

IMPROVING WRITING SKILL THROUGH FREE WRITING TECHNIQUE

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to prove whether Free Writing Technique could improve the eighth-grade students' skills in writing descriptive text. The researcher used a quasi-experimental research design. The population of this research was the eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Dampal Selatan, consisting of 3 classes. The sample was chosen using a random sampling technique to select an experimental and control group. The samples were class VIII B as the experimental group and class VIII c as the control group. The pretest result showed that the experimental group's mean score was 47.91, while the control group's was 48.75. The mean score of the experimental group on the posttest was significantly improved from 47.91 to 76.25. Furthermore, the result of the data analysis showed that the t-counted value of 2.82 was higher than the t-table value of 2.02 by applying a 0.05 level of significance and 38 degrees of freedom. Therefore, the hypothesis of this research was accepted. In conclusion, the eighth-grade students' skill in writing descriptive text at SMP Negeri 1 Dampal Selatan can be improved through Free Writing Technique.

Keywords: writing skill; descriptive text; free writing technique

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the most productive skills in learning a language besides speaking. It is a means of communication between readers and writers in a readable form. Through writing, writers can share ideas, thoughts, experiences, and feelings. Tessema (2005) states that the writer's ideas should be presented clearly in good organization, and the student's writing should be corrected in word choice, grammar, and punctuation. It means that in writing, the students should master language components such as grammar and vocabulary. Weigle (2002) states writing is an act that takes place within a context, accomplishes a particular purpose, and is appropriately shaped for its intended audience. From the definitions, it can be concluded that it is important to view writing not only as an individual's product but also as a social act.

To be a good writer, some aspects should be considered by the students. A good writing skill could not appear at once. It needs several revisions based on a person's capability to understand their writing. As stated by Oshima and Hogue (1999) writing has four stages. The first stage is prewriting. Two steps are used in this stage: choosing and narrowing a topic. The second stage is planning or outlining. There are three steps on planning: making a sub list, writing the topic sentence, and outlining. The third stage is writing and revising a draft. In this stage, a writer does three steps, writing the first rough draft, revising content and organization, and proofreading the second draft. The last stage in the writing process is writing the final copy to hand in as the final activity in a writing process. A writer must rework and polish the written drafts for the presentation or publication.

According to the theories above, the teaching of writing should be well constructed. The types of writing activities that will be applied in teaching writing are based on the student's level and capacity. Also, the writing practices, including writing paragraphs, should be based on the standards of competence and the essential competencies. Those efforts above should be done well to improve the student's writing skills.

Descriptive text is a kind of text which is described about person, place, animal, or thing is like. It presents information specifically. Oshima and Hogue (2007) define descriptive writing appeals to the senses, so it tells how something looks, feels, smells, tastes, and/or sounds. The descriptive text has generic structures. As stated by Pardiyono (2007:34) in descriptive text, there are generic structures such as: a) Identification is identifying a phenomenon to be described (person, thing, object, or place). It mentions the name, occupation, profession, career, and particular participant; b) Description describes parts, qualities, characteristics, etc. The descriptive text also has language features which will be described as follows. The language feature of descriptive text is important in determining the text. The language features of the text are a) The use of adjectives and compound adjectives b) The use of linking verb, c) Simple present tense, d) The use of a degree of comparison, e) Focus on specific participant means to focus on the leading actor or actress.

The researchers interviewed the English teacher at SMP Negeri 1 Dampal Selatan and found some problems faced by the students. Most of the eighth grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Dampal Selatan were uninterested in expressing their ideas freely in writing activities. Another problem is that they were discouraged from writing for several reasons; for instance, they lacked the vocabulary and could not construct their written ideas grammatically. To overcome the students' writing problems, the researchers were interested in facilitating the students with alternative techniques that could help them improve their writing ability. It is Free Writing Technique. It is believed that Free Writing Technique can improve students' writing ability, allowing them to express their ideas freely. They can write as much as possible based on their chosen topic. Elbow (1998) said the best way to improve writing skills is to do Free Writing periodically. It also can be a valuable medium to help students start writing.

