IMPROVING STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT THROUGH GUIDED WRITING

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Abstract
This research was conducted on the eighth grade students of SMPN 6 Pontianak in academic year 2015/2016. The research was conducted in to improve students' engagement in writing descriptive text. The method of this research was classroom action research. The tools of data collecting were observation sheet and field note. This research was done in two cycles. The result of data analysis showed that the students were engaged during writing activities. Guided writing could improve the number of students taking initiatives in asking and answering questions, the number of students working collaboratively in completing group task, and the number of students that focus on the writing process throughout the class. Those improvements also supported by the students' engagement rate. In the first cycle their engagement rate was 82% and improved by 13.6% in the second cycle to 95.6%. Thus, it can be concluded that guided writing did improve students' engagement in writing descriptive text. Teachers could use guided writing as an alternative technique in teaching writing. However, they should manage the time carefully so that they will have enough time to evaluate and give feedback to the students' writing.

Keywords: Students' Engagement, Descriptive Text, Guided Writing

INTRODUCTION

Students engagement has in recent years been very much in focus as it is increasingly being seen as a quality indicator for successful learning and teaching. In Curriculum 2013 for English subject, it is stated that eighth grade students are expected to be able to master descriptive text writing. Unfortunately, several students fail to meet the expectation. One of the causal factors of that problem is students lack of engagement. The teacher had tried to engage her students in some ways.

Prior to the research implementation, she used the students' workbook to teach about descriptive text writing. She also used loud voice so that students could listen to her. The teacher liked to throw some jokes too while teaching and it made the class livelier. Even so, the teacher's ways of engaging were still unsatisfactory.

Based on the pre-research observation in class VIII D of SMPN 6 Pontianak, the researcher found that a lot of students showed disengagement. It can be seen from their behavior during the lesson. Many students were passive when the teacher was explaining about the material. From the total of 30 students, only one to four students took initiative to ask and answer teacher's questions. The researcher also found some students being scolded because they were disturbing others and interacting socially when they were supposed to do writing tasks. These students were confused not knowing what to write because their lack of vocabulary. In addition, the researcher found that the students' engagement rate lay between 55.8 % to 68.5 % with the average number of engaged students from 16 to 20 people. This situation made the learning process was not effective and caused the students to fail reaching the passing grade for writing task.

Numerous researchers have said that students' engagement is closely related to

students' achievement in class. The more engaged the students are, the more successful they will be in doing task or test (Klem & Connell, 2004; Collins & Valentine, 2008; Dunleavy et al., 2012; Johnson-Smith, 2014). Furthermore, research has indicated that students who are engaged are likely to learn more (Coates, 2005; Graham, Tripp, Seawright & Joeckel, 2007), and it is therefore important for teachers to explore ways by which they can boost students' engagement in the classroom.

The importance of teacher support and guidance has been highlighted throughout the research on students' engagement. Modeling, structure, and encouragement are often needed to engage students who have weaker skills and therefore may not have the ability to complete tasks on their own. Teachers matter when they enjoyed the teaching and subject taught, respected students, cared about students, explained clearly, and responded to requests for help raised the engagement levels of students.

Sustained engagement, therefore, depends on good instruction. The role teachers play in the teaching and learning process of writing is fundamental to improve students' engagement in writing (Graham & Harris, 2005). Hence, new techniques are explored and assessed to verify its effectiveness (Roth & Guinee, 2011). In order to improve students' engagement in writing descriptive text, the teacher and researcher have adopted the model of guided writing that has been shown in several recent studies that exerts a statistically significant influence on the improvement of students' engagement (Lan, Hung & Hsu, 2011).

Through this technique, students were supported during writing lesson and they could maintain their engagement. It also developed and refined students' communication in writing.

METHOD

The teacher and researcher applied Classroom Action Research (CAR) to improve the engagement of 30 students of VIII D at SMPN 6 Pontianak in writing. According to Burns (2010) action research is a form of study conducted in educational setting based on reflective practice with the purpose of solving the problem to improve teaching learning process. This research aimed to improve

students' initiative in asking and answering questions, students' collaborative work in completing group task, and their focus on the writing process throughout the class.

