

IMPROVING THE GRADE 8 STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN WRITING A RECOUNT TEXT BY USING THE CLUSTERING TECHNIQUE AT SMPN 1 BALUNG

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Abstract

This research was intended to describe how the use of clustering technique could improve the Grade 8 students' active participation and their achievement in writing a recount text at SMPN 1 Balung. The design of this research was a classroom action research which was consisted of the planing of the action, the implementation of the action, the observation and evaluation, and the data analysis and reflection. The subjects of this research were the Grade 8 students of SMPN 1 Balung, especially class 8 C. The number of the students in this class were 36 students. The data collection methods used in this research ; they were primary data and supporting data. The primary data were taken from observation and vocabulary test, while the supporting data were taken from interview and documentation. The primary data were analyzed quantitatively by using the percentage formula.. The results showed the improvement in each cycle. In Cycle 1, the results of the observation showed that 66.66% of the students in meeting I and 72.22% of the students in meeting II actively participated during the teaching learning process. Besides, the result of the writing test showed that there were 69.44% of the students got score ≥ 75 . Meanwhile, in Cycle 2, The result of the observation increased from 77.77% of the students in meeting 1 to 83.33% of the students in meeting 2 actively participated during the teaching learning process, while the result of the writing test was 77.77% of the students got score ≥ 75 . Based on the result of the research, it was concluded that use of clustering technique could improve the Grade 8 students' achivement in writing a recount text.

Key Words: *Classroom Action Research, Clustering Technique, Students' Active Participation, Writing Achievement.*

Introduction

Most of people in the world use English to communicate with others. In Indonesia, English becomes one of the compulsory subjects that should be taught in the elementary level up to the university level. There are four language skills that the students should learn when they study English. They are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Related to those skills, in the curriculum of junior high schools, it is stated that English is a medium of communication in oral and written forms. Communication is the ability to understand and express the information, thoughts, and feelings in the form of spoken or written text which is expressed in the four English skills. Writing is one of the language skills which is very important to be mastered by the students to support the communication. As Harmer (2004:31) mentions, writing (as one of four skills) is a part of the syllabus in the teaching of English. According to Hartfiel *et al.* (1985:3), writing is an important tool for giving order and meaning of thoughts

and information. According to the 2006 Curriculum (KTSP or School-Based Curriculum), one of the writing materials that should be learnt by the Grade 8 students in junior high school is a recount text.

Based on the preliminary study that was held on 2nd October 2013. The teacher said that most of the Grade 8 students, especially class 8 C experienced difficulties in writing, especially in writing a recount text. They had difficulties in organizing and developing their ideas in the written form. They also lacked vocabulary. They sometimes used inappropriate words when they composed sentences so that their sentences were often meaningless. Moreover, they did not know how to construct sentences by using appropriate grammar and how to use correct punctuation. In addition, they still used Indonesian style in writing English. Therefore, it was difficult to understand their writing. Besides, the teacher informed that the general problem faced by the students in writing a recount text was they usually did not know how to start writing. When the

teacher gave a topic to the students, it was difficult for them to find the appropriate words that related to the topic. Because of those difficulties, the students often became frustrated and they were passive in the class. They talked to their friend and did not pay attention to the teacher explanation. In addition, The teacher said that there were only 10 students who achieved standard passing grade at SMPN 1 Balung that is 75, while the mean score of the students was 64.

Because of that reason and some problems which were found in learning writing a recount text, it is important to choose interesting media or a technique that may be able to overcome the students' writing problems. In this case, a clustering technique was selected. Gerson and Gerson (1997:184) say that a clustering technique has some advantages such as gathering information and organizing thoughts using a simple way. Brannan (2003:6) adds that clustering is another good prewriting technique. It means that by using a clustering technique, the students will be able to develop their ideas easily in writing a recount text.

A previous study concerning the clustering technique was conducted by Rahmawati (2010) in a Classroom Action Research at SMPN 5 Tanggul. The result showed that the clustering technique could improve the students' achievement in writing a recount text. A similar research was conducted by Putri in 2011. She conducted an experimental research by using the clustering technique at SMPN 2 Cluring Banyuwangi. The result of the research showed that there was a significant effect on the eight grade students' writing achievement by using the clustering technique.

