

THE USE OF *PERSONAL PHOTOGRAPHS* IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' SKILLS IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT

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This research was conducted to improve descriptive text writing of seventh grade students of SMP Negeri 17 and their use of noun phrases, simple present tense, and sentences writing in descriptive text by using personal photographs. The research was conducted in form of classroom action research. Subject of the research was seventh grade students of VII B class of SMP Negeri 17 Pontianak of academic year 2016/2017. In this research, the students made improvement during teaching and learning process as well as in writing descriptive text by using personal photographs. The students could also improve their use of noun phrases and simple present tense as well as their sentences writing in descriptive text by using personal photographs. After that, the students enjoyed and were happy in using personal photographs in their learning process as well as in writing descriptive text. Therefore, it indicated that personal photographs improved descriptive text writing of seventh grade students of VII B of SMP Negeri 17.

Keywords: personal photographs, writing, descriptive text.

INTRODUCTION

Descriptive text writing is one of the skills that were taught in junior high schools. In this case, seventh grade students of SMP Negeri 17 are expected to be able to write kind of text especially descriptive text based on KTSP curriculum that SMP Negeri 17 used. However, students had problems in writing descriptive texts when they were asked to write descriptive texts. The problems which were found during their writing process were in developing and expressing their ideas, using noun phrases and simple present tense, lack of vocabularies and in describing the object in sentences. The other problem which the students had was that the teacher seldom used media in teaching and learning process so that they could not understand the material that were given to them. Based on the problems above, the researcher used personal photographs to help the students in writing descriptive text.

Furthermore, personal photographs can be defined as images of something, persons, or events that captured with cameras or cell

phones by someone and then kept or saved into his or her cameras or cell phones in order to remember important things, persons, or events. Personal photographs can be used as in English teaching and learning. Personal photographs can help students in teaching and learning process since the photographs are related to their lives. Since they were related, personal photographs can grow interest to the students to learn. By using personal photographs, the students can feel easier in learning process.

According to Sieber and Hatcher (2012), photographs can excite students' interest since they can explore the photos to get information. The second comes from Kellner. Kellner (2008) states photographs are powerful teaching aids that can inspire students at all levels to create both expository and creative compositions. By showing students a photograph, they can describe with their own words anything in the photograph with their own imaginations. Ahola (2004) used personal photographs of his students as the instruments of his teaching. Ahola stated

that students tend to enjoy the writing process when they are able to write about topics relating directly to their lives. He also stated that personal photographs allow the students to reflect on some personal event in their lives and learn about narrative and descriptive writing. As a result, students are able to write without any problems since they have so much background information about their photographs.

Furthermore, in this research, personal photographs were used as media in teaching and learning descriptive text. According to Wilbur ((1966) in Nawawi (2011: 12), descriptive text is to create clear impressions of person, place, or object. Then, according to Gerot and Wiegner (in Mardiyah, Saunir, Refnaldi: 2013: 281), the purpose of descriptive text is to describe particular person, place, and thing. Next, descriptive text has characteristics. Then, personal photographs that were used in teaching and learning descriptive text were photographs of person. In addition, personal photographs that were used were teacher's provided photographs and students' own photographs. Then, to help them in using personal photographs in writing descriptive texts, the students were provided WH questions in teaching and learning process. WH questions helped the students in developing their ideas in describing person's appearances at photographs.

In teaching and learning process, personal photographs were used in identifying or describing the appearances of person on the photographs with the aid of WH questions. The students used their imaginations in using their photographs in identifying or describing the appearances of person on the photographs. First, the students identified or described the appearances of person on the photographs in form of noun phrases. After that, the students used their noun phrases to write simple present tense sentences. In sentences writing, the students could add more information about persons on photographs. Then, the students arranged and developed their sentences in writing their descriptive texts.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted in form of classroom action research. According to Chamot (1998), classroom action research is classroom-based research conducted by teachers in order to reflect upon and evolve their teaching. Chamot also explained that classroom action research is a systematic and documented inquiry into one aspect of teaching and learning in a specific classroom. The purpose of classroom research is to gain understanding of teaching and learning within a classroom and to use that knowledge to increase teaching efficacy/students learning. In addition, Ferrance (2000) stated that action research is a process in which participants examine their own educational practice systematically and carefully using techniques of research.

