

Improving Students' Ability in Writing Descriptive Text Using Instagram and Process-Based Approach

Agus Suyanto

SMPN 1 Bancar

Email: wewe.gombalamoh@gmail.com

Abstract

Writing is one important skill that must be mastered by the students. Nevertheless, writing is still considered as the most difficult skill compared to the other three skills, speaking, listening, and reading. The result of the preliminary study carried out to the eight graders of SMPN 1 Bancar showed that the majority of the students' ability in writing a descriptive text is low. The main problems faced by the students were how to develop and organize ideas, lack of vocabulary mastery, how to use the correct grammar, and how to put the right punctuation and capitalization. Moreover, the absence of relevant and interesting media also affects students' failure in writing. In relation to these problems, the researcher tried to use Instagram as the media as well as process-based approach as the method to improve students' ability in writing descriptive text. The research findings showed that the use of Instagram and process-based approach can enhance the students' ability in writing descriptive text. In addition, the questionnaire result showed that all students (100%) gave positive response towards the use of Instagram and process-based approach.

Key Words: *Writing Ability, Descriptive Text, Instagram, Process-Based Approach*

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Writing is one important skill that must be mastered by the students. Nevertheless, writing is still considered as the most difficult skill compared to the other three skills, speaking, listening, and reading. As Richard and Renandya (2002:303) state that there is no doubt that writing is the most difficult skill for learners to master. In line with Richard and Renandya (2002), Broughton et al (2003) and Taylor (2009) state that writing is extremely difficult for students. The difficulty of writing lies not only in generating and organizing of ideas but also in developing these ideas into readable texts.

However, it is important for the students to improve their writing skill since it is a very important skill in the teaching of English because by using written language, people can give information to others in different times and places. People can also read the text many times and give the information to the next generation. As Carroll (1990) states that the most important invention in human history is writing since it provides a relatively permanent record of information, opinions, beliefs, feelings, arguments, explanations, theories, etc.

Based on the preliminary study data collected by the researcher from class VIII-A to VIII-F of SMPN 1 Bancar, most students had difficulties in writing, in this case the focus was on descriptive text. The result of the preliminary study indicated that class VIII-C got the lowest mean score in writing descriptive text compared with six other classes. The mean score of class VIII-C was 59.83, while the other classes' mean scores were above 60.

The preliminary study indicated several problems dealing with the students' writing abilities in class VIII-

C. The first problem is that the students have no adequate sense and abilities in developing ideas for their writing. They find it difficult to build sentences into the body of the paragraph. In fact, they only produced not more than three short sentences in each paragraph of their

writing. The second problem is the limited vocabulary the students have and know in mind. Consequently, they could not convey their ideas in a complete and correct sentence instead of repeating the same words in different sentence. This lack of vocabulary matter obviously make them difficult to develop the topic they have chosen for their writing. The third problem faced by the students deals with capitalization and punctuation. They often got confused about when and where they must put the capital letter and punctuation in a sentence. Particularly, they tended to put lowercase letter in the beginning of a sentence. Moreover, students also could not define where they must add punctuation in every sentence.

The next problem is students' low ability in organizing their writing. They were not able to make a coherent sentence which caused their writing are not well organized. In accordance with this matter, the students also did not have good knowledge in grammar which made them difficult to arrange and form the sentence well grammatically. The last problem is the students' low motivation in writing activities. They were less motivated and easily got bored to write a text since they thought that this activity was wasting time and had no advantages for them. Therefore, they just wrote what they wanted to without any desire and intention to make or create a good composition.

Moreover, the preliminary study also pointed out some factors which may cause some problems faced by the students above. The first cause is that the teachers do not provide adequate time in the teaching of writing to their students. Teachers tend to only focus on developing their students' reading ability since the National Examination or also known as UN demands the mastery of this ability. The second factor is that teachers rarely used relevant and interesting media to attract students' attention and curiosity in the teaching of writing. The third cause is the lack of vocabulary distribution by the teachers. Teachers seldom provide vocabulary exercises for the students which affect their low vocabulary mastery. The fourth cause is that the students commonly do their writing task individually. Teachers occasionally give them opportunity to work in pairs or groups when they are asked to do and submit a writing product. Consequently, it makes the students have low motivation in learning writing.

