ABSTRACT


The aims of this research are 1) to find out whether clustering technique improve the students’ ability in writing descriptive text of seventh grade students of SMP Nurul Islam Ngemplak in academic year 2014/2015, 2) to describe the process of teaching descriptive paragraph by using clustering technique of seventh grade students of SMP Nurul Islam Ngemplak in academic year 2014/2015.

The researcher conducted a Classroom Action Research (CAR) from April to June 2015 at the seventh grade students of SMP Nurul Islam Ngemplak. The subject of the research was thirty students of class VIIE SMP Nurul Islam Ngemplak, consisting of 12 boys and 18 girls. The research was conducted in two cycles of action. Each cycle consists of four steps: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The data obtained were from quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative data were collected by using some technique including observation, interview, document analysis, and field notes. To collect the quantitative data the researcher conducted the tests. For the quantitative data, the researcher analyzed the mean scores of the test to compare differences between the score of pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2.

The result of the research showed that the students’ writing skill has been improved after the implementation of clustering technique to teach writing descriptive text. The improvement of students’ writing skill included; (1) content, (2) word order, (3) vocabulary, (4) grammar, (5) mechanic. The improvements are clearly seen on the mean score in every cycle. The mean of pre-test was 35.33, the mean of post-test 1 was 55.5, and the mean score of post-test 2 was 78.33. From the description above, it shows that there is improvement of students’ writing skill. It means that clustering technique can improve the students’ interest in writing skill. It also built well climate in the teaching learning activity.

Keywords: Writing Skill, Clustering Technique, Classroom Action Research
ABSTRAK


Tujuan penelitian ini adalah 1) untuk menemukan apakah teknik clustering meningkatkan kemampuan siswa kelas 7 SMP Nurul Islam Ngemplak tahun ajaran 2014/2015 dalam menulis teks deskriptif, 2) untuk menggambarkan proses mengajar paragraf deskriptif dengan menggunakan teknik clustering pada siswa kelas 7 SMP Nurul Islam Ngemplak tahun jaran 2014/2015.


Kata kunci : Keterampilan Menulis, Teknik Clustering, Penelitian Tindakan Kelas.
Improving Students’ Ability in Writing Descriptive Text Using Clustering Technique

(A Classroom Action Research at the Seventh Grade Students of SMP Nurul Islam Ngemplak in the Academic Year 2014/2015)

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Abstrak


Kata kunci: Keterampilan Menulis, Teknik Clustering, dan Penelitian Tindakan Kelas
INTRODUCTION

English has become an international language. Richards and Rodgers (1986:1) said, “Latin was most widely studied as foreign language five hundred years ago. However, English has become the most widely studied foreign language today.” English is so widely spoken; it has often referred to as a world language, the lingua franca of modern era, and while is not an official language in most countries, it is currently the language most often taught as a foreign language.

Studying English as a foreign language is gradually getting more important. Minister of Education and culture decree No: 372/2003, stated that English is considered as a first foreign language and compulsory subject to be taught in Indonesia school from junior high school up to university. One of the aims of teaching English is developing the ability to communicate. The ability involves the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Based on the concept and function, English has a purpose to develop those four skills and also the language components: vocabulary, structure and pronunciation (in speech) or spelling (in writing) which supports students mastery well. In mastering English, students find problems dealing with language skills and language components as mentioned above.

Writing is one of the four language skills which is very important to learn. Among the skills, writing is the most difficult skill to be learnt, because it needs hard thinking in producing words, sentences, and paragraph at the same time (Richards & Renandya, 2002:303). In the first year of junior high school, the basic competency that
should be achieved in the writing English subject is that the students have ability to develop and produce written simple functional text in the descriptive text.

Descriptive text is a text that describes the features of someone, something, or a certain place. Wardiman, Jahur, and Djusma (2008:115) state that descriptive text consists of introduction and description. Introduction is the part of paragraph that introduces the character, and description is the part of paragraph that describes the character. The students can use the simple present and adjective clause in writing descriptive text. In writing the descriptive text, students often find some difficulties. The students usually feel difficult to organize their ideas. Furthermore, many students made some mistakes and faced difficulties to build and develop their imagination.