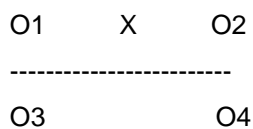
Free writing means writing whatever comes to the writer's mind. Free writing is a prewriting technique in which a person writes continuously for a set period of time without referring to spelling, grammar, or topic. It produces raw, often unusable material but helps writers overcome blocks of apathy and self-criticism. This statement does not mean the students will not care to good organization, spelling, grammar, and vocabulary. The students must pay attention to the elements because it is the most important thing to understand in doing good writing. This technique purpose is that the students will be given the freedom to write everything that comes in their students' mind and they will be easy to get their ideas which they will share in a paper, and then they will be given the direction how to make a good writing like as the elements of writing. Christenson (2002) states that Free Writing involves everything the student does before beginning actual task of writing, including background knowledge, generating ideas, and making plans of approaching the writing task. Getting started with a writing assignment, no matter whether the students assign or choose the topic, can be the most challenging part for Junior High School students. It can also be challenging for teachers who want the students' experience to be positive, energizing, and constructive.

Related to the statement above, Free Writing can become training or warming up for students, making writing very suitable for the beginner in sharing their knowledge. In this research, the researchers asked the students to write down the sentence about whatever they want to write and the researchers just remind the students to give attention to the elements or the mechanics of writing when they are doing Free Writing exercises. Also, it offers the student center activity that can be very beneficial for writing class.

There are some advantages of Free Writing Technique. First, the students feel free to write, they could choose the topic by themselves. They can express their ideas freely in writing, they can write whatever comes in their mind, so they can write as much as they can, this technique makes the students have a motivation to write because it encourages students to write in every meeting. Second, the students could work in pairs, they share their ideas and solve the problems in writing. Third, this technique makes the students not so dependent on the teacher but increases confidence to think by themselves and learn from other students.

METHOD

In this research, the researchers wanted to prove whether the use of Free Writing Technique could improve the eighth-grade students' writing skill in descriptive text. The researchers applied a quasi-experimental research design. This research has an experimental group and a control group which was randomly selected. The researchers conducted a pretest before the treatment as the first information of the student's skill in writing. Meanwhile, the posttest was used to determine the students' writing progress. The experimental group received the treatment through Free Writing Technique while the control group received the conventional method. This research used the design proposed by Cohen, Manion, and Marrison (2005:218) as follows:



Notes:

O1: Pretest of experimental group

O2: Posttest of experimental group

O3: Pretest of control group

O4: Posttest of control group

X : Treatment of experimental group

The population of this research was all the registered eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Dampal Selatan. They consisted of 3 classes. Each class consisted of 20 students. The researchers must determine the research sample. The researchers limited the population in order to conduct the research easily. Sample is an item or subject selected from the population to be observed and analyzed. Best (1981:8) defines, "Sample is a small proportion of population selected for observation and analysis."

In selecting the sample of this research, the researchers used random sampling technique. The procedures were the researchers wrote down the name of each classroom in some pieces of paper, folded them and put them in a box. Then the researchers took two rolls of paper to get the classes. She got VIII B as the experimental group and VIII C as the control group.

There were two variables in this research: dependent variable and independent variable. Variables refer to anything that has a quantity or quality that varies. The quality or quantity of each individual was different from one another. Instead, two or more beings could have same characteristics. In experimental research, there are two variables. They are dependent and independent variables. The dependent variable is a variable that a researcher is interested in while the independent variable is a tool to influence the dependent variable. The dependent

variable in this research was the writing skill of the eighth-grade students, while the independent variable was the use of Free Writing Technique.