From the explanation above, the researcher believes that the clustering technique was a good technique to improve the Grade 8 students' writing achievement at SMPN 1 Balung. Therefore, a classroom action research entitled "*Improving the Grade 8 Students' Achievement in Writing a Recount Text by Using the Clustering Technique at SMPN 1 Balung*" was conducted.

The problem of the research were (1) How can the use of clustering technique improve the students' active participation in writing a recount text at SMPN 1 Balung in the 2013/2014 Academic Year?; (2) How can the clustering technique improve the Grade 8 students' achievement in writing a recount text at SMPN 1 Balung in the 2013/2014 Academic Year?. Then, the objectives of the research were (1) To improve the Grade 8 student's active participation in the classroom during the teaching learning of writing a recount text by using the clustering technique at SMPN 1 Balung in the 2013/2014 Academic Year; (2) To improve the Grade 8 students' achievement in writing a recount text by using the clustering technique at SMPN 1 Balung in the 2013/2014 Academic Year.

Research Methods

The research design of this research was classroom action research (CAR) that was done collaboratively with the English teacher by adapting the cycle model of the action research from Lewin, as quoted by Elliot (1991:70) with a sequence of steps namely the planning of the action, the implementation of the action, the observation and evaluation, and the data analysis and reflection. This research was conducted at SMPN 1 Balung. This school was chosen purposively. The research subjects were 36 students of the 8 C class at SMPN 1 Balung. The data collection methods used in this research was the primary data and the supporting data. The primary data were collected from the observation and the writing test, while the supporting data were collected from the interview and the documentation. The observation was used to get the data about the students' active participation during the teaching and learning process, while the writing test was done to get data about students' writing achievement in the form of scores after the actions were given to the students.

In scoring the students' writing test, this research used analytical scoring method to evaluate the students' writing test. Hughes (2003:100) says that analytical scoring method is a method that requires a separate score for each of a number as the aspect of the task. There were five aspects of writing that were scored. They are *content, organization, vocabulary, grammar* and *mechanics*. The scoring guide used in this research was adapted from Anderson in Hughes (2003:101-102). After that, The students' writing test in the form of scores in each cycle were analyzed by using formula below that was adapted from Ali (1993:186).

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

Notes:

E = the percentage of the students who achieve ≥ 75 in the writing test.

n = the number of students who achieve ≥ 75 in the writing test.

N = the number of the students (subjects)

Then, the results of the observation in each cycle were analyzed qualitatively. To find the percentage of the students who were active during the teaching learning process of writing a recount text by using the clustering technique, the following formula was used:

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

Notes:

E = the percentage of the students who are active in the teaching learning process of writing.

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

N = the number of the students (subjects)

Research Results and Discussion

This research was conducted in two cycles. Each cycle was done in three meetings. The first and second meetings

were used for implementing the action. The third meeting was used to conduct the writing test. The research findings was based on the results of the observation and the writing test. The observation was done during the teaching learning process of writing a recount text by using clustering technique. To record the students' participation during the teaching learning process, the observation guide in the form of checklist was used. The indicators observed were as follows: 1.) paying attention to the teacher's explanation; 2.) answering the teacher's questions; 3.) The students write their ideas in the cluster based on the topic given individually; 4.) The students do the writing exercises given by the teacher based on the cluster made.

According to the results of the action done in each cycle, it could be said that the use of clustering technique in the teaching learning process of writing a recount text could improve the students' active participation and their writing achievement. The results of students' participation and their writing achievement could be described as follows. In Cycle 1, the results of the observation were 66.66% of the students who were active in meeting 1 and 72.22% of the students who were active in meeting 2. Besides, from the result of the students' writing test in Cycle 1, it was known that there were only 69.44% of the students got scores ≥ 75 in the writing test. It means it had not reached the criteria of the success in this research that was 75% of the students could get score ≥ 75 of the writing test and 75% of the students actively participated during the teaching learning process.

