
ENHANCING THE STUDENTS WRITING ABILITY BY USING COMIC STRIPS

(An action research conducted at the tenth grade of SMA NEGERI I TAPA)

Yusda Humola¹, Rasuna Talib²
yusdahumola@gmail.com Rasuna68@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT: This article reports on the results of a study aiming to investigate whether the comic strips can help students to enhance their writing skill in English. This study was conducted at the tenth class of SMA Negeri I Tapa 2014/2015 in academic years with 25 students as the participants. The text in focus was narrative. The study used an action research by using Kemmis and Taggart's design that consists of four steps, namely planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The data were collected from observation and written test. The data of observation were obtained the teacher and students' activities in teaching learning writing. Whereas, the data of written test were obtained from the students' writing task in every cycle. Some aspects used to analyze the students writing ability, namely content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics ones. The results indicates that despite some aspects that still need improvement, the use of comic strips can enhance students writing skill in narrative text. The portraits of students' progress in writing English narrative text of some cycles show that in the first cycle, only four of twenty five students (16%) who can write narrative texts as the successful indicator 80%. In the second cycle, ten students (40%) were success, then in the third cycle, twenty two students (88%) could reach the value 80 or more as the criteria of successful. Observation data shows that the students were motivated to write English narrative text by using comic strips both in group and individual works. Whereas, the commitment of English teacher as a model and colleagues to reflect and to renovate the teaching and learning process was running well on each cycle. Based on the results of the study, it is recommended that comic strips be implemented in other genres, notably recount text or other language skills, and other countries.

Key words: writing skill, narrative text, comic strips

1. Introduction

English writing competence is an essential skill for students. Generally speaking, English writing is one of important qualifications in the KTSP curriculum which is applied at the Senior High School. Writing is one of productive skills that the students should practice when they learn English subject. It can be said that in KTSP, English writing competence is an important skill for the students which must be practiced and learned through experiences. English writing requires students to express ideas for particular purpose, such as explaining events or phenomenon, telling a story and describing an object to persuade other people. Likewise, the importance of teaching writing is how teachers are able to make students having good competence in writing, or students can master the components of writing aspects in the effort of creating a good writing composition.

Raimes (1983) argued that there are the additional and very important reasons why writing is an essential competence, such as: firstly, writing reinforces the grammatical structures, idioms, and vocabulary that we have been teaching to our students. Secondly, when our students write, they also have a chance to be adventurous with the language, to go beyond what they have just learned to say, to take risks. And thirdly, when the students write, they are necessarily become very engaged with the new sentences, the efforts to express ideas and the constant use of eye, hand, and brain is a unique way to reinforce learning (p.3).

Another expert, Nunan (2003), moreover, indicated that the activities in the writing process encourage brainstorming, drafting, writing, feedback, revising and editing (p.96). It means that the students are given the time in writing, along with the appropriate feedback from the teacher or the other students, they will discover

new ideas, new sentences and new words as they plans, then they write a first draft and revise what they have written for the second draft. As long as Raimes (1983) indicated that in the writing process, teacher gives the students two crucial supports, such as; time for the students to try out ideas and feedback on the content of what they write in their draft (p.10).

Furthermore, according to Gebhard , (1996), there are some indicators which associated with writing that should be explained to students, such as: word choice, use of appropriate grammar, syntax, mechanics (e.g. punctuation, spelling, and handwriting) and another important indicator is organization of ideas, that is, coherent and cohesive form (p.221).

However, considering the researcher's experiences in teaching English, the researcher has found some typical problems. The first problem experienced by the students at SMA Negeri1 Tapa is identified during an observation when three teachers encountered with teaching narrative on March 2015 that most of them seemed unmotivated and had difficulty in composing their own writing. As revealed by Sampath and Zalipour (2010) who stated that students consider writing to be extremely difficult area in learning English and it seems to be a daunting task for most ESL learners. They believed that students are not aware of writing skill and they are usually unmotivated to write in English (as cited in Yunus,Salehi and Embi,2012.p.3462-3469). Second, students are usually seem to have got low interest in writing English. That is why, to some students chose to copy and paste the writing task from internet. Third, students often felt bored to write and even to stay in the subject due to the monotonous teaching strategy. Four, the students' main problem in accomplishing narrative composition is in the aspect of writing, namely; the content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. In the content aspect, the students' problem is to build up their idea in the sentences. The students did not know what they would write, although the teacher explains the topic which should be written into their paragraph.