According to Kemmis and McTaggart in Burns (2010), the basics classroom consist four steps in conducting it. The steps in conducting action research are planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Next, Kemmis&McTaggart (in Burns (2010)) created spiral model about the steps in conducting action research.

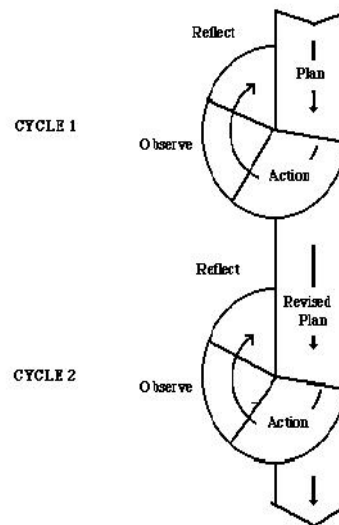


Figure 1. The Four Stages of Classroom Action Research

Furthermore, this research was conducted in three cycles. The subject of this research was students of VII B of SMP Negeri 17 Pontianak. The class consisted of 36 students. In collecting data from the research, it is important to use appropriate technique. Thus, in this research, the researcher uses observation and measurement technique. The researcher observes the students' and teacher's activity during teaching and learning activity. The researcher does the observation by using observation checklist and field notes.

Next, technique in collecting data from this research was measurement technique. Measurement technique was used to know progress of the students in every cycle. The measurement technique was done in form of written test. The students were asked to write descriptive text based on their personal photographs. The measurement was conducted three times since this research is applied in three cycles.

Then, the researcher used tools in collecting data from the research. The tools that were used were written test, observation checklist tables, and field notes. Written test was given to students in three cycles to see their improvement in writing descriptive text. Field notes and observation checklist tables were used to observe the act of students and teacher in applying personal photographs for descriptive text writing and record important thing that happen throughout the teaching and learning process.

In data analyzing, data was collected from learning and writing process. The researcher observed the students' learning process and record what they did in learning process. For the writing process, the students were asked to write descriptive texts based on their own personal photographs. The researcher provided scoring rubric for computation for the scores of their descriptive text writings. The researcher stopped his research if there were progress in students' learning and writing process.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This research was conducted in form of classroom action research. This research purpose is to improve the writing skills of seventh grade students of SMP Negeri 17 Pontianak in writing descriptive text. This research was conducted in three cycles. The subject of this research was seventh students in class VIIB of SMP Negeri 17 Pontianak. In this research, personal photographs are used in teaching and learning activity to help students in writing descriptive text. To know if the students' ability in descriptive text is improve when the teacher using personal photographs in teaching writing descriptive text, the researcher observed the class activity with observation checklist and field note. The research findings were discussed based on the result of the mean score, observation checklists, and field notes.

Furthermore, according to the result of the observation, field notes, and the analysis of students' assessments scores, students' use of noun phrases and simple present tense and in writing sentences in writing descriptive text were improved. Below explanations are the findings based on the specific problem formulations:

1. Personal Photographs Improved Students' Use of Noun Phrases on Descriptive Text

After doing the actions for three cycles, the researcher found that students' use of noun phrases in writing descriptive text were improved by using personal photographs. From first to third cycle, they slowly could use personal photographs in learning noun phrases after getting explanation in using personal photographs and WH questions after they earned more explanations and examples. Noun phrases were quite difficult to the students since they had not learned about this aspect before. Thus, they needed more explanations and examples about noun phrases and how to identify them based on appearances of person on personal photographs with the aid of WH questions.

From first to third cycle, the students made improvement in learning noun phrases. At first cycle, the students made mistakes such in adjective order. However, in second cycle, the students made progress in learning noun phrases by using personal photographs and WH questions. They were accustomed to use personal photographs and WH questions in learning noun phrases. Their mistakes in noun phrases slowly decreased. Then, in third cycle, they enjoyed using personal photographs and WH questions in learning noun phrases. Their mistakes in noun phrases were small. They were more excited in using their own personal photographs in learning noun phrases. Their own personal photographs helped them in learning noun phrases much easier.