According to Kemmis and McTaggart cited in Burns (2010), classroom action research was implemented into the procedures which include planning, acting, observing and reflecting. The first cycle may become a continuing spiral of cycles which recur until the researcher has achieved a satisfactory outcome and feels it is time to stop. For the first and second cycle of this research, the teacher and researcher did the following activities:

Planning

In this phase the teacher and researcher investigated students' problems in writing lesson. One of the problem that the teacher and researcher focus on was the lack of students' engagement in the writing activity. The teacher and researcher prepared the possible solution to improve students' engagement in writing which is using guided writing.

The material used in teaching was about descriptive text based on the basic competence of writing in syllabus of Curriculum 2013. The teacher and researcher also prepared the lesson plan before each cycle, arranged observation sheet and field note, as well as writing assessment for the students.

Acting

In this phase, the teacher and researcher applied the teaching material and lesson plan that had been planned before. The researcher acted as the collaborator and the teacher taught the students using guided writing to improve their engagement in writing.

The teacher applied guided writing to improve students' engagement that focus on their active academic involvement and their engagement rate in learning descriptive text writing. The classroom action research was held in 80 minutes, started from 9:15 to 10:35. The 30 students who were the subjects of this research were all present in both cycle one and cycle two. The teacher carried out the teaching and learning process as planned using guided writing to improve students' engagement in descriptive text writing.

The teaching processes had been implemented into three steps; introductory activity, main activity, and closing activity. At introductory activity, the teacher greeted the students, encouraged them by giving some motivations, and gave guiding questions to introduce the topic of the lesson. At main activity, there were five stages including observing, questioning, exploring, associating, and communicating.

In observing stage, the students read an example of descriptive text and identified the structure of descriptive text with teacher's guidance. In questioning stage, students identified the social function of descriptive text with guiding question from the teacher. In exploring stage, students identify the content of the text with guiding questions from the teacher. The teacher also introduced descriptive adjective words to the students. In associating stage, students filled in an incomplete descriptive text as a group with teacher's guidance. They received feedback from their friends and teacher after finishing their work. In communicating stage, students wrote descriptive text individually using guiding questions and writing frame that had been provided by the teacher. Students showed their writing to the teacher and received immediate evaluation and feedback to better up their writing.

At closing activity, students were given the comprehension questions as the assessment, then teacher and students concluded the lesson and close the activity.

Observing

In this phase, the researcher as the collaborator, took note and observed systematically the effects of the action and documenting the actions of those involved. The researcher observed the teacher action, the students' engagement, and the teaching and learning process holistically.

In the observing stage of the first cycle, the collaborator found many students have improved their engagement. Students showed their engagement by being actively involved in the activities given. Whereas, in the second cycle, the researcher as collaborator found many improvements on students' engagement.

Students were actively involved in the learning process.

The data collected from using engagement observation sheet and field note were further processed in the reflecting phase using the table of specification and by calculating the students' engagement rate using a simple formula.

Reflecting

In this phase, the teacher and the researcher analysed and evaluated the observation outcome and information from field note. The data collected from observation were computed in table of specification in order to know the students' engagement rates.

After acting out and observe the implementation of guided writing, the teacher and researcher concluded that the first cycle was fairly successful with the students engagement rate of 82 %. Still, the classroom action research needed to be revised and improved in order to get the better result. Therefore, the teacher and researcher conducted second cycle to improve the students' engagement

In the second cycle, the teacher and the researcher made some changes to some parts of teaching material and lesson plan. Some strategies that were used for the betterment of the second cycle are listed as follow; 1) Admonishing the students to come in time, 2) Giving motivation to the students before telling them about the topic and learning objectives, 3) Using a picture of popular celebrity for the lesson, 4) Using My Idol as the subject of the lesson, 5) Asking students to read aloud the text descriptive shown to make sure that they read the text, and 6) Calling students by name and asking them their opinion or ideas, so they could be involved actively to class activities (R108)

Based on the findings from observation in the second cycle, the teacher and researcher concluded that the second cycle had been successful. The students' engagement rate was surpassed 90 % and most of the students also showed active involvement during the class activities. The teacher and researcher then decided to finish the classroom action research since all of the indicators already fulfilled and they have improved the students' engagement in writing descriptive text.

