

THE WORD SORT STRATEGY TO IMPROVE STUDENT'S ACHIEVEMENT IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini berusaha untuk meningkatkan prestasi menulis siswa melalui The Word Sort Strategy. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan penelitian tindakan kelas. Subjek penelitian adalah siswa kelas X di SMA Amir Hamzah Medan yang berjumlah 40 siswa. Penelitian dilakukan dalam dua siklus; siklus I terdiri dari tiga pertemuan (pertemuan I, II, dan III) dan siklus II terdiri dari tiga pertemuan (pertemuan IV, V, dan VI). Instrumen pengumpulan data adalah data kuantitatif (tes tulis) dan data kualitatif (lembar wawancara, lembar observasi dan catatan harian). Berdasarkan nilai tes menulis, rata-rata nilai siswa pada siklus II adalah 79,35 dan pada siklus I 71,95. Berdasarkan lembar wawancara, lembar observasi dan catatan harian, ditemukan bahwa siswa tertarik untuk menerapkan Strategi Sortir Kata karena membantu mereka untuk meningkatkan prestasi menulis mereka. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Strategi Sortir Kata dapat meningkatkan prestasi menulis siswa.

Kata Kunci: Strategi Sortir Kata, Prestasi Belajar Siswa, Menulis Teks Deskriptif.

Abstract: This study attempted to improve students' writing achievement through The Word Sort Strategy. This study was conducted by using classroom action research. The subject was class X in SMA Amir Hamzah Medan that consisted of 40 students. The study was conducted in two cycles; cycle I consisted of three meetings (meeting I, II, and III) and cycle II consisted of three meetings (meeting IV, V, and VI). The instruments for collecting data were quantitative data (writing test) and qualitative data (interview sheet, observation sheet and diary notes). Based on writing tests' scores, the mean of the students' scores in the second cycle was 79.35 and in the first cycle as 71.95. Based on the interview sheet, observation sheet and diary notes, it was found that students interested in applying Word Sort Strategy because it helped them to improve their writing achievement. The result showed that Word Sort Strategy can improve students' writing achievement.

Keywords: Word Sort Strategy, Students' Achievement, Writing Descriptive Text.

A. Introduction

The Competency based Curriculum had developed into School Level - based Curriculum or in Indonesia it is called *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP)*. In this curriculum, the students that have graduated from senior high school are expected in mastering the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and also have the ability to communicate both in written and oral language to achieve functional and informational literacy. According to this case, English subject in senior high school is aimed to develop the four language skills in order that the students can do communication in English on the certain literacy.

Writing is one of the four language skills that are very important to learn. Writing as a process to get product is influenced by some elements; such as vocabularies, grammar, organization, spelling, and punctuation. According to Brown (2001), writing is a process of putting ideas down on paper to transform thoughts into words, to sharpen main ideas, and to give structure and coherent organization into its work. In the first year of Senior High School, the basic competency that should be achieved in the writing English subject is the students have the ability to develop and produce written simple functional text in the recount, narrative, procedure and descriptive text. They can use right diction, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and organization. In fact, many students still have difficulties when they are asked to write English.

As suggested in (<http://language123.blogspot.com/2008/04/writing-is-the-most-difficult-skills.html>), there are some reasons which make writing being difficult process. (1) A writing requires good grammar; a non-native person has to remember a large number of rules in structure that are quite different from their own language. (2) The students are known to spend less time to write than listen, to speak more than read. (3) When students of English as a foreign language write something, they have a big question in mind whether what they write is correct or incorrect. In conclusion, writing is the most difficult skill that learners of any foreign language may face; to be good in it, learners must give much effort.

Furthermore, based on the researcher's observation, it was found that the students' achievement in writing is still low. The students said that they did not know what to write and how to start. The students could not also express their idea through writing because they did not have enough knowledge to write other words and they did not have ideas to write. Another reason is language problem; poor vocabulary, awkward phrasing and unconventional grammar, inappropriate use of colloquial language, difficulty with sentence structure and word order, trouble reading back what is written, difficulty with word sounds, spelling and meanings.

In this case, the teacher has high responsibility to improve students' achievement in mastering language skills especially in writing. To improve their achievement in writing, the writer applied Word Sort Strategy. According to Weimer (2010), Word Sort is a strategy that helps them in learning and be better to remember new vocabulary. They work in small groups, with each group given an envelope containing key terms on separate slips of paper. They are instructed to discuss what they think the relationships among the words might be. The strategy was developed for using in science courses, where terms have more precise meanings and fit more readily into categories. The students do this initial sort before reading about the terms or hearing them defined and discussed in lecture. After exposure to the words in the text or lecture, students get back into their groups and re-sort the words, comparing their new arrangements with the ones they first constructed. The writer applied the strategy in teaching writing descriptive text because from the Curriculum, descriptive text is suitable for the levels of education. The writer choosed the Word Strategy which was applied in teaching writing descriptive text because this strategy has made the students be easier in writing descriptive text.