Then in the organization aspect, the teacher could not identify the introduction, body and closing of their sentences. While in the vocabulary aspect, the students use inappropriate words in their sentences. They translate their sentences from Indonesian into English. Furthermore, in the language use aspect the students' knowledge and ability in using simple past, conjunction and possessive pronouns are still low. Finally, in the mechanics aspect the teacher found the students' mistakes in using punctuation, capitalization and spelling in their sentences.

Relating to the teaching strategy, the teachers do not give correction or feedback about the students' writing. In this case, the teachers have just given the task to the students to write a story or their experience without guiding them how to write it well. Another typical problem is when the students were asked to write the narrative text individually. The students were always burdened with the teachers' rule that they cannot chat or share their tasks with their friends. This condition make the students become more passive, and they chose to do nothing, sit calmly because they did not know what they should do. Furthermore, although the teachers have explained about the concept of narrative text, the students did not use this concept in their writing task because of such an annoyed strategy. Last but not least, the teachers did not use a learning media or tool to facilitate the students are easy in writing.

This demands the English teacher has to be enthusiastically to look for the solution of students writing problem i.e. enhancing students' skill, looking better media etc. The researcher is interested to investigate about the students' skill. The researcher found that a learning media can be very useful to overcome the problems. It is also highly believed that, as previously mentioned, a learning media or tool is essential to facilitate the students in writing. To overcome students' problems in writing narrative text and enhancing their writing skill in general, the researcher suggests using learning media as a potential alternative, that is, comic strip.

A comic strip is a cartoon or a well – arranged pictures that tells a story. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2007) comic strips is defined as an art form that features a series of static images in set sequence usually to tell a story (p.300).It is the combination of pictures and words. It is colorful and funny. Therefore it brings a cheerful situation in the classroom. Csabay (2006) stated that comic strips can motivate and build up students’ confidence in the process of teaching learning (p.25). The comic strips are used in teaching writing and narrative text in particular. As Vanum and Gibbons cited in Yunus (2012) who stated that comics are seen as a narrative form which consists of sequence pictures.

There are some reasons using of comic strips in teaching writing. Firstly, Csabay (2006) stated that comic strip can motivates and build up students’ confidence in the process of teaching – learning (p.25). Secondly, Brown cited in Csabay (2006) stated that comic strips have a sequence story. It motivates students to continue reading and become more involved in the content of the story (p.21). It means that the students want to know more what will happen, the end of the stories, they remember the words, expression and grammatical forms easily. Thirdly, the characteristic of human being is represented by the actors in the story. It does not only build up students’ interests in reading, but also it influences their writing. Fourthly, Brocka cited in Yunus, Salehi, and Embi (2012) stated that comic strips can enhance students’ learning (p.3465). Finally, Williams cited in Yunus, Salehi, and Embi (2012) stated that using comic strips can improve students’ analytical and critical thinking skills (p.3463). Meanwhile, Yang (2013) stated that there are five strengths of comic strips. Firstly, comic strip is an educational tool in motivating students. He stated that before students thought in words, they felt in pictures. By using comic strips in teaching learning process, teachers can take advantages of motivating students. Secondly, comic strip is as visual medium. He indicated that students will read the printed materials with equal effectiveness. Thirdly, comic strips can be said

as a permanent media in learning. It means that students can read and write a text in the classroom or in their home by using the same comic strips. Fourthly, comic strips can be said as an intermediate step to difficult disciplines and concepts. Fifthly, teachers can introduce popular culture into their classroom easily and effectively through comic strips.

Considering the strengths of comic strips, this research would like to find out whether the comic strips can be used as a media in enhancing students’ skill in writing narrative text.

2. Method

By identifying the problems, the researcher conducted Action Research in Class X 3 of SMA Negeri I Tapa which has 25 students. This action research was conducted by collaborating with the English teacher in designing lesson plan, determining the criteria of success, observing the teaching – learning process and doing reflection.