Oshima and Hogue (1997: 2) stated that writing takes study and practice to develop this skill. For both native speakers and new learners of English, it is important to note that writing is a process, not a “Product”. Writing is a progressive activity. It means that when learners for the first time write something down, learners have already been thinking about what they are going to say and how they are going to say it. Then after learners have finished writing, they read over what they have written and make changes and corrections. Therefore, writing is never a one-step action; as it is a process that has several steps.

Writing is not only just talking about the post, but also the process of writing that would make a lot of writing that makes people interested. The essential writing will need a long process from the planning, drafting, writing, and revising (Langan, 2006:20). This process can be done by anyone, especially students. The stages of writing process
is to help students in learning writing, so if they have already followed the writing process they will be able to acquire this skill easily and be able to make a good writing.

Based on the researcher’s experience when she did the observation in SMP Nurul Islam Ngemplak, the process of teaching–learning in the classroom were still passive. There was some difficulties faced by students of VIIE class at the second semester 2014/2015 academic year in writing class, first, is they did not have idea to write. Second, they were still confused in organizing the writing. Third, they often did some mistakes with the lack of knowledge in vocabularies.

These problems can be influenced by some factors. The researcher assumed, these problems appear caused by method or technique in teaching writing, because the English teacher taught writing just gave explanation and exercises. It made students less comprehend and less interest in writing. These problems are important to be solved, therefore students get more comprehension in material of writing and students think that writing is an interesting skill.

To help students’ solved these problems, it needs another more interesting technique in teaching writing. There are a lot of techniques in teaching writing. The researcher proposed a technique which is “Clustering Technique”. Clustering technique is a good way to turn a broad subject into a limited and more manageable topic for a short essay. According to John Langan (2001:25), clustering technique also known as diagramming or mapping, is another strategy that can be used to generate material for a paper. This method is helpful for people who like think in a visual way. In clustering, writer can use lines, boxes, arrows, and circle to show relationships among the ideas and
details. Clustering is making visual map to produce a topic related to each other. Clustering technique will stimulus students’ ideas, also they can make a good paragraph in every types of writing.

Axelrod & Cooper (2013:509) explained that clustering works as follows:

a. In a word or phrase, write your topic in the center of a piece of paper. Circle it.

b. Also in a word or phrase, write down the main parts or central ideas of your topic. Circle these, and connect them to the topic in the center.

c. The next step is to generate facts, details, examples, or ideas related in any way to these main parts of the topic. Cluster these around the main parts.

The followings are strategies in teaching writing using clustering technique according to Dietsch (2003:26-27):

a. Introduce the concept of clustering technique to students. Tell them that clustering technique would help them in generate ideas when they started to write.

b. Leading students to generate ideas in form clustering technique on the whiteboard as a model. Put the topic in the center by using box or other shapes to make it more interesting, and put keywords related to the topic by using lines or arrows. Students do not have to worry in generating ideas; it is free for them to organize their ideas as long as related to the topic given.

c. Ask students to write the first draft based on the design of clustering technique samples that have been made on the whiteboard to know that students have easy when started to write by using clustering technique.

d. After students are able to use clustering technique, ask them through
selected topic to make a descriptive text. Give students an evaluation to check their ability in writing and to know their problems in writing.

![Diagram of Clustering Technique]

**Figure 1** The application of Clustering Technique

Clustering has some benefits as follows: 1) reduced single points of failure; 2) it provides ability to perform maintenance and upgrades with limited downtime; 3) allows the creative side of the brain to run wild, enabling the writer to get related ideas out in the open where the writer can then begin selecting, deleting, and arranging them into a plan for actual paper.

The researcher used descriptive text to conduct classroom action research. It was chosen because descriptive text is appropriate to the English learning syllabus of seventh grade students of junior high school and suitable with clustering technique. Descriptive text describes a particular person, place or thing (Rudi Hartono, 2005: 6). The purpose of a descriptive text is to tell about the subject by describing its features without including personal opinion. Contextual factor or social context of this text is
describing things. Can be person, animal, or place (a specific thing like our friends, or person who we know them well).