Based on the problems and causes mentioned above, it is crucial to minimize the students' inability in writing descriptive texts by applying an appropriate strategy and choosing relevant media. The strategy and relevant media are not only to solve the students' difficulty in writing descriptive texts, but also arouse students' interest and motivation during the writing activity. In an attempt to create a successful teaching learning process especially in the teaching of writing, the researcher chooses Instagram as the media and process-based approach as the strategy.

Instagram is a platform that can be found in social media. It becomes popular especially to youngsters all around the world since it provides many features that can be used by its users to post and expose their best photos to the followers and other users. Hence, this media surely can catch students' attention if it is used in the teaching learning process especially in writing descriptive text. The researcher believes that Instagram is compatible since it provides lots of photos that can be used by students as the source to write a descriptive text. The photos embedded in Instagram are vary from famous person to ordinary one. Therefore, students have many choices to enrich their learning sources which ease them in creating a text. Moreover, in the technology era, most of students in Indonesia have their own Instagram account. So, they will not have difficulties in accessing this social media.

Process-based approach is an approach where language learners focus on the process by which they produce their written products rather than on the products themselves. In the end, learners surely need to and are required to complete their products, yet the writing

process itself is stressed more. By focusing on the writing process, learners come to understand themselves more, and find how to work through the writing. Therefore, the researcher applied process-based approach in this study. This approach is suitable for the teaching of writing since it can give students more helpful guidance during the writing activities. During the implementation of this approach, teacher guides the learners how to compose a good writing. Hence, the teacher needs to guide the learners and gets involved in the process of writing from the very beginning to the last.

Statement of the Problem

In accordance with the background of the study above, the problem of the research is formulated as follows: -How can Instagram and process-based approach improve students' ability in writing descriptive texts?!

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to find out the effectiveness of Instagram and process-based approach in improving students' ability in writing descriptive text.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Writing Skill

Writing is one important skill that must be learned and mastered by the students. Many experts have defined the definition of it. Saleh Abbas (2006: 125) states that writing skill is an ability to express an idea, opinion and feeling to others through writings. In line with it, Darmiyati Zuhdi (1999: 159) say that writing skill is kind of skill to put one's thought, idea and opinion about something, responding on the statement of wish or expressing a feeling in the form of writing.

According to Hendry Guntur Tarigan (2008: 3), writing skill is a productive and expressive language skill which is used in indirect communication with others. It means that by writing, one can communicate with

other people without meeting each other. Meanwhile, Byrne (1996: 77) states that writing skill is an ability to convey one's thought in the form of writing which is arranged clearly and completely so that it can be understood by others.

B. Instagram

In the technology era, social media has been used widely in all life aspects including education aspect. Basically, social media is the most sophisticated invention of technology with internet base. Its function is to ease people to communicate, participate and share information on line so that they can broadcast their contents themselves. Social media networking is one of many websites which then becomes a new space for people all around the world to have a communication with their friends.

One social media that has the most users worldwide is Instagram. The word Instagram derives from the word *'insta'* (instant) like polaroid camera in which during its famous era known as instant photo. Meanwhile, the word *'gram'* is come from *'telegram'* which function is to send information to other people in short time. The same point is that Instagram is able to publish photo using internet connection so that the information sent can be received fast.

In the teaching learning process, teachers can use this media to announce a homework creatively and share students' experience during the classroom activities through photos published in Instagram. That's why teachers should be creative to use technology in the

classroom. Yet, teachers should also be selective to decide the suitable media with internet base since there are hundreds of social media released.

C. Process-Based Approach

Process-based approach is approach in teaching writing that concern on students' process during writing. As Raimes (1992) states that teacher's role is to guide students through teaching writing process, avoiding an emphasis on form to help them develop strategies for generating, drafting and refining ideas. Therefore, teacher should guide the students in the writing process and gives feedback to the students writing errors.