Setting of Research

This research was carried out at SMPN 6 Pontianak, Jalan Karya Baru. The researcher chose this school based on some reasons: (1) there are problems found in accordance with the matter to be investigated; (2) the researcher has done teaching practice at the school so she is familiar with the teacher and teaching environment; and (3) the school has not been used for research with similar topics to avoid the possibility of repeated research and duplication.

Subject of Research

This classroom action research requires collaboration between the teacher and the researcher. The teacher participated in this research is a permanent teacher who taught English in grade eight. To maintain the privacy of her, the researcher uses X to name the research participant. Mrs. X had nine years of teaching experiences. She had completed her undergraduate degree at teacher training and education faculty of Tanjungpura University (UNTAN). The subjects of this research were 30 students of VIII D at SMPN 6 Pontianak.

Techniques and Tools of Data Collection

This research used observation technique to collect the data. Several tools used to collect the data were observation sheet and field note. The researcher, as collaborator, observed teacher's actions and students' engagement in writing activities by using observation sheet and field notes that had been structured based on the lesson plan. The students' engagement data from observation sheet were analyzed using a simple formula to measure the students' engagement rate.

$$ER = \frac{Total\ students\ engaged}{Total\ students\ observed} \times 100$$

In this research, the researcher made 16 separate observations at five-minutes intervals. At the end of the 16 observations, the researcher calculated the total number of students who were observed during all the observations and the total number of students who were engaged. The total observed would be 30 students multiplied by 16 observations, or 480 students observations. The total number of students engaged would be calculated by simply summing the number of engaged students for all 16 observations. The student engagement rate is then calculated by dividing the total number of students engaged by the total number of students observed.

Validity of Data Collection

Triangulation is used as technique to confirm the data validity. It is a solution to provide valid and reliable data. Thus, the research is not only strengthened, but also empowered by implementing triangulation (Holtzhausen, 2001). Type of triangulation that is used is data source triangulation. The researcher used the footages of students and teacher in the learning process as the evidence to validate the data source.

Technique of Data Analysis

This research used comparative description and critical analytic technique to analyze the data. Comparative description is a technique of describing data which is done by comparing qualitative data from learning process between cycles. Critical analytic is a technique of describing data from observation in learning process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Result

On the pre-research observation, the researcher found that a lot of students showed disengagement. Many students were passive when the teacher was explaining the material. Some students were found being scolded because they were disturbing others and interracting socially when they supposed to do the writing task. These students were confused not knowing what to write because their lack of vocabulary. This situation made teaching and learning process was not effective and many of the students fail to reach the passing grade for writing task. The researcher then adopted guided writing technique in the teacher's class to improve the students' engagement in writing descriptive text.

The classroom action research was conducted in two cycles. The subjects of this research were 30 students of VIII D at SMPN 6 Pontianak in academic year 2015/2016. Each

cycle of this research carried in 80 minutes. The researcher acted as an observer who observed students' engagement. The implementation of first cycle was on 29th April 2016 and the second was on 30th April 2016.

Based on the result interpreted from the classroom observation using observation sheet and fieldnotes, guided writing improved students' initiative in asking and answering questions, collaborative work in completing group task, and focus on the writing process throughout the class. Therefore, the finding for general research question was the use of guided writing improved students' engagement in descriptive text writing.