This process of this research based on Kemmis & McTaggart’s model (2014), such as planning, acting, observing and reflecting (p.19). In the planning step, the researcher prepares lesson plan, instruments of observations, and students’ worksheet dealing with the teaching writing by using comic strips as a media in teaching narrative text. While in the acting step, the teaching writing designed in the lesson plan was implemented on the tenth class, they are 25 students. The implementation of this teaching writing narrative text using comic strips use the steps of writing process. The steps of writing process consist of prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.

In this step, the collaborator observed the teaching writing narrative text by using comic strips. The researcher observed the students’ activities. In observing activity, the researcher and collaborator use instruments of observation checklist. The instruments consist of the teacher and students’ activities surrounding the implementation of using comic strips in teaching writing narrative text. After the acting step, the researcher

analyzed the result of observation in the observing step. The researcher analyzed whether the teacher's activities and students' activities and the result of students' achievement in implementing comic strips in teaching writing narrative text. The reflection step is evaluation of the result of the acting that obtained from observation. The result of this analysis, the researcher and collaborator decided which activities have been done for the further cycle in this research.

To collect the data, the researcher used observation and test. The observation consists of the teacher and students' activities. Sugiyono (2013) stated that there are two aspects of observing, such as process and instruments. Process of observing consists of participant and non-participant observation. On the other hand, instrument of observing consists of structured and non-structures observation. In this research, the writer uses participant observation and structured observation. Participant observation means that the researcher observes the students' activities in the process of teaching learning. The structured observation means that the instrument of observation has been designed systematically.

Meanwhile, the test was used to get the students' skill in writing narrative text by using comic strips. In this research, the researcher used the students' writing task on every cycle as the data collected and analyzed. The students' writing was analyzed by using analytic scoring adapted from Heaton (1988 p. 146).

After analyzing the data, the students' skills are classified into four classifications. These classifications based on Heaton's opinion in scoring the writing task. The classifications can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. The Classification of Students' learning Achievement

No	Classifications	The intensity of Scores
1	Very Good	86-100
2	Good	68-85
3	Enough	48-67
4	Less	32-47

The Indicators of Success

The writer decides the success of implementing this action based on the criteria of success. The criteria consists of two aspects, namely; first, the data obtained from the students' writing narrative include content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics can reach the value 80 by using comic strips as a media in teaching writing.

Second, 85% students got value 80 or more in their achievement classically. It indicates that the students can be stated success if they get value 80 or more. This score is based on KKM of SMA Negeri I Tapa is 80.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Findings of Cycle 1

The findings of cycle 1 include the result of observation on teacher's activities, the result of observation on students' activities in teaching learning process and the result of students' writing skill.

Based on the teacher's activities as shown in table 3 below, 42,11% of the indicators has been done in classification 'good', while 52,63% of the indicators has been implemented in 'enough' classification. 5,26% of the indicators has been done in 'lack' classification. Therefore, referring the data from the observation of teacher's activities, it could be stated there were some indicators did not do maximal. This condition should be advanced in the next cycle because it influenced the students' result in writing.

Meanwhile the students' instruments of observation focused on their activities during the writing process, namely students' cooperation in group, individual commitment, and use comic strips. This instrument of observation is used to monitor the students' performance and participation during the writing process using comic strips. The result of observation of

students' activities in the first cycle was shown in table 2.

Table 2. The result of observation of students' activities in the first cycle

No	Indicators	Implementation (%)		
		Good	Enough	Lack
1	Students' cooperation in group	20	12	68
2	Individual commitment	20	8	72
3	Use comic strips	84	16	-

The data of observation students' activities showed that the percentage for indicator students' cooperation in group is 20% in 'good' classification, 12% 'enough' classification and 68% 'lack' classification. The students' activities showed that they were lack in cooperation with their group and their individual commitment. Therefore, the indicators must be built up in the next cycle.

The last point discussed the result of students' writing skill in the first cycle. The students' writing skill was viewed from the aspects of writing, namely organization, content, language use, vocabulary, and mechanics. The result of data analyzing on the writing aspects of students' skill in writing narrative text using comic strips could be seen in table 3.