White and Arntd (1991) state that focusing on language errors improves neither grammatical accuracy nor writing fluency. They also suggest that paying attention to what the students say will show an improvement in writing. Therefore, it is important for the students to focus on the process by which they produce their written products rather than on the products themselves. By focusing on the writing process, students come to understand themselves more, and find how to work through the writing. It means that by focusing on the process of writing, students could be more aware of their writing and solve the problem during the writing process through guidance from the teacher. So, it can be said that by concerning on the process the students could produce better product of writing and their writing achievement could be maximum since they had passed the process in writing well.

According to Richards and Renandya (2002) and Gebhard (2000) there are four stages of the writing process itself, those are: planning (pre-writing), drafting (writing), revising (re-drafting), and editing. In line with Richard, Renandya, and Gebhard, Zemach and Rumisek (2010) also state that there are some main steps of writing process including pre-writing – drafting – reviewing and revising – rewriting. In addition, Harmer (2002) states that the process of writing consists of planning – drafting – editing – final version. Another version of the process of writing is proposed by Tompkins (2004) that there are five stages of writing; pre-writing – drafting – revising – editing – and publishing. However, in this study the researcher focused on the four stages of writing process; pre-writing – drafting – revising and editing.

Table 1. The Stages of Process-Based Approach

Steps	Activity
Planning (Pre-writing)	Students try to order or list their ideas and arrange them according to their priorities topic. The students put the ideas into subsist based on the main idea and eliminate all the irrelevant ones.
Drafting (writing)	Students focus on the fluency of writing and are not preoccupied with grammatical accuracy or the neatness of the draft. Students begin to write down their ideas based on the composition of the main idea in pre-writing stage. Students can consult their ideas to the teacher and ask his or her help to arrange the sentence structures. Meanwhile, teacher responses to students' writing product by giving written or oral comment and feedback.
Revising (Re-drafting)	Students revise their writing by reviewing their draft on the basis of the feedback or comment given by the teacher in the drafting stage.

Editing

Students are engaged in tidying up their texts as they prepare the final draft for evaluation by the teacher. They edit their own for grammar, spelling, punctuation, diction, sentence structures and accuracy of supportive textual material such as quotations, examples, and the like. This step is actually almost the same with activity in revising, yet in revising the main concern is adding, deleting, and modifying.

METHOD

This research is designed regarding to the problem faced by the English teacher and the learners in learning English especially in writing descriptive text. The research design of this study is action research. It is a method for solving the problems of teaching objectively and systematically. This is useful for improving and modifying the teaching-learning process. Wallace (1998: 1) defines action research as the systematic collection and analysis of data relating to the improvement of some area of professional practice. It would be often considered as the most accessible form of research for teacher because its goal would be solution of problems encountered in every practice.

In this research, the researcher works collaboratively with one of the English teachers at SMPN 1 Bancar as a collaborator. Here, the collaborator helped the researcher to observe and take notes during the process of implementing the strategy in the observation stage. Meanwhile, the researcher will act as the teacher in applying the strategy involving the implementation of process based approach combined with cue cards to develop the students' writing ability in descriptive text.

FINDINGS

The students' results in writing descriptive texts indicates that the students' mean score in the preliminary test has increased from 59.83 to 82.75. It means that the students' mean score has improved 22.92 points. Moreover, all the students' individual score (100%) improved more than 10 points from the preliminary test. From the data analysis, it is found that 21 students (70%) out of 30 students of the class could pass the minimum passing grade. It means that all those students achieved the score above 75, the minimum score which must be achieved by the students to pass the lesson. Meanwhile, a number of 6 students (30%) attained the score below 75 which means that they could not pass the minimum passing grade. However, they still made improvement by increasing their score more than 10 points.

