

UTILIZING PICTURE SERIES TO IMPROVE THE WRITING ABILITY OF THE SEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS

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Abstract

Writing as known as complicated language skill. It is caused by the complexity of some elements in writing that should be fulfilled to make it interesting. It is avowed that fulfilling its elements is a difficult matter for junior high school students. They faced some problems when they assigned to make a piece of writing, even in the simplest one. To solve the problem faced by the students in writing, it needs to conduct a classroom action research by utilizing picture series strategy. The the research aim to describe the utilization from picture series in writing ability at seventh-grade students. After conducting the research, it is noted that students' writing ability was improved. The research result showed that 18.19% or 2 of 11 students reached an excellent category of writing ability. Next, 63.63% or 7 of 11 students and 18.19% or 2 of 11 students were classified respectively into the good and average category of writing ability.

Keywords: picture series, writing ability

INTRODUCTION

In order to compete successfully in the global stage, one of the important competencies that should be mastered by citizens is the ability to communicate in English. Dealing with this issue and considering the status of English as one of the international languages, the Indonesian government has made a policy to make English a number of compulsory subjects to be taught in junior high school level. By making this kind of policy, it is hoped that Indonesian citizen, in this case, junior high school students will have an ability to communicate in English well.

In writing, students are required to link some words to be sentenced and connect them together to become attractive of writing product. In this case, students sometimes get difficulty in generating as well as organizing the ideas. Besides, finding appropriate vocabularies to be used also become students' problems in writing. Some of them do not know to start in making a piece of writing. As a result, they get stuck in the middle,

even at the beginning of their writing activity. Another difficulty of writing comes when students asked to write, they should deliver the message with the absence of the audience so that they have to imagine both the situational context and the roles of the readers to ensure that the intended messages are understood.

Related to the problem faced by the students in writing, it is necessary for an English teacher to provide an appropriate teaching strategy to solve students' writing problem. In this case, teachers should be creative and innovative enough to overcome their problematic classroom. Here, English teachers should pay attention to some components accordance to the learning process to make everything in the classroom runs well. Those components are objectives, strategies, environment and instructional media (Smaldino, Lowther & Russel, 2009). All of them may become problems for English teachers in teaching writing. Besides, the implementation of an appropriate teaching strategy also should be well considered by them to teach writing, so that the problems in the classroom can be solved.

This research tries to figure out the use of picture series, as one of the instructional strategies to develop students' writing ability. It is believed that picture series is considered as one of the most effective instructional strategies that can be implemented by English teachers in writing class. Besides, it is believed that pictures benefit the teacher in facilitating their teaching as they are so easy, cheap, and motivating the students. Pictures can be used as source material in various ways. They can stimulate the students to get involved in whatever language skill they are learning, including writing. In addition, Harmer (2004: 67) highlighted that pictures work really well to spark writing. Besides, to stimulate students' to think fast, it is notable for English teacher to provide a kind of illustration to provoke students' imagination. In this case, one thing that can be done by an English teacher is providing a picture series.

To support several arguments above, it is important to present some studies conducted by previous researchers which prove the significant of utilizing picture series in teaching writing. A research conducted by Khotimah, Bukhari Daud and Burhansyah in 2017 indicated that there was a benefit of utilizing pictures series to improve students' writing ability, especially in narrative text. Besides, a research conducted by Krčelić & Matijević in 2015 also proved picture series help students to think fast since they can find idea fast just by seeing the picture series given. Using picture series make students maximizing their imagination, later it make them to discover the idea to be written easily. Then, in 2009 Susanti conducted a classroom action research to improve the students writing' ability. The findings of intended classroom action research showed the fruitfulness of utilizing picture series in improving the ability of junior high school students in make a writing product. In sum, it can be said that picture series give a benefit, both for English teachers and students in solving some problems in writing.

Those result findings indicated that students had a positive response and were involved enthusiastically and actively in the writing process by utilizing pictures series. an English teacher is providing a picture series

Fachrurrazy (2010: 96) said pictures are effective to be used in teaching several kinds of text type. In other words, it can be concluded that pictures series can be utilized to teach writing without having to be specified in certain text type. Picture series strategy can be simply implemented by pointing some pictures. Let students see as well as focus on the pictures series given. By seeing the pictures, it is expected that students will have more comprehension about things that they want to express in written form. By applying picture series, might students will be more attracted and easier to discover ideas to start their writing activity. Having discovered ideas successfully, the students will be easier to continue writing activity, for example expressing their ideas into; then using appropriate vocabularies and correct grammar to make their writing products interesting.

