

IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING ABILITY IN DESCRIPTIVE TEXT USING POSTERS STRATEGY

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Abstract

This research aimed to examine the impact of posters on students' writing performance as well as students' attitudes towards the implementation of posters in writing. The population of this research was the eighthgrade students at SMP N 1 Pagar Alam. The number of the sample was 30 students. The researcher employed pre-test and post-test to measure the students' skill in writing descriptive text before treatment and after the treatment. The result of the study showed that students writing ability by using poster has improvement. In conclusion, the use of poster in writing was effective to improve the students' skill in writing descriptive text.

Keywords: Writing ability, descriptive text, posters strategy

INTRODUCTION

Writing is an important skill which must be mastered in order to effectively transfer the new ideas, feeling and thought in form of written language. It is one of the important competences that must be mastered by students because we know that language is not only in spoken form, but also it can be used in written form (Sa'diyah, 2010; Mulyani & Al-Hafiz, 2012).

However, writing is considered the most difficult skills to be mastered among other skills. This skill is obviously a complex process, and competent writing is frequently considered as the last language skill to be acquired (Jannah, 2013). Harmer (2004) states that making good writing is more complex than producing speaking. Different from speaking, writing is more difficult to acquire because there are many aspects related to writing which need to be mastered, such as organization, mechanics, and grammar.

In this case, I find the phenomenon related to the writing which happens in Junior high school. The problem is the students find difficulties in writing descriptive text. According to Gerot & Wignell (1995), descriptive text is a text that describes a particular person, place or thing. There are many students still performing poorly in writing a descriptive text and they are uninterested in writing. They lack to practice and the teacher provides less time for teaching writing compared to the other language skills. Moreover, some teachers still use conventional media in the learning process. It causes the students unattractive to join the activities in the class.

The most important things should be done by teachers are prepared appropriate media and choose an effective technique or strategy in teaching writing. Based on the reasons above, I want to offer a new strategy to solve these problems especially in writing descriptive text. According to Raimes (1983), pictures (drawings, photographs, posters, slides, cartoons, magazine advertisement, diagrams, graphs tables, charts, and maps) can be valuable resources for teaching writing. Poster is one of teaching strategy that can be used in teaching descriptive text. It gives visual aid to students in learning writing descriptive text.

By using poster, I want to help the students to produce a descriptive text. It is chosen because it has potential process to innovate, accelerate, enrich, and deepen skills, to motivate and engage student, to help relate to work practices.

Furthermore, teaching descriptive text writing by using posters may motivate the students to write. They are guided to develop and express their idea in writing by looking at the picture. Then, posters are simple strategy that brings innovation in teaching especially to teach descriptive text writing. It makes the students pay more attention in the learning process and guides them to build up their ideas in writing activity. By conducting the study, the writer will know whether or not the implementation of posters can improve the students writing ability.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Writing

Writing is a skill to transfer ideas, experiences, and feeling into a written form (Mulyani& Hafiz, 2012, p. 225). In this case, the students are expected to be able to express their ideas, feeling, and thoughts in written language and spread their creativity. Oshima and Hogue (2006) state that writing is a progressive activity. This means that when you first write something down, you have already been thinking about you are going to say and how you are going to say it. Then after you have finished writing, you read over what you have written and make changes and corrections. Therefore, writing is never a one-step action; it is a process that has several steps.

Teaching Writing

The purpose of teaching writing as one of the four language skills is to facilitate students' learning, career, and their daily communication. Teaching writing is a process of how to increase students' ideas and record them in written form. The process involves, planning, writing a draft, revising, editing and publishing (Ontario Ministry of Education [OME], 2005, p. 20).

According to Harmer (1998), there are four reasons for teaching writing to students of English as foreign language. First is reinforcement: Some students get language in oral way, but others from seeing the language written down. Second is language development: Students improve their writing mainly through writing itself. Third is learning styles: some students are able to find easier to pick language just by looking and listening. By writing, the students have much time to think things and to produce language. Fourth is writing as a skill: writing is as important as speaking, listening and reading.

Descriptive Text

Descriptive Text is a kind of text with a purpose to give information. The context of this kind of text is the description of particular thing, animal, person, or others, for instance: our pets or a person we know well. The Social Function of Descriptive Text is to describe a particular person, place, or thing (Gerot&Wignell, 1995).