As analyzed from the students' individual scores, all students made better achievement compared to the result in the preliminary test. Their improvement scores are varied from the smallest 12.5 points to the largest 45 point. From 30 students in the class, 7 students (23.33%) improved 20 points, while 15, 25, and 27.5 points were achieved by 4 students (13.33 %) for each. Another 2 students (6.66%) improved 12.5 points, 2 students (6.66%) improved 17.5 points, 2 students (6.66%) improved 22.5 points, 2 students (6.66%) improved 35 points, and the rest 1 student (3.33%) improved 30 points, 1 student (3.33%) improved 37.5 point, and 1 student (3.33%) improved 45 point.

This result proved that the students have made significant improvement. Moreover, it also validates that the use of Instagram and process-based approach succeed to enhance the students' ability in writing descriptive text. The students' improvement in writing descriptive text in this study was describing people which was considered hard and difficult in the preliminary study. Hence, this improvement has made the study meets the first criteria of success in which 80% of students can pass the minimum passing grade and 10 points improvement for the students' individual score. Students' improvement points in writing test compared to the preliminary test is shown in the following figure.

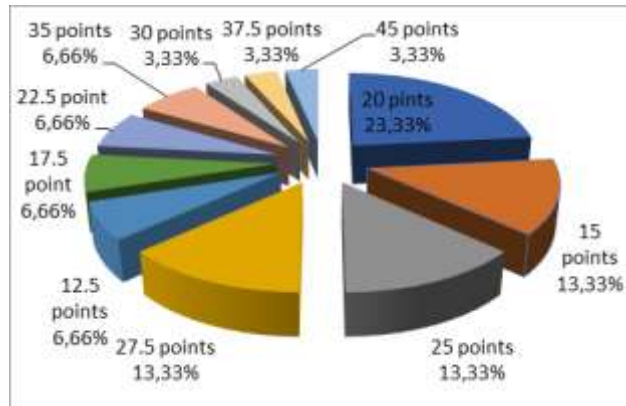


Figure 1. Students' Improvement Points in Writing Test Compared to the Preliminary Study

Dealing with all aspects of writing (content, organization, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics), the data analysis result indicated that the students' ability in writing descriptive texts had significantly improved compared to their preliminary test scores. The scores in the post action showed that the students made improvement in all aspects of writing

In aspect of content, the students' mean score in the cycle improved compared to their mean score in the preliminary test. It improved from 2.80 in the preliminary test to 3.65 in the cycle. Related to the organization, the students also made improvement by achieving 3.50 compared to 2.50 in the preliminary test, next in term of grammar, the students' score also improved from 2.20 in the preliminary study to 2.95 in the cycle. Furthermore, in aspect of vocabulary, the students made significant progress by increasing their scores up to 3.20 from 2.36 in the preliminary test. For the last aspect of writing, in mechanics the students also increased their score from 2.10 to 3.15 in the cycle.

DISCUSSION

The implementation of Instagram and process-based approach is proven could improve the students' ability in writing descriptive texts as can be seen from the findings that all students could increase their scores in all aspects of writing. Compared to the preliminary test, the students' mean score in the post test increased significantly from 59.83 to 82.75. It means that the students made improvement up to 22.92 points. Besides, related to students' individual scores, all of them also made improvement in which it varied from 10.25 points to 40.50 points. The students' improvement in increasing their scores both for the mean score and the individual scores was the evidence that the media and strategy used in this study could improve the students' ability in writing descriptive text.

The implementation of Instagram and process-based approach has affected the students to improve their ability in writing descriptive text and made the quality of their writing better. As the result, the students could improve their scores in all aspects of writing in one cycle. There are two factors which make the success of the students' improvement in increasing their ability in writing descriptive text. The first factor which contributed to the success of this research is the use of Instagram as the media in the teaching of writing. Instagram which provides various pictures has attracted the students' interest and motivation to be actively involved in the writing activity. By the help of Instagram, students could easily find the ideas since it provides some information in the form of pictures and captions. Besides, they could also find some vocabularies by looking at the pictures and then consulted the words through their dictionaries. This activity led them to be more active in the planning stage in which they

must take notes based on the pictures they observed and then generated these ideas into a composition in drafting stage. Moreover, Instagram also attracted the students' interest and motivation which then created a good atmosphere in the teaching learning activities.