Table 3. The result of students' writing skill in the first cycle

No	The aspects of writing	Score	Average	Percentage
1	Content	544	21,76	72,53
2	Organization	218	8,72	43,6
3	Vocabulary	291	11,64	58,2
4	Language Use	314	12,56	50,24
5	Mechanics	71	2,84	56,80

Data which are presented in table 5 are as follows. In the content aspect of the students' narrative writing, the students' score is 544 (72,53%) with the average is 21,76. The organization, the total of the students' score in this aspect of writing is 218 (43,6%) with its average is 8,72. In vocabulary aspect, the students' score is 291 (58,2%) and its average is

11,64. Next, the students' score in the language aspect is 314 (50,24%) or its average is 12,56. Finally, mechanics aspect is scored 71 (56,80%) with its average is 2,84. Based on the students' result of writing narrative text, the researcher found that the students' skill in writing narrative text is not best possible yet, because there are four aspects of writing got less than 60% namely organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. While the content aspect has score more than 60% , that is 72,53%.

The findings indicated that the action research should be gone on the next cycle because from twenty five students, only four students or (16%) were successful in learning or have 'good' classification. While twenty one students or 84% were unsuccessful in learning. In the other words, many students have not skill yet in writing narrative text using comic strips. So that, the researcher concluded that the action research should be to continue to further cycle.

Revision of the Implementation in Cycle 1

There are some problems must be solved in the next cycle. Firstly, the students do not pay attention to the use of punctuation, so that the researcher must explain about the punctuation before they are asked to write narrative text using the other comic strips. Secondly, to overcome the students' problem in using 2nd verb form must be developed by giving them exercise such as grammar task especially simple past. Thirdly, to discuss with the students the glossary under the comic strips that will be written into narrative text. Fourthly, by understanding how to use punctuation and appropriate words in their sentences, that is expected to understand main and supporting sentences. Fifthly, to make the students could identify the generic structure of narrative text by understanding the plot of the story which was shown in the comic strips.

These problems must be included in lesson plans and implemented in the further action.

3.2 Findings of Cycle 2

The aspects described in findings of cycle 2 was the same as with findings in cycle 1, such as the result of observation on teacher and the students' activities in the teaching learning process and the students' writing skill.

Based on the data of observation on teacher's activities in teaching writing narrative text using comic strips showed that there was 78,94% 'good' classification, 15,79% in 'enough' classification and 5,26% in 'lack' classification. Referring to the data, the researcher points out that there were some indicators were increased in the teacher's activities in the second cycle.

Derived from the data on students' activities in writing narrative text using comic strips showed that , 24% for indicator students' cooperation in 'good' classification, 56% in 'enough' classification and 20% into 'lack' classification. While for indicator individual commitment there was 28% into 'good' classification, 72% into 'enough' classification and for indicator use comic strips there was 84% into 'good' classification and 16% into 'enough' classification. It can be said that there was a significant improvement on students' performance.

In the first cycle, the indicators of students' cooperation in group and individual commitment were mostly in 'lack' classification. But, in the second meeting, the indicators of students' cooperation in group and individual commitment could be increased into enough. The indicator of use comic strips was mostly good classification. Furthermore, the students' achievement in writing narrative text using comic strips could be seen in the table .

Comparing with the percentage in the first cycle, the researcher stated that the percentage in the second cycle was increased. In the first cycle, there were four students (16%) who categorized into 'good' classification, and in the second cycle, twenty students (92%) are categorized into 'good' classification. However, if we related with the indicators of success that is the students are successful if they got score 80 or more, and the amount of the students who are success in

learning or having value 80 or more can reach 85% classically. So the researcher and the collaborator concluded that the action research should be go on to the further cycle.

Revision of the Implementation in Cycle 2

After analyzing the result of students' writing in the second cycle, the researcher found that there were some aspects have to be fixed. Firstly, the students' mistakes were on the use appropriate words in their sentences. The researcher understood the meaning of their sentences, but sometimes the students used incorrect words. Examples of students' sentences are ; *Rizky fell and directly below to the hospital, he continued to approach each person ad ask who reported it.* Secondly, the students made mistakes in spelling. Examples of students' sentence is; *ther a man who saw the mas who was holding the gun and immediately called the police.* The word 'ther' should be written 'there' and the word 'mas' should be written 'man'. They wrote their sentences careless. Therefore, the researcher and collaborator made a lesson plan for the third cycle based on the evaluation of the second cycle.