There are many types of writing; exposition, argumentation, description and narration. This research is basically limited in teaching of writing descriptive text in the first year of Senior High School. The objective of the study is to investigate whether Word Sort Strategy in teaching descriptive writing can be effective. The findings of the study are expected to be useful for: a) The English teachers can improve their ability to conduct a better and interesting strategy in teaching writing skill; b) The researchers will use the result of this study as information for further research in the same interest; c) The researchers in developing a study model.

B. Research Methodology

This study has been conducted by applying Classroom Action Research. Action research is an observation of an activity that appears consciously in a class. According to Stringer (2007), action research is a systematic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems they confront in their everyday lives. It is a way in reflecting on the teaching that is done systematically, collecting data on everyday practice and then analysing it in order to have some decisions. Classroom action research helps teachers to understand more about teaching and learning, to develop teaching skills and knowledge and to take action to improve student learning. This is why the term "action" will be used for this method of research. The subject of this study was the first year student of Yayasan Perguruan Islam SMA Amir Hamzah Medan. One of classes, which consist of 40 students, was selected as the subject. The writer choosed this class because according to the teacher it was the best class. This study used two types' data, namely quantitative and qualitative. According to Wallace (1998), the quantitative data is broadly used to describe what can be measured or

counted and therefore be considered. In collecting the qualitative data, the writer conducted written test that was writing descriptive text. The test was given in every meeting and the researcher observed the improvement of their score every meeting. The qualitative data was collected by using diary note containing the writer's personal evaluation about the class, the progress of the project and the material that have been given to the students. Next, by used observation sheet and interview sheet, the researcher investigated the situation and the problems found during the teaching and learning process.

C. Findings and Discussion

The data in this research consisted of two kinds of data; they were quantitative data and qualitative data. Quantitative data were taken from written tests given three times, while the qualitative data were taken from interview, observation sheet and diary notes. The data were taken from one class consisted of 40 students and every students was present from the first meeting until the last one.

1. The Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data were taken from the writing tests given three times; Pre-test, Test in cycle I and Test in cycle II. Writing tests were used to evaluate students' achievement. The students' scores were listed in the following Table 1.

Table 1. Students' Score of Pre-test, Test I (cycle I) and Test II (cycle II)

Student's Score	Pre-Test	Test in cycle I	Test in cycle II
TOTAL	2338	2878	3174
MEAN	58,45	71,95	79,35

From the calculation, it was found that the class average score increased from 58.45 to 71.59 to 79.35. In pre-test, there was 10% (4 students) who got up to 75 points whereas in test II of the second cycle, there was 90% (36 students) who got up to 75 points. After analyzing all the data, it was concluded that the students' score had improved for each students from the pre-test until the test II in cycle II. Based on the data analysis could be concluded that all of the students got improvement on their score. There were high, medium and low improvements. It meant that the application of a Word Sort Strategy could improve the students' achievement in writing descriptive text.

The qualitative data were taken from the interview showed that most of the students said that they were rarely to write and felt difficulties in writing. From the observation sheet showed that most of students were active and enthusiastic in writing descriptive text by applying Word Sort Strategy and from diary notes showed all the process of teaching and learning. Although some students found difficulties in writing at the first time, but at the last students were able to writing descriptive text well.

Analysis of qualitative data does it by interviews, observation, and diary notes. Interview sheet was used to know feeling, problem and other condition of students. In the first interview, most of students were shy to be interviewed because they were rarely to speak English. The first interview was about English subject, teaching style of their teacher, and their difficulties in writing descriptive text. From the interview, it is found that the students were confused it started writing and thought writing was bored activity. However, the teacher did not use various media in teaching. From the observation sheets, it was concluded that teaching and learning process become much better in second cycle compares to that in first cycle. The result of observation sheet indicated that there was the improvement of students' activity and teacher's performance in teaching and learning process. Teacher gave explanation and motivated students to show their best in writing so that students gave good response to the activity in the classroom from the data taken from diary note; it was found that students' attention to the teacher's explanation improved day by day. Some students who didn't pay attention before, day by day became good students that response the teacher. The teacher helped them in creating a descriptive text.

2. Research Account

Cycle I. The cycle I was done in three meetings. The detail procedures of cycle I were described as follows: **Planning.** The researcher made the concept of lesson plan for three meetings. It would be done for ninety minutes for each meeting. Then, prepared the suitable teaching facilitates. Before the researcher asked the student to write a descriptive text, the researcher introduced the descriptive text, explained the generic structure and the grammatical function of descriptive text to the students. In this research, the writer would be as the teacher and the English teacher would be the collaborator who observed the teaching learning process in which the use of Word Sort Strategy was implemented.

Action. Meeting 1. The students were taught how to write descriptive text based on the lesson plan made. The researcher taught the students about descriptive text and the parts of descriptive text. In the last lesson, the researcher asked the students to write descriptive text in a piece of paper about their favorite artist.

