perhaps they get stuck for a while. This is also similar to Hughey et al. (1983: 38) who say that writing is often found as the difficult skill of all the English skills, both as the first and second language. From those statements it can be concluded that most of students have problem with their writing, they still get confused how to develop and explain the ideas.

Meanwhile students have to master writing well. As it is stated in *School Based Curriculum (KTSP)* 2006, the scopes of writing at junior high schools are that students are able to understand and create many kinds of *short functional texts, monologue and essays in form of procedure, descriptive, recount, narrative* and *report*. The changes at teaching materials are appeared in the use of *vocabulary, grammar* and *rhetorical steps*

Writing is a process of discovery that involves a series of steps (Langan 2000: 13). This is similar to Wingersky et al. (1999: 4) who say that "Writing is a process through which you discover, organize, and communicate your thoughts to a reader. Besides, writing is also consisting of several writing process such as generating idea, revising, and so on." Those are useful components that should be mastered by the students in writing activity, if the students have mastered them, they can write more quickly.

A writer should consider some aspects such as grammar, mechanics, content, vocabulary, and organization when they are writing. Besides those aspects, students should think about the ideas that will be written. This is similar to Richards (1990: 101) who says that "The process of moving from concepts, thoughts, and ideas to written texts is complex. It shows that writing is a complex chore that involve complex language components such as, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation."

Based on the preliminary study conducted at SMPN 2 Mumbulsari on February 4th, 2013 by interviewing the English teacher and observing the writing classroom, it was

revealed that class VII B still had difficulties in generating and developing ideas in writing. They also had problems with vocabulary and grammar. It could be proven when they had free writing activities. Some of students just did nothing, looked confused and did not know what they have to do.

In reality, there are many students who get a lot of difficulties in learning English. According to Swick (2009: VII), writing in any language is a difficult skill to acquire. Therefore, an ESL student should approach writing in English carefully. In order to write well, there must be an understanding of grammatical structures, vocabulary, and tense usage. One of the students at Class VII B also wrote *She study in Indonesia University* that should be *She studies at Indonesia University*.

English as a foreign language in Indonesia has different structures from the structures of Bahasa Indonesia. They often lead the students into confusion and mistakes whenever the learners attempt to produce English sentences. One of the examples is when one of the students at Class VII B wrote *She has a dog brown*, that should be *She has a brown dog*. The lack of vocabulary and grammar also become the main problems in writing process. They keep asking about the meaning of easy words, such as *sekolah, rambut, cantik,* and *tampan*.

The English teacher said that Class VII B had lower writing scores than other class. When the teacher asked them to do a free writing about someone that they like or love, they knew the topic but they did not know how to start their writing. The teacher asked them to imagine about the person that they like, but the teacher did not give any media to the students. Then the teacher gave some clues for them to start their writing, but after that, they stuck again and they did nothing. They keep asking about how to write it to their teacher. From the discussion, the researcher found that the problem was the English teacher seldom provides media in teaching English. She admitted that she taught English based on the textbook and never used pictures as media. As a result, the classroom activity became less productive and only few students were active in the learning writing process.

The researcher and the English teacher discussed that using single pictures of famous people as media would be an attractive and an interactive ways in teaching writing. Single pictures mean pictures of single objects, persons, or activities. Wright (1989: 196) states that pictures of people invite us to speculate who they are, what sort of people they are (age, family, work, concerns) and what they are thinking and feeling. According to Wright (1989: 22), pictures can be used to motivate learners and to remind them what to say. He (1989: 161) adds that picture gives extra information which allows the students to infer what is intended but not clearly stated in the text.

There are many things that teachers and students can do with pictures. Picture is useful for students to gain new information and to learn many things from it. Pictures of people can also make students to learn many new things from it. As Wright (1989: 196-197) adds

Pictures of people invite us to speculate who they are, what short of people they are (age, family, work, concerns) and what they are thinking and feeling, and general things to talk about are about the identity (reason of fame; achievement; evaluation of what they have done/are doing/will do), character: background (origin, influence, struggles, etc); physical description; like/dislike/admire.