The use of guided writing improved students' initiative in asking and answering questions by the help of guiding questions from the teacher. The group task not only created a collaborative work, but also allowed the students to practice the descriptive adjectives words that they have learned with the teacher. The teacher's support and guidance during writing activities helped the students to understand what the teacher's expect from them to do in their own writing. The students were able to compose a descriptive text individually using writing frame and guiding questions from the teacher.

Table 1. Summary of the Research

Students' Engagement	Pre-research observation 1	Pre-research observation 2	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
1. Students initiated to ask and answer teacher's questions	1 – 4 students	1 - 4 students	27 students	27 students
2. Students worked collaboratively in group	Less than 25 students	Less than 25 students	25 students	26 students
3. The average number of engaged students	16 students	20 students	24 students	28 students
4. The students' engagement rate	55.6%	68.5%	82%	95.6%

For more specific explanation, the researcher provided the specific research findings as follows:

Guided writing improved students' engagement in writing descriptive text

The researcher measured students' engagement by observing students' academic involvement whether they are engaged or unengaged during the lesson. In this classroom action research, the teacher and researcher defined engaged students as being actively involved in the learning process. For example, students are taking initiative in

asking and answering questions, working collaboratively in completing group task, as well as focused on the learning activities with minimum distruption (reading, writing, and listening to teacher's explanation). Unengaged students, on the other hand, are defined as not actively involved in the learning process. They usually are passive, doing work not related to class, being punished or scolded, disturbing others, interacting socially, or going out the room temporarily.

Guided writing that was applied in this research started with the teacher showing a

model of descriptive text to the students. The students are guided to read the text and identify descriptive adjectives used along with the text structure. After that, the teacher and students discussed the meaning of the text. The students are then guided to identify the social function of the descriptive text with guide question given by the teacher. Next, students are guided to identify the content of the text with some guide questions from the teacher. Students then encouraged to mention other descriptive adjectives and nouns which is commonly used to describe a person. showed list of adjectives and nouns that are commonly used to describe people. The teacher also provided descriptive adjectives and nouns needed in a power point presentation. This activity were intended to build students' vocabulary before they are given writing tasks.

The students were arranged in groups to complete a fill in the blank task afterward. The teacher provided handout with a descriptive text that need to be completed with noun and descriptive adjectives. It was expected that the students can be aware of the text's social function, language features, and structure. The teacher also gave support needed while monitoring them. At the end of the group work, the teacher gave feedback on their task.

The teacher then gave students handout for their individual writing. Before they work on their writing, the teacher demonstrated the thinking process and how to organize ideas in constructing a descriptive text using guide questions and writing frame. She guided the students to write their own text independently, applying the language features and structure learned using the writing frames. At last, students got evaluation and input of their writing from the teacher.

Throughout the writing lesson, the researcher found that students were engaged. They were actively taking initiative to ask and answer teacher's questions as well as work collaboratively in groups. In addition, on the pre-research observation the researcher found that the rate of students' engagement lay between 55.8% - 68.5%. After the implementation of guided writing, the

students' engagement rate improved significantly. The total number of students engaged was 394 in the first cycle. Hence, made the students' engagement rate was 82 %. In the second cycle, the engagement rate was 95.6 % with total number of 459 students engaged. Therefore, the researcher concluded that guided writing improved students' engagement in writing descriptive text.

Discussion

The teacher and researcher applied the classroom action research in Class VIII D of SMPN 6 Pontianak in academic year 2015/2016 to solve the problems found regarding students' engagement in writing descriptive text. In this research, students' engagement defined as students' initiatives in asking and answering questions, collaborative work in completing group task, and focus on the writing process throughout the class. This classroom action research was conducted in two cycles. Each of which consisted of four stages – planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

Before the first cycle began, the researcher had conducted two pre-research observations and found that the class had small number of students who initiated to ask and answer teacher's questions. Many students were also seen not working collaboratively in groups with the average number of engaged students ranges from 16 – 20 students. The students' engagement rate was also not satisfactory. It was 55.6 % in the first pre-research observation and 68.5 % in the second pre-research observation.