This research is aimed at providing, not only theoretical, but also practical contributions in teaching writing for seventh grade of junior high school students. Besides, the result of this research is theoretically worthy in supporting knowledge of the teaching of the English, especially writing skill. Besides, the result of this study is also, practically, worthy of both English teachers and the students.

For English teachers, it is expected to contribute valuably for them who encounter some problems in the teaching of writing. Interesting picture series are believed can be a kind of stimuli for students who look at them. By seeing a picture series, they are expected to be more stimulated. Besides, it is expected that students will enjoy as well as interested in writing activity. When students enjoy, it is relatively easy for them to express their thought smoothly.

In line with the introduction of the research presented previously, it can be formulated that the problem of this research is describing the utilization of picture series strategy to improve writing ability of seventh grade students.

Some literatures used in this research related to the nature of writing and writing skill. Then, the teaching of writing in EFL class becomes one of the literatures that need to be reviewed to support this research. Next, several literatures related to the research such as the concepts of teaching writing and the use of picture series in teaching writing also become reviewed literatures. Besides, some previous studies related to the utilization of picture series strategy in teaching writing for junior high school students are used to strengthen this research.

Ager (2009) expressed that writing is the way of representing language in visually. To produce a good writing product, students should consider a lot of aspects. Peha (2002) stated that a good writing product has some aspects that should be fulfilled. These are; (1) interesting and important ideas; (2) logical and effective organization; (3) voice that is individual and appropriate; (4) specific and memorable word choice; (5) smooth and expressive sentence; (6) correct and communicative conventions.

Besides, one of the important elements in writing that should be noticed is the micro skills for writing production. In brief, students' writing skill can be improved some activities in writing. The activities are based on the micro skills for writing production. In this case, teachers should involve the micro skills into teaching learning process of writing. Then, teachers give students many kinds of writing genre, and ask them to write both individually and cooperatively. By doing these kinds of activities, it is hoped that students will be relatively easy to make an interesting writing product.

Teaching EFL writing differs from teaching speaking. It requires systematic instruction and practice. Writing connects the writer and the reader. Meaning that, what writer expresses should be understood by the reader. Sometimes, it is not easy to do. It makes writing become the most difficult language skill to be master, especially for junior high school students. Widiati & Cahyono (2006: 140) stated that writing would be best and more meaningful when it is taught integrated to the other skills. As a means of personal discovery, creativity, and self-expression, writing is considered as an important skill to support other learning activities.

In teaching writing for EFL class, the teacher should consider many things. For example, he/she should know and aware of the level of students who are going to teach. In a particular situation, a teacher should start from simple writing to complex one. It can be arranged based on students' ability level, whether they are beginner or advanced one. Gebhard (2000) explains that the basic conventions such as the ability to identify and write down letters, words, and simple sentence of writing should be learned by the beginner of EFL writers.

Harmer (2004) stated that teaching writing means to teach students how to produce ideas and "translate" them into readable sentences. Besides, it is also demonstrating to the students how to organize sentences into a well-formed paragraph. Besides, he illustrated that there must be at least five procedures that should be done in teaching writing. These procedures are demonstrating, motivating and provoking, supporting, responding, and evaluating.

Numerous previous studies proved that picture series play a significant role in teaching writing. It can help students to catch and express their ideas easily. Simply, it can be

described in a situation when students are assigned to write about an object, or they are required to write about the sequence of activities. Without any pictures, probably it is difficult for students to write a text even some sentences, because they may spend very long time to express their ideas.