Moreover, from first meeting cycle of first cycle to third cycle, the students showed improvement regarding use of noun phrases in writing descriptive text. The personal photographs alongside with WH questions helped the students in learning how to use noun phrases in writing descriptive text. From first cycle to third cycle, the students were accustomed and enjoyed in using personal photographs in learning noun phrases in writing descriptive text. They could use correct noun phrases in answering questions and in writing their own descriptive texts. Personal photographs helped them in learning noun phrases and how to use noun phrases in writing descriptive text.

2. Personal Photographs Improved Students' Use of Simple Present Tense on Descriptive Text

Beside noun phrases, the students' use of simple present tense in writing descriptive text was one of aspect of this research that was investigated in process of the research. In learning how to use simple present tense, first students used personal photographs and WH questions in identifying appearances of person on photographs in form of noun, adjective or noun phrases. Then, they made sentences from noun, adjective, or noun phrases they got previously by using simple present tense. At first time, the students had difficulties in using

personal photographs in learning use of simple present tense. However, they slowly could use personal photographs in learning simple present tense after getting explanation in using personal photographs and WH questions. Slowly, they were accustomed in using personal photographs and WH questions in using simple present tense in writing descriptive text. They enjoyed using WH questions and personal photographs especially their own personal photographs in using simple present tense in writing descriptive. Personal photographs helped them in developing their ideas and imagination while WH questions guided them in writing their ideas down in form of simple present tense sentences.

From second meeting of first cycle to third cycle, the students showed improvement regarding use of simple present tense in writing descriptive text. The personal photographs alongside with WH questions helped the students in learning the use of simple present tense in writing descriptive text. At the beginning, they had problems in using personal photographs in learning simple present tense. They also made quite a lot of mistakes in using simple present tense in their descriptive text writings. However, the students could use the personal photographs in using simple present tense in writing descriptive text in second cycle. It was showed in their descriptive texts writing that they made lesser mistakes than prior cycle. Then, the students enjoyed in using personal photographs in learning simple present tense. They could use correct simple present tense in answering the questions and in writing their descriptive text based on their own personal photographs. It was showed in their descriptive texts writing that they could use correct simple present tense in writing their descriptive texts. Personal photograph helped the students to improve their use of simple present tense in writing descriptive text.

3. Personal Photographs Improved Students' Sentences Writing on Descriptive Text

Beside noun phrases and simple present tense, the students' sentences writing in writing descriptive text was one of aspect of this research that was investigated in process of the research. Sentence writing was taught after noun phrases and simple present tense. After doing the research in three cycles, the researcher found out personal photographs helped the students in writing sentence correctly, in this case descriptive sentence writing. From first cycle to third cycle, students were accustomed in using personal photographs and WH questions in learning sentence writing. They also enjoyed using personal photographs and WH questions in learning sentence writing.

From first to third cycle, the students made improvement in learning sentence writing. At the beginning, the students made many mistakes in writing sentences. Most of them made mistakes in word orders. They usually put the verb before subject noun or object noun before verb. This kind of mistake also appeared in their descriptive text writing. Then, the other mistake they did in their descriptive writing was in using to be and verb. Most of them used to be in verbal sentences. Beside of these mistakes, the students made mistakes in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

In the second cycle, the students made improvement. They could understand how to write sentences using provided and their own personal photographs and WH questions. Some of them could provide their answers in form of sentences in identifying appearances of person on photographs with WH questions. They also made improvements in their descriptive text writing. They made mistakes lesser in their descriptive text writing than prior cycle. Albeit making lesser mistakes than prior cycle, some of the students still made as same mistakes as in first cycle. Some of them still made mistakes in simple present tense order, using to be in verbal sentences, and in mechanic.

In the third cycle, the students made improvement. They made better improvement than two prior cycles. They could understand how to write sentences using provided and their own personal photographs and WH questions. Most of them could provide their answers in form of sentences in identifying appearances of person on photographs with WH questions. They also made improvements in their descriptive text writing. The students could use their own personal photographs and WH questions in writing descriptive text. The students could identify their own appearances in their own personal photographs and write them in form of descriptive text. Then, in writing descriptive text, they made few mistakes in mechanic in writing their descriptive text.