According to Hammond (1992, p. 78), the social function of descriptive text is to describe a particular person, place, or thing. The generic structures of this text are:

- (1) Identification: identifies the person, place or things to be described.
- (2) Description: describes parts, qualities, characteristics.

The purpose of descriptive text is used in all forms of writing to create a vivid impression of a person, place, object or event e.g. to: ·

- (1) Describe a special place and explain why it is special.

- (2) Describe the most important person in your live.
- (3) Describe the animal's habit in your report

Posters

Posters are tools that can be used in a number of ways to overcome challenges and problems in the EFL classroom; the particular way they are used will depend on the teacher's experience and the students' needs (Simpson, 2013).

There are some reasons to use posters in classroom activities:

1. Posters facilitate oral practice
Using posters at timely junctures during class acts as a great energizer for students, letting them know that it's time to switch to English
2. Posters encourage authentic communication
Posters can serve as a springboard to authentic and creative language use. The poster acts as a way of getting the learners to express that content in their own way.
3. Posters augment self-confidence
As teachers, we should always aim to foster safe environments that encourage students to take risks.
4. Posters accommodate a variety of learning style
The students engage with, and generally create the posters; they interact with the environment and are visually stimulated.
5. Poster foster learner autonomy
Posters enable students to take a greater role in their learning because they can make choices about which information to include and even how to work with their classmates.
6. Poster help minimize incorrect language L1
Errors and incorrect language are limited with poster use because most posters focus on a single concept (in today's case, the uses and effects of pesticides)
7. A poster's visual cues reduce reversion to L1
Using posters can mitigate the problem of reversion to L1 that can occur, because learners experience the motivation of having to display their work to others
8. Posters allow teacher to monitor student speech
Many activities included in current EFL texts require teachers to set up tasks, provide examples, cue students, indicate who is to participate, and ask for volunteers
9. Poster use calms excitable learners.
Because posters focus on particular language tasks, students can easily understand the goal of the lesson and so engage with the activity

METHOD

Participant

This study used thirty students of the eight-grade regular class of SMP N 1 Pagar Alam. The participants consisted of eleven male and nineteen female. The writer is the teacher of this class.

Context

At the time of this research conducted, the students were studying descriptive text. This material presented for six meetings. One meeting for the students studied descriptive text writing

without using poster, five meetings for students studied descriptive text writing using poster. In this study, the writer conduct pre-test before the students studied descriptive text and post-test after the implementation of poster.

Material

Descriptive text was used in this study. Topics and titles of the lesson were carefully planned based on level difficulty. The selection of the topics was fit to the materials in the syllabus. The posters were chosen based on the topic of the writing.

Procedure

In this class, teaching and learning process were done through three important phases; pre-activities, whilst-activities, and post-activities. In pre-activities, the teacher did brainstorming by asking some questions and related them to the previous lessons. Meanwhile, in whilst-activities, the teacher gave the students some exercises related to the topic, and then discussed it together. Finally, in post-activities, she concluded the lessons and administered various kinds of exercises and quizzes.

In learning descriptive text using posters, the students were asked to bring the poster of their idol. Before starting the learning sessions, the teacher explained about descriptive text to the students by showing some examples of writing descriptive text. She explained about the structure of descriptive text. During the activity the students were asked to identify poster they have brought. In this section, the teacher focused on students' fluency of writing. After that, the students were asked to develop a complete paragraph based on their draft. As the student worked individually, the writer monitored their work to ensure that they could follow the instruction.

Here, the teacher's role was only as facilitator, organizer, and monitor for learning. The students took initiative and responsibility for their learning and asked for help when they needed it. After the task was completed, the students discussed it together with the teacher.