Findings of Cycle 3

Based on the data of observation on teacher's activities showed that there was 94,74% of all indicators of the teacher's activities in 'good' classification, while 5,26% into 'enough' classification. Therefore, it could be stated that the researcher applied the activities which have been planned in the lesson plan and the indicators that were stated in the observation sheet. The collaborator as observer said that the researcher could do all indicators in the observation sheet. Therefore, the researcher could interpret that there was improvement in teaching learning process which could influence towards students' writing skill especially in writing narrative text using comic strips.

Table 4. The Result of Students' Writing Skill in the Second Cycle Viewed from the Aspects of Writing

No	The aspects of writing	Score	Average	Percentage
1	Content	608	24,32	81,07
2	Organization	455	18,2	91
3	Vocabulary	340	13,6	68
4	Language Use	439	17,56	70,24
5	Mechanics	96	3,84	76,8

Based on the data above, for indicator students' cooperation in group was 80% into 'good' classification, 20% into 'enough' classification. While indicator individual commitment was 80% into 'good' classification, 20% into 'enough' classification, and for indicator use comic strips there was 88% into 'good' classification, 12% into 'enough' classification. Referring to the data of students' activities in writing narrative text, it could be stated that of the students have acted all indicators. Therefore, the researcher could state that there was a significant improvement on students' activities in learning writing narrative text using comic strips.

The data of the result of students' writing skill in the third cycle could be viewed from the aspects of writing. The content, the students' score is 623 (83,07%) or its average is 24,92. In the organization aspect, the total of students' score is 482 (96,4%) with its average is 19,28. In the vocabulary aspect, the students' score is 352 (70,8%) with its average is 14,08. While in the language use, the students' score is 488 (78,08) or its average is 19,52. The last aspect of writing, mechanics has been scored 95 (76%) with its average is 3,8. The percentage of all aspect of writing are more than 60%, therefore, the students' writing skill have been increased. The classifications of students' writing skill could be seen in table below.

Table 5. The Classifications of the Students in Writing Narrative Text in the Third Cycle

No	Classification	The Amount of Value	Frequency	Percentage
1	Very good	86-100	4	16
2	Good	68-85	21	84
3	Enough	48-67	-	-
4	Less	32-47	-	-
Sum			25	100

The data in table 5 showed that there are four students (16%) classified into very good classification. They have the values more than 86. Twenty one students (84%) are classified into good classification because they got the values between 68 and 85. There is no one

students in enough and less classifications because they have not the values less than 48 and 32

4. Discussion

By analyzing the students' writing skill in the first cycle, the researcher found that their writing were disappointing. Before the researcher gave them a test in writing a narrative text using comic strips, the students were asked to make narrative text by using comic strips through the steps of writing, such as prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing. However, after analyzing the students' writing narrative text, it was found that in the content aspect was 72,53%, the aspect of organization was 43,6%, the aspect of vocabulary was 58,2%, the aspect of language use was 50,24%, and the aspect of mechanics was 56,80%.

The result of the students' writing indicates that the students had difficulties in writing narrative text. The first problem is in the content aspect. The researcher found that the students had difficulties to determine the topic of the story, so in developing their idea, they made sentences careless without pay attention on the topic. To overcome this problem, the researcher asked them to determine the topic of the story which told in the comic strips before they wrote it into narrative text.

In the organization aspect, the researcher found the students' problem that the students could not express their idea according to generic structures of narrative text. To overcome this problem, the researcher discussed with the students about the generic structures of the story which told in the comic strips. Based on Brown's opinion cited in Csabay (2006,p.21) that comic strips have a sequence story. While Khordoc cited in Yunus, Salehi, Embi (2002,p.3463) stated that narrative is an important aspect in a comic strips. So the researcher guided them to determine the generic structures of the story and it was expected the students wrote the narrative text easily.

In vocabulary aspect, the students did not have appropriately English vocabulary. They wrote their sentences in Indonesia firstly and

then they translated it into English. They could not express their idea in English spontaneously.