After observing the teaching and learning activity and students' descriptive text writing, it was found that students' sentences writing was improved by using personal photographs in writing descriptive text. Their writings were also improved with the aid of WH questions in writing sentences by using personal photographs. From first cycle to third cycle, the students made improvement of their sentences writing by using personal photographs and WH questions. At the beginning, the students had difficulties in using personal photographs and WH questions in learning sentences writing. However, they slowly understood how to use personal photographs in writing sentences. They were accustomed in using personal photographs in writing sentences especially in writing sentences for descriptive text. They could make sentences in answering questions and in writing descriptive text by using personal photographs. Personal photographs helped students in sentences writing in writing descriptive text.

Discussion

This research was conducted in form of classroom action research toward seventh grade students of class VII B of SMP Negeri 17 Pontianak to investigate how personal photographs can improve descriptive text writing of seventh grade students of SMP

Negeri 17 especially in using noun phrases and simple present tense and in writing sentences in writing descriptive text. This classroom action research was conducted three cycles. The first cycle was conducted in three meetings while the second and third cycle was conducted in one meeting. The researcher acted as the collaborator that observed and recorded what happened in teaching and learning process. The data of research was collected through observation and students' writing performance. The researcher observed and recorded what happened in teaching and learning process of each cycle.

In this research, there were three things that researcher investigated during students' descriptive text writing process: noun phrases, simple present tense, and sentences writing. Prior the research, the students had difficulties in learning noun phrases, simple present tense, and sentences writing. Actually, the students learned simple present tense prior this research. However, they still had difficulties in learning it. In addition, the teacher seldom used learning media in learning process. Thus, it made students bored and not interested in learning process. Next, based on the observations and results of students' writing process, the students' use of noun phrases in writing process were improved by using personal photographs. The students' improvement in use of noun phrases was showed during teaching and learning process and writing process. This improvement was influenced by positive responses of the students in using personal photographs. At the beginning of the research, the students were curious toward personal photographs. Then, slowly, they grew interest and excitement in using personal photographs in learning process. Then, the observation showed the students were excited when they used photographs during learning process. During teaching and learning process, the students became active in discussing noun phrases with teacher. They were happy in using personal photographs. Furthermore, the students' improvement in use of noun phrases was showed in their descriptive text writing. The

students could use noun phrases in writing descriptive text by using personal photographs. From first to third cycle, personal photographs helped them in writing descriptive text in using correct noun phrases. This improvement was showed by lesser errors that students made in their descriptive texts. The students could write noun phrases in correct order in their descriptive texts. When the teacher asked them about the personal photographs, they expressed their happiness in using personal photographs in learning and writing descriptive text. They felt easier in using their imagination and expressing what in their mind in writing descriptive text. This was just like Kellner (2008) states that photographs are powerful teaching aids that can inspire students at all levels to create both expository and creative compositions.

Beside noun phrases, students' use of simple present tense was also improved. Prior this research, the students had learned simple present tense. However, the students still had difficulties in learning and using simple present tense. When they got and used personal photographs, they were interested in using them. During teaching and learning process, the students became active in discussing and learning simple present tense. Since they had learned simple present tense before, they could understand about simple present tense and how to use it in writing descriptive text. Next, based on the observations and results of students' writing process, the students' use of simple present tense in writing descriptive texts were improved with the help of personal photographs. The improvement was showed in their descriptive text where the students could put words in correct order in using simple present tense in writing their texts. They also made small errors in using simple present tense in writing their descriptive texts from first to third cycle. Furthermore, the students expressed their happiness in using personal photographs. Personal photographs made them easier in using personal photographs in learning and using simple present tense. They could write down what in

their mind easily in writing their descriptive text with the help of personal photographs. What students felt in learning and writing process was just like Sieber and Hatcher (2012) stated that photographs can excite students' interest since they can explore the photos to get information.

After the use of noun phrases and simple present tense, students' sentences writing were also improved. Sentences writing were pretty difficult for the students. Prior this research, they have not learned about sentences writing and thus making them difficult in writing sentences. Next, based on observation during teaching and learning process, the students could make sentences in describing about the appearances of person on photographs. They also actively engaged in learning sentences writing during learning process. Most of them raised their fingers when the teacher asked them about their answers. Next, based on observation during writing process, it was showed that the students were happy in using personal photographs especially their own photographs in writing descriptive texts. They could write what in their mind in describing appearances of person especially appearances of them on photographs. They also enjoyed using personal photographs in their writing process. Thus, their results of their descriptive text writing were improved. Their writing result showed that the students could write sentences correctly and just made small errors in their descriptive texts. Furthermore, the students expressed their happiness and excitement in using personal photographs. They told that personal photographs especially their own personal photographs made them easier and enjoy in learning and writing process. They also added that personal photographs helped students in expressing what in their minds in writing sentences. This was just like what happened with Ahola (2004). Ahola (2004) saw that his students enjoy their writing process when writing things that related to their life. As a result, students are able to write without any problems since they have so much background information about their photographs.