In conducting this research, the researchers used test to collect the data. Two tests were administered for the experimental and control groups in this research. The first test was pretest to know the preliminary data about the students' writing skill in descriptive paragraph. The second was the posttest to determine the progress in writing descriptive text. The researchers made the tests and the material of the tests was taken from the students' handbook, other related book, and internet. The scoring system of the test can be seen in the table below:

Table 1 – The Scoring System

Rating	Range score	Category
4	86-100	Excellent
3	71-85	Very good
2	56-70	Good
1	≤ 55	Poor

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

In getting the main data, the researchers analyzed the data obtained from pretest and posttest of the experimental and control groups. In presenting the data, before and after treatment, the researchers examined the students both in experimental and control groups. She administered the test to the experimental and the control groups twice. She gave pretest before applying the treatment by using Free Writing Technique. In the first meeting, a pretest was administered to know the students' skill in writing descriptive paragraphs. Then, the treatment was conducted after giving the pretest to the students. The researchers taught the experimental group students about writing descriptive text by using Free Writing Technique for six meetings, including pretest and posttest. After that, she gave posttest to find out the students progress in writing descriptive text using Free Writing Technique. The researchers chose the sample of the research by using random sampling technique, the samples were VIII B as the experimental group and VIII C as the control group.

The researchers gave pretest to the students in order to know their writing skill in three components of writing, those are organization, grammar, and vocabulary. The researchers gave pretest to the experimental group (VIII B) on Monday, Maret 30th, 2020 at 08.00-08.45 a.m, while for the control group (VIII C) on Friday, April 03th, 2020 at 08.00-08.45 a.m. Then, the researchers

conducted the treatment using Free Writing Technique about six meetings. She taught the students about descriptive text. The topic was given based on the students' handbook on the school and another related sources from internet. The treatments were given to the experimental group on Monday April 20th, 2020 at 08.00-08.45, until April 24th, 2020 at 08.00-08.45. After administering six treatments to the experimental group using Free Writing Technique and teaching the control group using conventional method, the researchers gave posttest for both groups. Then, the result of the pretest and posttest of the students in experimental group is presented on the table 2 below:

Table 2 – Result of Pretest and Posttest of Experimental Group

No	Initial	Pretest (X1)	Posttest (X2)	Square Deviation (X2-X1=X)
1	MNF	33.33	58.33	625.00
2	SA	66.66	91.66	625.00
3	NA	58.33	83.33	625.00
4	S	66.66	91.66	625.00
5	AL	58.33	83.33	625.00
6	NF	58.33	83.33	625.00
7	R	41.66	75.00	1111.11
8	SU	41.66	66.66	625.00
9	RA	33.33	50.00	277.77
10	SW	66.66	91.66	625.00
11	HA	33.33	58.33	625.00
12	ST	33.33	66.66	1111.11
13	NS	58.33	83.33	625.00
14	IN	41.66	75.00	1111.11
15	RZP	50.00	83.33	1111.11
16	SAT	41.66	75.00	1111.11
17	AS	41.66	75.00	1111.11
18	RI	33.33	75.00	1736.11
19	AF	41.66	75.00	1111.11
20	MRE	58.00	83.33	625.00
Total Score		958.33	1525	16041.67

As presented on table 2, it shows that the total score of the experimental group in the pretest was 958.33 while the mean score was 47.91. Meanwhile, the total score of posttest was 1525 while the mean score was 76.25. Then, the researchers found the highest square deviation was 1736.11 from the deviation 33.33, and the lowest square deviation was 227.77 from the deviation 16.66. From the table 2, the sum of square deviation of experimental group was 16041.67 while the standard deviation is 29.05. Next, the result of pretest and posttest of the control group can be seen in the following table below:

Table 3 — Result of Pretest and Posttest in Control Group

No	Initial	Pretest (X1)	Posttest (X2)	Square Deviation (X2-X1=X)
1	PDS	41.66	50.00	69.44
2	MM	58.33	66.66	69.44
3	MRR	58.33	66.66	69.44
4	HE	66.66	75.00	69.44
5	HA	58.33	66.66	69.44
6	F	66.66	75.00	69.44
7	MR	66.66	75.00	69.44
8	S	41.66	50.00	69.44
9	R	33.33	41.66	69.44
10	DP	75.00	83.00	69.44
11	AK	33.33	41.66	69.44
12	FT	50.00	58.33	69.44
13	WL	50.00	50.00	0
14	SS	33.33	41.66	69.44
15	HR	41.66	50.00	69.44
16	HS	33.33	41.66	69.44
17	NH	50.00	58.33	69.44
18	NA	33.33	41.66	69.44
19	RN	41.66	50.00	69.44
20	AR	41.66	58.00	277.77
Total Score		975	1141.66	1527.77