Next, in the language use aspect, the researcher got the students' problem in using simple past. The simple past is used in writing narrative text. Even though the students have learnt about simple past in the first semester, they could not use it in their sentences correctly. So the researcher explained about the simple past and gave them exercises that made them understand about the use of simple past.

The last aspect of mechanics, the students did not use punctuation and capital letters at the first word of a sentence. To overcome the problem, the researcher explained and guided them to punctuate and capitalize their sentences while the researcher revised and they edited their writing.

In the second cycle, the students' problems were in the vocabulary and language use aspects. In the vocabulary aspect, the same as in the first cycle they wrote their story in Indonesia firstly, and then they translated it into English. They always looked for each word in the Indonesian-English dictionary. While in the language use aspect, the students had understood about the simple past or the use of 2nd verb, but they did not know to put the 2nd verb in their sentences. To overcome the students' difficulties, the researcher guided them how to make simple sentences that the sentences just consist of subject, verb, and object or adverb.

Finally, in the third cycle the students' narrative text were suitable with the organization of the text, used 2nd verb in their sentences, they used punctuation. However, some of them still had difficulties in vocabulary aspect, such as they used incorrect words, but their mistakes were not significant.

By analyzing the data of the students' achievement from the first, second, and third cycles, there is a significant improvement in the students' writing skill after using comic strips. In the first cycle, the students who have been categorized good classification are four students (16%), while in the second cycle there are twenty three students (92%) classified into good classifications, and in the third cycle there are

four students (16%) classified into very good classifications, twenty one students (84%) are classified into good classification.

Referring to the indicators of success that the action achieved if students have values 80 or more, and 85% of all students have values 80 or more classically, therefore it can be decided that the activities in the third cycle is successful. This means that the activities should not be continuous in the next cycle, because the objective of the research is achieved.

One important thing that supported the successful of teaching learning in writing narrative text using comic strips is students' confidence in the process of teaching learning and understanding on their writing by their selves. It is supported by Csabay (2006.p.25) who stated that comic strips can motivates and build up students' confidence in the process of teaching learning. Additionally, William cited in Yunus, Salehi, and Embi (2012.p.3463) stated that comic strips can improve students' analytical and critical thinking skills.

By analyzing the researcher's experience in teaching writing using comic strips, she concludes that the comic strips could not only enhance the students' writing skill, but also it would improve their listening, speaking, reading, and English vocabularies.

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

5.1 Conclusions

The implementation of this action research and the discussion of research findings, the researcher concludes that the students' skill in writing narrative text can enhance by using comic strips.

In the first cycle, the result of the students' achievement in writing narrative text using comic strips was unsatisfied. There were no one students or 0% of the students who achieve the minimal standard value (KKM). This is caused by the students have low skill in writing narrative text. Their difficulties included in the aspects of writing, such as in the content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics.

In the second cycle, the researcher revised the teaching learning by explaining the narrative

text, simple past, the use of appropriate words in sentences, punctuation and capitalization. After revising the teaching learning, the students' skill in writing narrative text using comic strips could be improved. The percentage is increased more than before. The students who reached the minimal standard value (KKM) were ten students or 40%. However, the action could not reach the success of indicators yet, because the result of students' achievement did not reach 85% classically. Therefore, the action should be continued on the third cycle.

In the third cycle, by implementing the revised planning, explaining and guiding the students used the appropriate words, the researcher found that the percentage of students who reached minimal standard value was 88% or twenty two students reached the minimal standard values. The result of the students' achievement indicated that using of comic strips as a media in teaching writing can enhance the students' skill in writing narrative text.

5.2 Suggestions

Reflecting on the result of the action research, the researcher states some suggestions. Firstly, comic strip is useful media which can facilitate the teacher in teaching writing and the students in learning writing. It can build up the students' vocabulary and their idea in writing narrative text. Therefore, the researcher suggests to the teachers, especially English teachers to use the comic strips in teaching writing narrative text.

Secondly, it is suggested to the other researchers who would focus similar research that comic strips is not only useful media in enhancing the students' skill in writing narrative text, but it can be also used in improving the other skill, such as listening, speaking and reading.

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