Based on the explanation above, it is showed that personal photographs helped seventh grade students of SMP Negeri 17 Pontianak in improving their descriptive text writing and in using noun phrases and simple present tense and sentences writing. Personal photographs especially their own personal photographs gave students excitement in their learning and writing process. The students felt easier and made them active in learning and writing process. Personal photographs especially their own personal photographs provided them information that they needed in learning and writing process. Personal photographs made them reflect on important event in their lives.

Furthermore, what the students felt was as sameas what happened with Ahola (2004) and Ratmaningsih (2012). First, Ahola used personal photographs of his students as the instruments of his teaching. Ahola stated that students tend to enjoy the writing process when they are able to write about topics relating directly to their lives. He also stated that personal photographs allow the students to reflect on some personal event in their lives and learn about narrative and descriptive writing. As a result, students were able to write without any problems since they had so much background information about their photographs. After That, Ratmaningsih (2012) conducted her research in applying personal photographs as teaching media in teaching writing to senior high school students. Then, she found out that her students' writing results was satisfyingly improved and her students liked and enjoyed using personal photographs in their writings.

Based on the results of this research, this research showed that personal photographs managed to improvethe students' descriptive text writing and their use of noun phrases and simple present tense and sentences writing in descriptive text. Personal photographs could help students to improved their descriptive text writing since personal photographs were powerful teaching aids that could inspire students at all levels to create both expository and creative compositions (Kellner: 2008). By showing students a photograph, they can

describe with their own words anything in the photograph with their own imagination. With personal photographs, the students feel easier in writing descriptive text. The students also enjoy the learning and writing process with the use of personal photographs.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

Based on the data which were gathered in first to third cycle, it was showed that the use of personal photographs could improve descriptive text writing of seventh grade students of VII B of SMP Negeri 17. From first to third cycle, the students showed improvement in their performances in writing descriptive text. By using personal photograph, the students could write descriptive text based on person on the photograph especially in learning noun phrases and simple present tense as well as sentences writing by identifying appearances of person on the photographs. Beside personal photographs, WH questions helped the students in using personal photographs in writing descriptive texts especially in learning noun phrases and simple present tense as well as sentence writing. According to the students, personal photographs made them excited and active in learning and writing process and helped them in using their imagination in identifying appearances of person on the photographs in learning noun phrases and simple present tense as well as sentence writing and in writing their descriptive texts. Therefore, in line with the description of the conclusion above, it can be summed up that personal photographs could improve descriptive text writing of seventh grade students of VIIB class of SMP Negeri 17 in academic year 2016/2017.

Suggestions

Based on the research findings, there are some suggestions researcher gives the suggestions for the reader and other researchers. (1) The researcher recommends the use of personal photographs in improving students' writing skills in descriptive text especially in improving their skills in correct

use of noun phrases, simple present tense, and in writing sentences. The researcher found that personal photographs as learning media are enjoyable and interesting for students which can make them more active and confident during teaching and learning process. (2) The researcher recommends the teacher to manage the time well in explaining descriptive text including in explaining noun phrases, simple present tense, and sentences writing. There are several important parts in writing descriptive text so good time management is important for the teacher. (3) The teachers also do not forget to select photographs that interest to the students in teaching and learning process. Based on the research findings, the students became interested when they got photographs about famous person they know. These kinds of photographs helped them to understand the material easier. (4) The researcher recommends the students to be more active in teaching and learning process. They should follow the instructions that teacher gave to them in using personal photographs in writing descriptive texts. (5) The last recommendation from the researcher is that further researchers can apply personal photographs in solving students' problems in writing in other type of texts. They should apply personal photographs with interesting materials and activities in teaching and learning writing descriptive text.

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