Table 3 points out that the total score of the control group in the pretest was 975 while the mean score was 48.75. Meanwhile, the total posttest score was 1141.66 while the mean score was 57.08. Then, the researchers found the highest square deviation was 277.77 which was from the deviation 16.67, and the lowest square deviation was 0. From the table 3, the sum of square deviation of control group was 1527.77 while the standard deviation was 8.96.

Furthermore, the researchers computed the t-counted value to prove the effectiveness of the use of Free Writing Technique in improving writing skill of the eighth grade students. The researchers used testing hypothesis to prove whether Free Writing Technique was accepted or rejected. The rule of the testing hypothesis is if the t-counted is higher than t-table, hypothesis is accepted. If the t-counted is lower than t-table, the hypothesis is rejected. The result of data analysis showed that the t-counted was 2.82. By applying 0.05 level of significance and 38 degree of freedom (df) ($N_x + N_y - 2 = 30 + 30 - 2$), the researcher found that the t-counted (2.82) was higher than t-table (2.0252). It means that using Free Writing Technique improves the students' writing skill in descriptive text.

DISCUSSION

This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Dampal Selatan. The researchers took VIII B as the experimental group and VIII C as the control group of this research. Both experimental and control groups received the same kind of pretest. The pretest was administered before the treatment while the posttest was administered after the treatment. The pretest topic was family members (make a simple descriptive paragraph about one of family members).

Based on the result of the pretest, the researchers found some mistakes made by the students in writing. Most of the students were difficulty to express ideas freely in writing. For example, they still took a long time to decide who was the subject they wanted to describe, and they did not know what they would write first to begin their writing. Another problem, the students got confused to write grammatically especially in simple present tense. They also often made mistakes in organization of text and not put their ideas in the right part. The last, they had limited vocabulary, it makes them difficult to write their ideas.

The researcher applied Free Writing Technique in teaching descriptive text in the treatments. She did not forget to share the warming up question which related to the topic. Then, delivered the learning objectives that will be done at this meeting. At the beginning of the treatment, the researchers introduced and explained to the students the Free Writing Technique and how to make descriptive text using Free Writing Technique. After that, the researchers divided the students to work in pairs. Then, she gave a topic about people. Next, the students choose who they want to explain, they are free to choose whoever they want to explain.

After conducting the treatments, the researchers gave the experimental and control group posttest to find out the progress in writing. The researchers asked the students to write a simple descriptive text about their idol. She asked her students to write one of their favorite idols. As a result, the students finish their task faster and they look more confident in doing writing than before. The posttest result showed the students' significance progress in the experimental group. Although in control group also had progress but the progress was different. It showed that 19 students were considered pass the writing test and 1 student were considered fail the test or under the standard score. The mean score of posttest in the experimental group was 76.25.

Moreover, in the control group who passed the writing test were 10 students and 10 students were considered fail the test or under the standard score. The mean score of posttest in the control group was 57.08. It means that the students score in experimental group was higher than in control group.

CONCLUSION

After conducting and analyzing the data, the researchers concluded that the use of Free Writing Technique improves the students' writing skill in writing descriptive text particularly for some aspects of writing were grammar, organization, and vocabulary. The data analysis showed that there is a significant difference between the result of the experimental group and control group. The result of the data showed that the t_{counted} (2.82) was greater than the t_{table} (2.02). By looking at the result of t_{counted} and t_{table} , it means that there is a significant improvement of the students' achievement. The researchers concluded that the use of Free Writing Technique was effective to improve the eighth grade students skill in writing descriptive text at SMPN 1 Dampal Selatan.

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