Pictures of people can definitely help students to learn many things, especially about the description of the people. Even if the people are famous, the students will easily produce many things from the pictures.

Single pictures of famous people can help the process of meaning assimilation of the students because it can direct the students to think about the picture and apply it in the writing descriptive text. Giving single picture hopefully students' attention will be attracted directly to think about the information that is represented on the pictures.

Many researchers have done a classroom action research by using pictures. Munawaroh (2011: 58) found that the use of single pictures could improve the fifth year students' sentence writing achievement at SDN Tawangsari II Tulungagung in the 2010/2011 academic year. Besides, Halim (2011: 51) also reported that the use of single pictures could improve the students recount paragraph writing achievement of grade VIII-C of SMPN 2 Puger in the 2010/2011 academic year. There was also a research dealing with writing that was conducted by Wicaksono (2011: 3) who found that the use of individual picture could improve the eighth grade students' descriptive paragraph writing achievement by using individual pictures at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Genteng 2010/2011 academic year. There was also a previous research dealing with the effectiveness of using single picture as media in teaching writing that was conducted by Yulianto (2011). His research showed that students made improvement in their writing achievement.

Based on the reasons above, the researcher conducted an action research entitled *Improving Class VII B Students' Descriptive Writing Achievement by Using Pictures of Famous People at SMPN 2 Mumbulsari in the Academic Year of 2012/2013*.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted to improve the VII B students' achievement in writing descriptive text by using single pictures of famous people at SMPN 2 Mumbulsari. Therefore, this research applied CAR design. Elliot (1991: 69) explains that an action research is the study of a social situation, with a view to improve the quality of action within it. In addition, McMillan (1992: 12) states that classroom action research is a specific type of applied action research with the purpose of solving a specific classroom problem or making decision at a single local site. The research design was Classroom Action Research (CAR) with cycle model. Each cycle consists of four stages of activities; the preparation of the action, the implementation of the action, classroom observation and

evaluation, reflection of the action. In conclusion, the classroom action research is intended to improve the quality of the teaching learning process.

In this classroom action research, the action was conducted by the researcher collaboratively with the English teacher. The subjects of this research were 39 students of class VII B at SMPN 2 Mumbulsari in the academic year of 2012/2013. They were taken by using purposive method. The standard minimum score requirement of the seventh grade students at SMPN 2 Mumbulsari was 70.

The data in this research were gathered by administrating a writing test and by having observation in the class in each cycle.

Concerning the scoring system, analytic scoring method was used in this research. "The analytic scoring method is a method of the scoring with requires a separate score of a number of aspects of a task" (Hughes, 2003: 104). There were five aspects that were scored analytically: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics.

This research was conducted in two cycles. If the students' scores in cycle one did not fulfill of the standard score requirement, the actions would be continued in cycle two. However, if the results of the first cycle achieved the standard score, the second cycle was needed as reinforcement to know the consistency of the result of the students' writing skill in the first cycle. The activities of the research used the following procedures;

The first step was do the interview with the seventh grade English teacher to gain the data. Second, plan the actions by constructing the lesson plans for meeting I and meeting II in the first cycle. Third, implement the action in cycle one. Fourth, monitor the implementation of the action by doing observation. Fifth, give the writing test by using single pictures to the subjects after the action in the first cycle. Sixth, analyze the result of writing test by finding the mean score of the students' writing test. Seventh, reflect the result of writing test and observation, if the result of writing test does not achieve the standard mean score requirement, the lesson plans of the first cycle will be revised and will be continued in cycle two. The eighth step and the rest were including at the second cycle. The eighth step was construct the lesson plans for the second cycle. Ninth, Implement the action in cycle two. Tenth, monitor the implementation of the action in the second cycle by doing observation. Eleventh, give the writing test by using single pictures to the subjects after the action in the second cycle. Twelfth, analyze the result of writing test in the second cycle by combining the scores of the students' writing test from the researcher and the English teacher. Thirteenth, reflect the result of writing test and observation in the second cycle. The last step is drawing a conclusion to answer the research problems.