Some indicators were set up before conducting the classroom action research. The teacher and researcher ceased the cycles as the following indicators are fulfilled; 1) The total number of students taking initiatives in asking and answering questions to the teacher is improved to more than 15 students from 30 students. 2) The number of students working collaboratively in completing group task is improved to more than 25 students from 30 students. 3) The average number of engaged students is improved to more than 25 students from 30 students. 4) The students'

engagement rate is improved to more than 90 %.

After two cycles with all the careful planning and execution of the technique used, the students' engagement in writing descriptive text was improved. In the first cycle, the teacher and researcher used My Best friend as the topic of the lesson. There were 27 students in total who initiated to ask and answer the teacher's questions. More than half of the students also worked collaboratively in groups and the average number of engaged students was 24 students. All students finished their writing within given time when they had individual work. Although some students were seen unengaged during the learning activities, the students' engagement rate was quite high with 82 %. It was still lower than the target indicator which is more than 90 %. Since the result in first cycle was not satisfactory, the teacher and researcher decided to conduct second cycle with some improvements for the better result.

In the second cycle, the teacher and researcher used My Idol as the topic of the lesson. It was expected by using this topic in learning descriptive text, the students would get more engaged. As Richard & Renandya (2002) stated that the topic should engage students' interest, based on their experience, and relevant with their life. From the second cycle, the researcher found that there were 27 students who initiated to ask and answer the teacher's questions. The number of students who worked collaboratively in groups was improved to 26 students and the average number of engaged students improved to 28 students. The students' engagement rate was also improved by 13.6%, from 82% to 95.6%.

The data found shows an increase of meaningful processing of content, increased participation in learning and focused attention by students who are observed to be engaged. Gibson (2008) said that guided writing provided maximum opportunities for active student engagement in their own writing and supported by the teacher's immediate guidance. This research proved that guided writing supported students psychologically and cognitively in writing activity. Guiding students by demonstrating correct writing procedures showed the students what the teacher expect from them to do in their writing. Thus, the students felt more confident to write their own writing.

In conclusion, the research finding of the classroom action research was satisfying. The students' engagement in descriptive text writing is improved significantly by implementing the guided writing technique. Therefore, the researcher confirmed that the action hypothesis was accepted.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS
Conclusions

This classroom action research was conducted to 30 students of Class VIII D at SMPN 6 Pontianak to improve their engagement in writing descriptive text through guided writing. The first cycle was conducted on 29th April 2016 and the second was on 30th April 2016.

Based on the findings of this research, it was found that students' initiative in asking and answering questions, collaborative work in doing group task, and focus on the writing process throughout the class were improved through guided writing. It means that the students improved much in their descriptive writing.

After two cycles, the teacher and researcher found satisfactory improvement on the students' engagement in writing descriptive text. Guided writing has encouraged the students to take more initiative in asking and answering questions, working collaboratively in group, and focus on the writing process throughout the class. Those improvements are also supported by the students' engagement rate which increase significantly. In the first cycle, the students' engagement rate was 82% and improved by 13.6% in the second cycle to 95.6%.

The use of guided writing also has changed students' behaviour towards writing class. They do not find writing activities as difficult anymore because the teacher gave them support along the way. The use of guided writing made the writing procedures clear and the students know what the teacher expect

from them to do in their writing. Therefore, the students feel more confident to write their own descriptive writing.

Suggestions

After conducting classroom action research with the main focus on improving student' engagement in writing descriptive text through guided writing, the teacher and researcher realized some weaknesses in implementing the process. To apply guided writing interestingly and appropriately, the researcher provided some suggestion for the English teacher of Class VIII D at SMPN 6 Pontianak; 1) The teacher is suggested that she should manage the time carefully so that she will have enough time to give evaluation and feedback to the students. 2) The teacher is suggested that she should choose a topic which relate to students' interest, based on their experience, and relevant to their life. This to help the students in developing their writing since they already have peer knowledge related to the topic.

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