Data Collection & Analysis

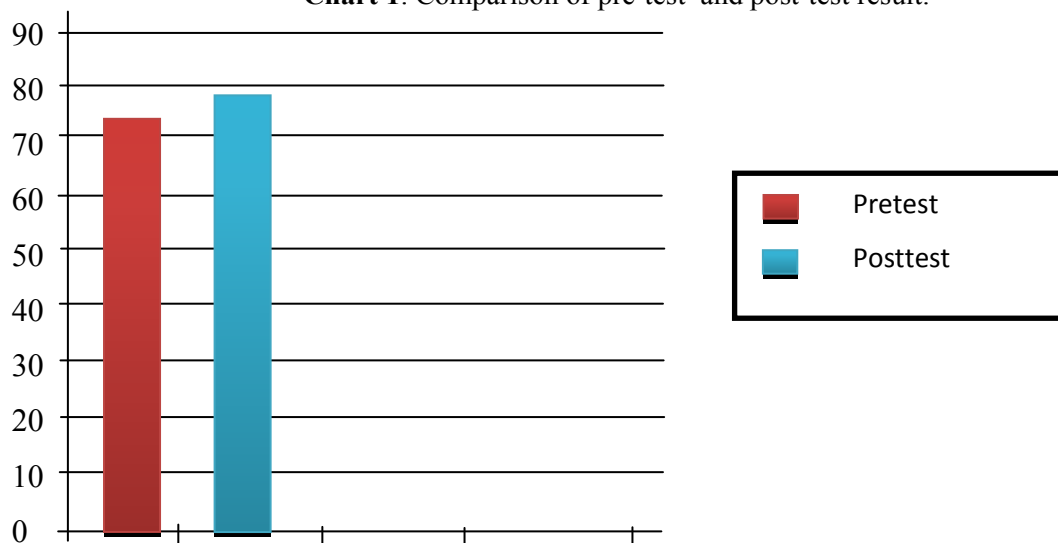
This research waspre experimental,with one pre-test post-test design. To analyze the data, the writerapplied an appropriate technique to find out whether teaching writing usingposters is effective to improve students' writing ability or not.The technique of the dataanalysis, the researcher uses descriptive analysis (mean, mode, median,standard deviation).

Lastly, in order to elicit and measure the students' attitudes toward poster the researcher adopted a Likert-Scale questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 25 items. It used Likert Scale (SA= strongly agree, A= agree, U= uncertain, D= Disagree, and SD= strongly disagree).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data analysis, the post-test score is 79.50. It is higher than pre-test score 75.70, as can be seen in the following chart.

Chart 1. Comparison of pre-test and post-test result.



The table below is the summarized scores of students' writing ability of the pre-test and post-test.

Table.1 The writing ability results of pre-test and post-test

Group	H	L	R	Me	Mo	T	M	S
Post-test	88	72	16	80	80	2385	79.50	4.911
Pre-test	85	70	15	75	72	2271	75.70	3.411

The highest score of the students of posttest at the eighth gradestudents of SMP N 1 is 88 and the lowest one is 72. The mean of post-test is 79.50, the median is 80, the modus is 80, the range is 16 and the standard deviation of it is 4.911. The highest score of the students of control group of the eight-gradestudents at SMP N 1 Pagar Alam is 85 and the lowest one is 70. The mean of pretest is 75.70, the median is 75, the modus is 72, the range is 15 and the standard deviation of it is 3.411. It means that the students of pretest of the eight-gradestudents at SMP N 1 Pagar Alam had sufficient result on their writing ability.

From the computation of t test the result shows that t value score was 3.531, t table score was 2.002. Based on the score obtained, t value is greater than t table ($3.531 > 2.002$). It means that null hypothesis is rejected and there is significant difference between posttest means of posttest and pretest. Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of posters in teaching writing to the second grade students of SMP N 1 Pagar Alam is effective.

Questionnaire Result

Analysis of questionnaire indicates that most of students were not familiar using posters in learning English especially in writing descriptive text. Moreover, it was revealed that the overall attitude of these results, it can be concluded that students' attitude toward learning writing descriptive text using poster was positive.

Limitations

While the writer found some positive impacts in this study, it would not be fair to say that there were no negative circumstances since lack of participant only one class, period of time (6



meetings), and the significant of the result was not too high. For further research studies, those limitations need more attention by other researchers.

CONCLUSION AND REMARK

For the conclusion, posters may be one of effective strategy. It can be used to motivate and attract more attention from the students. They can be interested in participating teaching learning activity. As a result, it affects the students' ability in writing descriptive text. It can be seen from the result of the students' score of post-test, which is better than in their score of post-test before treatment. However, because this is a pre experimental study and the writer still inexperienced well in conducting research, the weaknesses of this research still encounters. Finally, the writer hopes the result of this research can be an initial reference for the English teachers to make better variation in teaching, in order to help their students understand the teaching material, especially in writing.

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