After all of those steps were done, it was hope that the research data could give good result as it has stated at the research problems before and the students would able to improve their writing and achievement through single pictures of famous people.

RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION
Cycle 1

The action in cycle 1 was conducted in three meetings including the descriptive writing achievement test at the class of VII B of SMPN 2 Mumbulsari in the 2012/2013 academic year. The first meeting was done on June 14, 2013 and the second meeting was done on June 15, 2013. Meanwhile, the descriptive writing achievement test was done on June 17, 2013. During the actions in the first meeting, the researcher taught the students and the English teacher of SMPN 2 Mumbulsari observed the students' participation. There were 39 students in the classroom. The topic of learning at the first and the second meeting was about famous people. The students were given some pictures about famous people and they had to describe them in the form of descriptive text. The implementations of the actions in the first meeting were based on lesson plan 1 and the second meeting was based on lesson plan 2.

Based on the result of the first writing test, it was revealed that there were 31 students or 79.49% of the students who had score more than 70. In addition, there were eight students or 20.51% who did not achieve the minimum standard score.

During the observation as the process evaluation, 79.49% of the students and 84.61% of the students were actively involved during the teaching and learning process in the first to the second meeting in cycle 1. It means that the requirement of the 75% of the students' participation to get involved on the teaching and learning process had been fulfilled.

The standard requirement of this action research has been achieved. But, to know the consistency of the result in cycle 1, second cycle was needed to be done. In cycle 2, the researcher was going to apply the same teaching technique as the cycle 1, but the researcher planned to use more famous people as the media of descriptive writing to make the students easier to recognize them.

Cycle 2

The action in cycle 2 was done to know the consistency of the results in cycle one. It was done in three meetings. The first meeting was done on June 19, 2013 and the second meeting was done on June 20, 2013. The descriptive writing achievement test was done on June 21, 2013. During the actions, the English teacher of SMPN 2 Mumbulsari became the doer of the actions while the researcher became the observer.

Based on the results of the second writing test, it was revealed that there were 32 students or 82.05% of the students who got score 70 or above 70. In addition, there were 7 students or 17.95% of students who did not achieve the minimum standard score.

The minimum standard score for English lesson in this school is 70. In cycle 1, the students' score in descriptive writing achievement test improved to 74.38, from the previous average English test score that was 72.79. There were 79.49% of the students got score at least 70 or above 70. It had fulfilled the standard requirement of the mean

score that was 70. Moreover, in cycle 2, there was also an improvement of the students' score on descriptive writing achievement test that was 75.81. There were 82.05% of the students got score at least 70 or above 70. Further, the students were actively involved during the teaching and learning process. In the first and second meeting of the cycle 1, there were 79.49% and 84.61% of the students were active in the class. While in cycle 2, there were 82.05% and 87.18% of the students were actively involved during the teaching and learning process. It means that the teaching of descriptive writing achievement by using pictures of famous people was able to improve the students' descriptive writing achievement and active participation.

The evaluation process was done by conducting classroom observation. The result of observation in the first and second meeting in cycle 1 showed that there were 79.49% and 84.61% of the students were active during the teaching and learning process. Then, the result of observation in the first and second meeting in cycle 2 showed that there were 82.05% and 87.18 % of the students were active.

The results of the observation in the second meeting in cycle 2 showed that 87.18% of the students (34 students) were actively involved in the teaching learning process of descriptive writing achievement by using pictures of famous people. It means that the target requirement of 75% of students' active involvement in the teaching learning process of descriptive writing achievement by using pictures of famous people had been fulfilled.