From those results, it was known that there were some factors that influenced the results. They were: first, the students still had difficulties in creating clustering, second, there were some students who created the cluster without writing the three subtopics that were *orientation*, *event* and *reorientation* or using lines and circle in the cluster. Third the students still did not understand about grammar and mechanic dealing with spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Some of them did not write the sentences with the appropriate tenses and articles. They also wrote the text without punctuations, capital letters and ignored the spellings of the words. In addition, When the teacher asked the questions to the students, there were only the same students who answered the teacher's questions, while the rest of them did not pay attention and did not answer the teacher's questions. They tended to keep silent and depended on their friends' answers. It made the situation become monotonous.

To solve those problems, the teacher invited one of the students to come in front of the class to write his cluster on the whiteboard. Then, the teacher discussed the cluster together with the students. Besides, the teacher gave more explanation and examples about grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. The teacher also advised the students to pay attention when the teacher explained about grammar and mechanic. Moreover, in asking some questions to the students, the teacher asked the questions to

the students randomly. So, all the students were ready to answer the teacher's questions and there were no students who depended on their friends' answers. They tried to answer the teacher's questions whether their answers were correct or not.

After the action were done in Cycle 2, it was found that the students could improve their active participation and their writing achievement in Cycle 2. The percentage of the students' participation increased from 77.77% in meeting 1 to 83.33% in meeting 2. It was higher than the percentage of the students' participation in Cycle 1 that was 66.66% in meeting 1 and 72.22% in meeting 2. Then, the percentage of the students who got score ≥ 75 in the writing test also increased from 69.44% in Cycle 1 to 77.77% in Cycle 2. From the results of Cycle 2, it proved that by revising some weak aspects the students could improve their active participation and their writing achievement optimally. In conclusion, the target evaluation criteria in this research had been fulfilled. Therefore, the action was stopped.

The results were supported by some theories and studies related to the use of clustering technique during the teaching learning process of writing. Buscemi (2002:14) says that clustering is another effective way to gather information. It is a good way to turn a broad subject into a limited and more manageable topic. In addition, Langan (2008:30) says that clustering is one of prewriting activities which can help a writer to generate a topic and make details about the topic. It uses circles, boxes, and lines to show the relationship among the ideas and the details. The results were also supported by the previous research that was conducted by Rahmawati (2010) in a Classroom Action Research at SMPN 5 Tanggul. The result showed that the clustering technique could improve the students' achievement in writing a recount text. The other research was conducted by Putri in 2011. She conducted an experimental research by using the clustering technique at SMPN 2 Cluring Banyuwangi. The result of the research showed that there was a significant effect of using the clustering technique on the eight grade students' writing achievement by using the clustering technique. Related to the above explanation, it could be concluded that the use of clustering technique could improve the students' participation during the teaching learning process of writing a recount text and the students' writing achievement.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Based on the results of writing test which were done in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2, it could be concluded that teaching a recount text by using clustering technique could improve the 8 C class students' writing achievement at SMPN 1 Balung in the 2013/2014 academic year. It was because of the clustering technique could help the students to organize and develop their ideas before they wrote a recount text. It could be seen from the results of the students' writing test.

The percentage of the students who got scores 75 or more in the writing test in cycle I was 69.44% of the students, while, in the Cycle 2, the percentage of the students who got score ≥ 75 in the writing test improved to 77.77%. Therefore, the criteria of success that was 75% of the research subjects who got score at least 75 was fulfilled.

Then, the percentage of the students' active participation also improved. The clustering technique could improve the students' active participation in the teaching learning process of writing a recount text. The percentage of the students' active participation during the teaching learning process of writing by using clustering technique increased from 66.66% in meeting 1 to 72.22% in meeting 2 in Cycle I to 77.77% in meeting 1 and 83.33% in meeting 2. It means that in Cycle 2, the results had fulfilled the target evaluation criteria that was at least 75% of the students participated actively in the teaching process of writing a recount text.

The results showed that the use of clustering technique could improve the students' active participation and their writing achievement. Considering the results, some suggestions are given to the following people. First, the English teacher is suggested to use clustering technique as the prewriting activity in teaching writing especially in teaching writing a recount text. It is due to the result using clustering technique could increase the students' writing achievement. Second, the students are suggested to be more active during the learning activities in the class and they are suggested to improve their writing achievement by using clustering technique for the other topics in writing a recount text. The last, the future Researchers are suggested to conduct a future research on a similar problem by using the same or different research design to increase the students' writing achievement by using the clustering technique at different school and different subjects.

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