The second factor is the implementation of process-based approach as the strategy in the teaching of writing. This strategy has proven its effectiveness to increase the students' achievement in writing descriptive texts since it provides some writing stages which are useful and helpful for the students in joining the writing activity. In planning stage, the teacher's guided questions were very helpful for the students to make notes based on the pictures they observed which then made them easy to generate the idea and develop it into a composition in the drafting stage. Therefore, the students succeeded to increase their writing product quality in term of content which can be proven by the findings that 66.66% students could achieve the maximum score 4 while the rest students achieved score 3.

In the revising stage, the teacher's comment and feedback accompanied by peer correction enable the students to improve their writing quality in term of content and organization of their composition. In this stage, the students could easily revise their writing based on the teacher's comment and feedback as well as their peer correction which made the content and organization of their composition better. Meanwhile, in the editing stage, the students could decrease their grammatical, spelling, and punctuation mistakes by discussing with their groups or partner. In addition to that, the editing stage also helped them reduce their vocabulary misuses

Based on the research findings, this study met the criteria of success which has been determined by the researcher. The success could be attained in one cycle since all the stages applied in the strategy gave positive contribution to improve the students' writing ability in all aspects of writing, in terms of content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Furthermore, the use of Instagram also played a very crucial role to enhance students' ability in writing descriptive text.

CONCLUSION

The research findings show that the implementation of Instagram and process-based approach could improve the students' ability in writing descriptive text, especially in describing people. The use of the media and strategy could also increase the students' interest and motivation in the teaching learning activities. The success of the research included the students' individual improvement score, the effectiveness of the teaching learning process, the students' activeness during the writing activities. In addition, there were two factors which affected to the students' success in improving their writing ability. The first factor was the use of Instagram as the media in the teaching of writing, while the second factor was the implementation of process-based approach in the teaching teaching learning activities.

The use of cue cards as media in the teaching of writing supported the strategy which could raise the students' motivation and activeness in the writing activities. Meanwhile, the implementation of process-based approach as a strategy in teaching writing took a very important role and was very helpful for the students to make improvement in their writing ability, particularly in writing descriptive texts. This strategy proved its effectiveness in solving the students' problem in all writing aspects in terms of content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics.

REFERENCE

- Abbas, Saleh. 2006. *Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia yang Efektif di Sekolah Dasar*. Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan Nasional
- Broughton, G., Brumfit, C., Flavell, R., Hill, P., Pincas, A. (2003). *Teaching English as A Second Language*. London: Taylor & Francis e-Library.
- Carroll, T. Robert. (1990). *Student Success Guide-Writing Skills*. USA: Longman.
- Raimes. 1992. *Second Language Writing*. Hongkong: Cambridge University Press.
- Gebhard, G. Jerry. 2000. *Teaching English as a Foreign or Second Language*. USA: University of Michigan Press.
- Harmer, Jeremy. 2002. *How to Teach English "An Introduction to the Practice In English Language Teaching"*. Malaysia: England and Associated Company
- Richard, C. Jack and Renandya, A. Willy. (2002). *Methodology in Language Teaching*. USA: Cambridge University Press
- Tarigan, Hendry Guntur. 2008. *Membaca Sebagai Suatu Keterampilan Berbahasa*. Bandung: Angkasa
- Taylor, G. (2009). *A Students' Writing Guide: How to Plan and Write Successful Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Tompkins, G. E. 2004. *Teaching and writing: Balancing process and product*. 4th edition Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall
- Wallace, Michael J. (1998). *Action Research for Language Teacher*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. White, R. and Arndt, V. (1991) *Process Writing*. Essex: Addison Wesley Longman Ltd.
- Zemach, D. E., Rumisek, L. A., 2010. *Academic Writing: From Paragraph to Essay*. Oxford: Macmillan Publisher
- Zuhdi, Darmiyati. 1999. *Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia di Kelas Tinggi*. Jakarta: Depdikbud