Picture series as instructional strategy have great influence in improving students' writing ability. Writing teaching-learning process will have more varied and will be exciting by utilizing picture series. It is used to escalate teacher and students' communication. Later, their interaction will be more alive. Besides, students will be more motivated and interested in joining the teaching-learning process. Pictures as the visual media are very helpful for teacher to teach writing. The implementation of pictures series as an instructional strategy will be more effective to improve students' writing ability. It is believed that picture can often be used to promote students' productive skill. There are several researches related to the implementation of picture series related to the teaching of writing. In this case, Sudaryo (2013) and Hasanah (2009) Sudaryo (2013) conducted classroom action research by utilizing picture series in improving students' writing ability. The result of their research showed that picture series are useful to improve students' writing ability. Similar to them, Mudassir (2014) and Asrifan (2015) conducted a research by implementing picture series in teaching writing. Both of their research indicated that picture series are beneficial in teaching writing.

In 2014, Desitawardhani conducted classroom action research. Her research showed three result findings. First, picture series can improve students' writing ability in producing some kind of text. The next result showed that picture series was very effective in teaching writing. It showed students' motivation and passions in writing were relatively high. The third result finding described that students' cooperative was getting better by utilizing picture series. Besides, this strategy made them got more chances to participate.

METHOD

This part consists of subheadings for explaining research design, research setting and subjects, preliminary study, steps of research design, and research instruments.

Research Design

This research applies Classroom Action Research (CAR) as its design. Latief (2012: 144-145) proposed that classroom action research is an effective design in improving

both the quality of English teachers' performance and students' achievement in learning English in the classroom. It is a method of finding out the best instructional strategy in the classroom so that it can improve students' writing ability.

Classroom action research related to classroom setting which intends to provide a strategy (picture series strategy) to solve problems faced by the students in writing. The first step in classroom action research is identifying problems occurring in the classroom. Next, exploring the strategy to solve the problems occurred. In this case, an English teacher should be able to produce an innovative classroom strategy that contributes to the improvement of English teaching and learning practices in the classroom.

Research Setting and Subjects

The research was conducted at a private junior high school. The subjects were the seventh-grade students who sat during the second semester in academic year 2018/2019. This school was selected as the setting of this research due to several reasons found in the preliminary study. Besides, some information from the English teacher there also became the researcher's consideration to research the intended school. Based on the preliminary study, students there had low ability in writing. Besides, they were not interested and unmotivated toward their writing class.

Preliminary Study

The preliminary study was conducted on 7th till 8th January 2019. In this part, the researcher observed the class to know the teaching and learning process. Then, the students were assigned to make a piece of writing using to know their writing ability. It also did to know students' writing score. Besides, the researcher also distributed a questionnaire for the students as the supporting data in order to know in depth some problems in writing faced by students.

Steps of Classroom Action Research (CAR)

Classroom action research consisted of several steps. These are; (1) planning the picture series strategy; (2) implementing the concept of picture series strategy; (3) observing the implementation of the teaching strategy using picture series and collecting the data; (4) reflecting in which the researcher analyzed data collected from the observation and determined whether there was next cycle or not.

Planning is a step to prepare the classroom instructional strategy to be developed in the study to solve the occurred problems. In this step, the researcher prepared everything related to the teaching strategy of utilizing picture series to solve problems that occurred in the writing class in terms content, organization, grammar,

vocabulary, and mechanics of the writing product. Besides, students' attitudes and motivation during writing class also need to be observed. In this strategy, the students are guided to make a piece of writing by using picture series. Picture series gave consist of various themes which were simple and suitable enough for the seventh-grade students.

Implementing or **acting** in classroom action research is the second step to implement. In implementing section, the researcher prepared things related to the teaching and learning activities based on the designed lesson plan. In this step, the researcher taught the students, while the collaborator observed the class activities to know the implementation of picture series strategy in teaching writing. The teaching procedure was implemented in seventh-grade students where time allotment of each meeting was of 90 minutes.

Observing is the step of putting data together indicating the success of the strategy implemented in solving the classroom problem. Observation is intended to obtain data connected to the teaching and learning process during the implementation of the action in solving students' problem. The data collected point to the criteria of success as formulated previously. In this step, the researcher was assisted by an English teacher to observe the execution of the picture series strategy in solving students' writing problem. Furthermore, Latief (2010:87) also asserted that the aim of raising data is to know how well the strategy that has been implemented is success to solve the problem.

Reflection is the step of analyzing data to know how far the data collected have shown the success of the strategy in solving the problem. It is the sequence stages that are carried out after those stages above are done. In this stage, the researcher compares the data collected through the observation. From the observation result of the students' achievement, the researcher can determine the number of cycles. If one cycle fulfils the criteria of success, the researcher does not need to continue the next cycle of the research.