The percentage of the students' descriptive writing achievement test score in cycle 2 was 82.05% of the students passed the minimum required score that was 70. Further, the students' mean score of descriptive writing achievement test in cycle 2 was 75.65. It was improved from the students' mean score in cycle 1 that was 74.38. Moreover, there were 82.05% and 87.18% of the students were active during the teaching and learning process on both meetings 1 and 2. They were active discussing the material given by the teacher, answering the questions from the teacher and raising some questions to the teacher. They looked so enthusiastic and paid much attention to the teacher's explanation during the teaching learning process. Eventhough they were active, but they still need to improve their descriptive writing. The scorer of each aspects show that they still reached the average score of the range in the scoring rubric. They still wrote monotonously, but some of the students had already improved the content of descriptive writing. Since the actions in cycle 2 had achieved the standard requirement of this research, therefore, the actions in cycle 2 were stopped.

DISCUSSION

As it was stated in Chapter 2 of this research, pictures had some roles for students, as it was stated by Wright (1989: 17) that the roles for pictures in speaking and writing were as follows:
1. Pictures can motivate the student and make him or her wants to pay attention and wants to take a part,
2. Pictures contribute to the context in which the language is being used. They bring the world into the classroom (a street scene or a particular object, for example a train),
3. The pictures can be described in an objective way ('This is a train.') or interpreted (It's probably a local train.') or responded to subjectively ('I like traveling by train.'),
4. Picture can cue responses to questions or cue substitutions through controlled practice,
5. Pictures can stimulate and provide information to be referred to in conversation, discussion and storytelling.

From the above statements of Wright, it could be seen that the main role of pictures for students is for helping them to improve their writing ability and achievement. In this research, pictures of famous people have very important roles to the students. One of them is for helping them to improve their descriptive writing ability and achievement. Through pictures, the students were helped to describe the people by looking at their appearance. Then, they could tell about the personality, the habits, the movies/albums, the awards and many more. They could describe easier about famous people because they had already known about them before. Then, they described famous people by writing some paragraphs about them. They could improve their descriptive writing scores from cycle 1 to cycle 2. It is proven by their scores at cycle 1 and cycle 2. The mean score of descriptive writing test at cycle 1 was 74.38 and the mean score of descriptive writing test at cycle 2 was 75.81.

In addition, pictures are easy to get. If a teacher wants to know and find some pictures, they can find them from many sources. After that, they can use the pictures as teaching media by their own way. Here are the use of pictures as Wright (1996: 129) stated in the previous chapter 2:
1. To motivate the student to speak or to write
2. To create a context within which his/her response will have meaning
3. To provide the student with information to use *uncontrolled* practice work. Pictures showing objects, actions, events and relationships can cue answers to questions, substitutions and sentence completions
4. To sponsor, stimulate and possibly to guide, spoken and written descriptions, narrations or dialogues.
5. To sponsor, stimulate and offer information for free writing and speaking. 'Free, in the sense of the teacher otfering no Ianguage guidance or restrictions.

From those statements above, it is clear that pictures have important roles for helping students to improve their speaking and writing. In this research, the researcher used pictures to help the students to improved their descriptive writing achievement. It could be seen from the scores of cycle 1 and 2. They were succeed in improving their descriptive writing scores. Moreover, there were some

previous research related to the use of pictures and they were succeed too. The success of this research also supports the previous research done by the previous researchers.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The results in both cycles showed that single pictures of famous people are able to improve the VII B students' descriptive writing achievement of SMPN 2 Mumbulsari Jember. Moreover, according to the results of observation done by the researcher and the English teacher, it is known that there are 79.49% of the students and 84.61% of the students were categorized as active in cycle 1. Next, there were also 82.05% of the students and 87.18% of the students were actively involved in cycle 2.

Considering the result of this classroom action research which showed that the use of single pictures of famous people are able to improve the seventh grade students' descriptive writing achievement and active participation, some suggestions are proposed to the English teacher, the students, and the other researchers.

It is suggested to the English teacher, she should apply single pictures of famous people more frequently as the media when teaching writing and teaching other skills in English.

The students are suggested to be familiar to and use single pictures of famous people when learning writing or other skills in English as an alternative technique in improving their ability in English.

The other researchers, who have the same problem, are suggested to use the results of this action research as references to conduct the same research but in different design of research to develop the quality of teaching writing. It is suggested to pay more attention to the students who are low achievers to make them able to catch up with the rest of the class.

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