This research was aimed to improve students’ writing ability through clustering as the teaching technique at the seventh grade students of SMP Nurul Islam Ngemplak at the academic year 2014/2015. Beside that, this research also aimed to describe the teaching process of reading comprehension skill through clustering technique.

RESEARCH METHOD

The action research conducted through teaching and learning process in class VII-E in the academic year 2014/2015. There was 30 students in this class, consist of 12 boys and 18 girls. This class chose as the reason that there was a problem in students’ writing skill of English.

The model of classroom action research used in this study was based on the model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart in Burns (1999: 32). This model involves four steps to implement the action research. According to the model, the implementation of the action research includes four steps. They are as follows:

a. Identifying problems and planning the action
b. Implementing the action and observing or monitoring the action
c. Reflecting the result of the observation, and
d. Revising the plan for the following step
The qualitative data of this research was obtained from the interview and observation that was done to the teacher as collaborator and to the students as subject before the research. The researcher observed the students’ activities and the progress of teaching and learning in writing subject before and during the implementation of clustering technique. It was used to identify the problems which found in subject of research. The field notes also was taken in every meeting for each cycle to know the progress of the students’ ability in writing activity.

Meanwhile, quantitative data consisted of students’ final writing as a pre-test and post-test. The data are taken from pre-test and post-test that are carried out before and after the cycles are implemented. The result of pre-test and post-test show whether the students’ ability in writing descriptive text improves or not.
This classroom action research conducted in two cycles. Each cycle consisted of two meetings (2 x 40 minutes) and post-test which synchronized with the schedule of English subject in the class. Pre-test conducted before the action. It is aimed to measuring the students’ reading comprehension before the treatments carried out. The researcher also conducted two meetings as treatment. At the end of the treatment, the researcher gave post-test. All cycles discussed about descriptive text.

DISCUSSION

Table 1. The Result of the Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The Mean Score of Pre-Test</th>
<th>The Mean Score of Post-Test 1</th>
<th>The Mean Score of Post-Test 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35.33</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>78.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the table above, the mean score of pre-test is 35.33 and the mean score of post-test 1 is 55.5. It means that there is an improvement. The improvement happens after teaching learning used clustering technique. The mean score of post-test 2 is higher than post-test one. The mean score of students post-test 2 increased into 78.33. The improvement post-test one and post-test two was 22.83. It could be summarized that there was significant improvement of the student’s skill in constructing descriptive text step by step based on clustering technique. Through clustering technique, there is improvement in student’s writing skill.
CONCLUSION

In sum, based on the finding of this research, the researcher gives conclusions are as follows: (1) Clustering technique can improve the students’ writing ability in writing descriptive text. It was known that their scores of all five elements of writing that covered word order, content, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics improved significantly. The average score of the first cycle was 55.5, the average score in the second cycle was 78.33. It could be summarized that there was a significant improvement of the students’ ability in constructing descriptive text through clustering technique. (2) The teaching-learning activities through clustering technique could run well even the classroom’s atmosphere was very alive because they interacted with their friends freely. It seemed they enjoyed it since the researcher did not dominate the classroom activities during teaching-learning activities occurred.

The researcher conclude that the students got better understanding of the teacher’s instructions. Therefore, the researcher concluded that clustering could improve the students’ writing ability in writing descriptive text. The significance improvement of the students’ ability in writing occurred when it was implemented in the teaching-learning process.

According to elaboration above, the researcher gives some suggestions: (1) For English teachers, give more attention to the five writing elements: content, grammar, word order, vocabulary, and mechanics to improve students’ writing.; make an enjoyable and interesting environment of teaching English, so they are not afraid to explore their ideas. (2) The students are suggested to do more practice and reading
absolutely help them to sharpen their ways of thinking and develop their writing ability; be opened or tell frankly to the teacher what their problems are in order to gain problems solving. (3) For the school, the researcher suggested to introduce clustering technique among English teachers in school. The schools can implement clustering to teach English especially in writing activity. In addition, they can provide appropriate facilities to support the success of the teaching learning process.
REFERENCES