Research Instruments

The instruments have to be developed based on the nature of the data to be collected. The data on students' English achievement can be collected using English achievement test developed based on the curricular objectives, while the data on students' problems, classroom atmosphere, and students' motivation can be collected using observation checklist, interview, and documentation.

Writing Test

The writing test in this present study was done before and after the implementation of picture series strategy. The first writing test was done to know the students writing ability before implementing the picture series strategy. Then, the second one was done to know the progress of students' writing ability after implementing the picture series strategy. When the picture series strategy was successfully implemented, it showed that students' writing ability got improved.

The questionnaire, Observation Checklist and Field Notes

A questionnaire was used to know in-depth students' attitudes toward their writing class and their motivation in writing. Besides, the researcher and observer use field notes to record activities during the teaching and learning of writing through the implementation of picture series strategy in the classroom. It dealt with some aspects such as the description of the classroom atmosphere and how teaching and learning process in writing run

Documentation

Documentation, in this case in the form of a photograph, is conducted to identify the classroom atmosphere and how implemented strategy run. By using documentation, the researcher knows the students' behaviour in the classroom through the implementation of picture series strategy.

RESULTS

This part consists of two main points. They are findings of the research and discussion.

Research Findings in the Pretest

The researcher conducted a pretest to measure students' writing skills. In this pretest, the students supposed to write a simple paragraph. The result of this test showed various students' scores. The following table shows the students' pretest scores in details.

Table 1 Students' Writing Score in the Pretest

Range	Category	Students	Percentage
85-100	Excellent	-	-
70-84	Good	-	-
55-69	Average	2	18,19%
25-54	Poor	9	81,81%
Total		11	100%

From the result of the pretest, it can be presumed that all students had average even poor writing ability. The table above described that 81.81% or 9 of 11 students were in poor category and 18.19% or 2 of 11 students were in the average category. There were no students who had good or excellent writing ability. It is showed that the result did not fulfil the score of the school's minimum requirement standards and the curriculum applied. After realized the problems based on the students' interviews, observations, and pretest results, the researcher and the teacher as a collaborator, had a discussion to find out the solution of the problems faced by the students in writing. Then, it is noted that there were several actions planned by the researcher and the teacher as the outcome of their discussion.

The result of the discussion agreed to utilize pictures in teaching writing, applying picture-based activities, giving the task of integrated materials, and giving feedback on students' work. The researcher was chosen picture series as the strategy of teaching writing since pictures proposed a nonverbal and can stimulate students' written responses. By provided some pictures for students in writing activity were making it easier for them to obtain and produce ideas. Picture series also assist the learners to organize sentences into an interesting paragraph. Hereafter, to fulfil the expectation, the researcher also gave the students integrated materials related to writing elements, such as vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Research Findings in Cycle I

Research in cycle I was conducted from January 12 to 19, 2019. There were three meetings conducted in the first cycle of the research. Here, several phases of classroom action research were implemented.

After implementing the picture series as an instructional media to teach writing, then the last task scored as a posttest by the researcher in the first cycle I. It was set to find out students' writing skills after picture series strategies were implemented in cycle I. In details, the result of the posttest was drawn as follows:

Table 2 Students' Writing Score after Cycle I

Range	Category	Students	Percentage
85-100	Excellent	-	-
70-84	Good	2	18,19%
55-69	Average	2	18,19%
25-54	Poor	7	63,63%
Total		11	100%

In most cases, the percentage of the students' writing ability was not good yet. From the table above, it can be recapitulated that there were 18.19% or 2 of 11 students only who could be classified into the good category. However, the percentage of students in the good category was upgraded from the pretest result. In the pretest, the percentage of students who were in the good category was 0%. After cycle I was carried out, there were 18.19% or 2 of 11 students who could be classified into good category, while 81.81% or 9 of 11 students still classified into poor category.

After the researcher conducted cycle 1, there were some improvements to the students' writing ability. In addition, the researcher analyzed the result of students' writing and resumed that students got improvement in doing some writing aspects; generating the idea, spelling, capitalization, punctuation and slight improvement on sentence structure and vocabularies.