Meeting 2 and 3. In the second and third meeting, they were taught with Word Sort Strategy. After that the students were asked to write a descriptive text based on the topic given. These were the procedures of Word Sort Strategy: 1) The teacher divided the students into some groups. One group consists of four or five students; 2) The teacher told the topic. All groups had the same topic, the topic was Lake Toba (second meeting) and parents (third meeting); 3) In closed word sorts, the teacher defined the process for categorizing the words. This requires students to engage in critical thinking as they examine sight vocabulary, corresponding concepts, or word structure; and 4) In open word sorts, the students in each group determine how to categorize the words, thereby becoming involved in an active manipulation of words. After the words are completed, the teacher asks the students to write descriptive text about their parents according with the word sort done.

Observation. The observation was done to observe what the students done during the teaching and learning process. It was found that there was some students could write descriptive easily. But, most of them got difficulties to write descriptive text, as the result, they were still very slowly to write.

Reflection. The researcher asked the students about their difficulties and problems in understanding the lesson. The evaluation of three meetings became the reflection to the researcher in making two cycles. The evaluations were gained from the students' test result and the researcher's observation of students' attitude. The researcher checked up the students' result test based on the components of scoring descriptive text. From the data the researcher decided to continue cycle two to get better result.

Cycle II. After doing the first cycle, the students' problems almost found and it gave information about the students' achievement in writing descriptive text. From the data, the percentage of students who got the standard score was not 70% yet. In order to get the better improvement, the researcher did cycle 2 which done in three meetings with the same steps.

Planning. Similar with the first cycle the researcher conducted the second cycle within three meetings and the same steps as follows. The time was also ninety minutes for each meeting. The writer also prepared some pictures as tool of teaching. She also prepares interview sheet, because by doing this, it still was intended to know the students' improvement to write descriptive text through Word Sort Strategy.

Action. Meeting 4 and 5. The researcher re-explained about the elements of descriptive text in detail. In teaching learning process, the researcher gave an example of descriptive text in white board and showed the picture of cat (my pet). In this phase, Word Sort Strategy was conducted to improve the students' achievement in writing descriptive text.

Meeting 6. The researcher taught writing descriptive text through Word Sort Strategy. In this time, the researcher gave a title about my favorite place. This was aimed to make students easily to remember some physical, moral, and intellectual of their favorite place clearly. At the end of the teaching, she asked the students to write descriptive text by giving a title of writing about My Favorite Place in a piece of paper.

Observation. In the cycle 2, the students were more focused on gathering details for their descriptive text. They felt it was interesting to write descriptive text using Word Sort

Strategy and shown some pictures that related to the teaching learning process. It was found that there was many students could write descriptive text easily and comfortable.

Reflection. After the cycle 2 had been completed, the students and the teacher were interviewed to know their comment about the whole research. The writer also conducted the test. It was found that the students' ability in descriptive writing text was better than in the first cycle. The students had already understood the main purpose of descriptive writing and how to write it in a fascinating and easy way using Word Sort Strategy. The total score in the second cycle had been increased from the first cycle. The total score in the second cycle was 3174 while the total score of the first cycle was 2878. It means that this cycle could be stopped because the goal determined had significantly improved.

3. Result

The qualitative data were taken from the interview sheet, diary note and observation sheet. From the diary notes, it can be concluded that the students were very interested to follow all the components of the Word Sort Strategy. The interviewed sheet showed that the students faced a lot of difficulties in descriptive writing text at the first meeting. The interview in the last meeting indicated that the students were familiar with the strategy and were able to use Word Sort Strategy to make descriptive text. The teacher also agreed that the Word Sort Strategy was suitable to use in the class. From the observation, it was found that the class was effectively run the students seemed more comfortable work in their group and felt comfort to study in informal situation. All these data indicated that the students gave their good attitude and response during the teaching and learning process.

Based on the quantitative data, it can be concluded that all of the students had improvement on their score. The result shown that in the first test (in cycle I), the highest score was 77 and the lowest score was 47. It meant that this cycle is categorized as bad, in the second test (in cycle I), the highest score was 83 and the lowest score was 55. In the last test (in cycle II), the highest score was 88 and the lowest score was 70. It means that this cycle is categorized as good. It can be concluded that there was the improvement of the students' score from cycle to cycle. It means that using Word Sort Strategy could improve students' achievement in writing descriptive text.

D. Conclusion

After analysing the data, a conclusion was drawn that teaching by applying the Word Sort Strategy can improve the students' achievement in writing descriptive text. It can be proved that most of the students can write descriptive text well. It might be seen from the improvement of students' mean score. The mean of writing test I (58.45) increased to the mean of the writing test II (71.95) and to the writing test III (79.35). Diary notes and observation result showed that the students more active and gave their good attitudes during teaching learning process by using Word Sort Strategy. Thus, the use of Word Sort Strategy in teaching significantly improved students' achievement on writing descriptive text in X students of SMA Amir Hamzah Medan. In relation to the conclusion above, some suggestion can be provided to the readers as in the following: 1) It is suggested to the English teachers to apply the Word Sort Strategy to improve students' achievement in writing descriptive text as the study shows that by applying Word Sort Strategy, students can overcome their problem in writing especially descriptive text. It's caused word sort strategy helped students learn and better remember new vocabulary; 2) It is suggested for the readers who are interested in the further study related to this research. It can choose different text or different strategy to explore the knowledge to enlarge their understanding about writing.

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