Research Findings in Cycle II

The second cycle of the research was held from January 23 to 30, 2019. It was same as the previous cycle in terms of the number of meetings. There were three meetings conducted in this cycle.

After giving some tasks and doing some activities in cycle II, the researcher gave the second writing test to the students. The test was applied to know the improvement of students' writing ability. The following table presents the students' writing score in cycle

Table 3 Students' Writing Score after Cycle II

Range	Category	Students	Percentage
85-100	Excellent	2	18,19%
70-84	Good	7	63,63%
55-69	Average	2	18,19%
25-54	Poor	-	-
Total		11	100%

The table above showed that there were 18.19% or 2 of 11 students who could be classified into the excellent category. Then, 63.63% or 7 of 11 students could be classified into the good category. In another word, we can say that the students' writing ability was getting better. Comparing the result of research in cycle I and cycle II, It concluded that by implementing the picture series in the teaching and learning process, the students' writing scores were significantly increased. Most of the students had good writing ability. The improvement of students was from 0 to 2 students on excellent category and 2 to 7 students in the good category.

DISCUSSION

This study began on January 12, 2019, and ended on January 30, 2019. It was aimed to improve the writing ability of the seventh-grade students of junior high school through the implementation of picture series strategy. All of the actions had been conducted in two cycles. Each cycle consisted of three meetings. The implementation of picture series strategy and the complementary actions were successfully accomplished and the objective of the research had been achieved.

The result of the preliminary study showed a fact that students were passive during the teaching and learning process, especially in writing class. Furthermore, another problem found is that the teacher focuses on the product of the students' writing. Indeed, there is also little interaction between the students and their teacher in the classroom. In traditional writing classrooms, writing is viewed as a product, not a process because the teacher evaluates the students' finished written texts but not their process or strategies in writing a composition.

In cycle I, the researcher conducted the research to implement picture series strategy during teaching and learning process in the classroom. As formulated in the background of the study, the goal of utilizing picture series strategy was to help the learners to enhance their writing skill. Based on the result of the cycle I, the researcher found that the implementation of picture series in improving the students' writing skill was not successful yet. It was because the students still had difficulty to find and generate their ideas. They felt hard to find some vocabularies when they started to write a text. Furthermore, some students got difficulties in applying an appropriate word to be written in the text.

In cycle II, it was indicated that the implementation of picture series strategy to enhance the students' writing skill was successful. The researcher noted the students' score and found that there were 9 students who got ≥ 75 and there were 2 students who got ≤ 75 from 11 students. Regarding the criteria of success that had been formulated, this research is considered successful if 75% of the total number of students got ≥ 75 . The result of cycle II that the implementation of picture series strategy helps students to fulfilled the intended criteria of success.

Dealing with the explanation above, picture series as an instructional media are often used in the teaching and learning process. By using picture series, it could stimulate students in learning language and make it easier for them to understand the learning materials and help to memorize some words that they get from the pictures. Applying picture series as an instructional media could be a great way to help the teacher. Probably, students would not always be successful in learning English just by listening to the teacher's explanation or by reading a lot of textbooks. Therefore, utilizing picture series strategy to teach writing hopefully could be an alternative instructional media that can be applied in teaching English.

CONCLUSION

The whole series of research conducted on January 12-30, 2019 brought a conclusion that should be concerned. As formulated in the first chapter of this study It is stated that improving students' writing skill through the use of picture series is the objective of this research. Based on the results and discussions in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that the implementation of pictures series in the teaching and learning process of writing activity is assumed to be an effective way to improve students' writing skill.

The results of this research revealed the improvements of students' writing ability contributed by the implementation of the picture series in the teaching and learning writing process in seventh-grade students of SMP Tri Murti 02 Wagir. First, the students' writing problems in several writing elements can be reduced. It might happen because picture series could give the learners illustrations and help them to "translate" their thought in writing form. It made students could express their ideas easily. In addition, It is proven that the implementation of picture series can facilitate the learners to improve their writing skills effectively. Second, picture series manages to make students be more motivated as well as interested in the teaching and learning process. As a result, they feel enjoy and finally, their writing ability could be improved. In short, based on the results of the research, it is implied that picture series was an effective way to improve students writing ability. It is better for the teachers to apply picture series in their teaching and learning process of writing.

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