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**IMPROVING THE STUDENTS' ABILITY IN WRITING
DESCRIPTIVE TEXT BY USING CHAIN WRITING**

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Abstract

Writing is most likely to encourage thinking and learning when the students view writing as a process. By recognizing that writing is a recursive process and every writer uses process in a different way, students experience less pressure to “get it right the first time” and more willing to experiment, explore, revise, and edit. Yet, novice writers need to practice “writing” or exercises that involved copying or reproduction of learned material in order to learn the conventions of spelling, punctuation, grammatical agreement, and the like. Furthermore, students need to write in the language through engaging in variety of grammar practice activities of controlled nature.

Keywords: writing, descriptive text, students' ability

BACKGROUND

Writing means expressing ideas, feeling in the written form of language which needs a communicative competence of the writer. It encourages thinking and learning for it motivates communication and makes thought available for reflection.

Writing is one of the most important skills in learning a language. Students are able to express their ideas, thought and feeling in writing. It means that writing is a communication skill since there is an interactive activity.

Some people agree to say that writing is the most physical task to do because of its complexity. Such assumption appears to be true because it really requires many efforts, much time, and great attention of the writer towards the topic as well as towards the process of writing.

Writing becomes a problem for some students because writing is a complicated production skill. There are many aspects should be considered in writing, such as, developing ideas, grammatical devices, choice of words, writing strategy and so on.

Based on senior high school curriculum, the students are required to be able to write many kinds of genres, such as narrative text, descriptive text, recount text, etc. which are useful for communicative purposes. It is stated by Bathia in Mauchlan (2005) that genre is a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs.

The first year students have learned how to write a descriptive text by using chain writing. The students have learned how to make a good sentence and paragraph; they also have learned structure which has an important role in writing. In this research, the writer will investigate how good the students in writing descriptive text by using word chains.

However, based on the writer's observation, as long as he teaches English, many students still have difficulties in writing. It might be caused by several factors. The first one is the students' difficulties I developing ideas in written form. The students spent a lot of time to write a text. After three times the writer asked them to write a text, the students seemed confused to start their writing. More than the students disturbed the other

friends and even asked the teacher for home assignment. There were only 7 (seven) of 35 (thirty five) students finished writing their texts. The second is their mistakes in grammatical devices, such as the use of the present tense, punctuation, conjunction, etc. For example, they wrote “he have” for “he has”, “my father’s nose sharp” for “my father’s nose is sharp”, “I mother” for “my mother”. Besides, most of the students did not know the generic structure of descriptive text. They did not write the identification as a part of descriptive text generic structure. Mostly, the students directly wrote to the physical appearance without identification. The last one is their lack of strategy in writing. In additional, teachers need to have appropriate technique in teaching writing, in which can help students to express their ideas easily.

Based on phenomenon above, it is essential for the teachers to choose an appropriate strategy in teaching writing in order to help the students in writing a text. In this research, the writer considers that the use of chain writing is a suitable strategy in teaching writing, especially writing descriptive text.

Based on the background above, the writer is interested in conducting an action research about “Improving the Ability of the First Year Students of SMAN 1 Lubuk Jambi Taluk Kuantan in Writing Descriptive Text by Using Chain Writing”.

THE NATURE OF WRITING

Writing means expressing one’s ideas, feeling in the written form of language which needs a communicative competence of the writer. It means the writer must be able to use the appropriate vocabulary and know about connection, purpose and etc, in order to reach a good composition.

Writing is a complex process that allows writers to explore thoughts and ideas, and make them visible and concrete. Writing encourages thinking and learning for it motivates communication and makes thought available for reflection. When thought is written down, ideas can be examined, reconsidered, added to, rearranged, and changed.

Writing is most likely to encourage thinking and learning when the students view writing as a process. By recognizing that writing is a recursive process and every writer uses process in a different way, students experience less pressure to “get it right the first time” and more willing to experiment, explore, revise, and edit. Yet, novice writers need to practice “writing” or exercises that involved copying or reproduction of learned material in order to learn the conventions of spelling, punctuation, grammatical agreement, and the like. Furthermore, students need to write in the language through engaging in variety of grammar practice activities of controlled nature.

Writing is one of product skill besides speaking that is important to be learn. It is one of the English language skills that are taught in senior high school. Writing is an essential subject that should be taught in senior high school level. Besides writing is one of skills that can improve the students’ language and stimulate students’ cognitive that is useful for students who learn a language. Robert (1982:2) states that writing is the practical important of the communication skills. Communication skills enable students to fully express their thought and feeling. It means that writing needs a process of expressing thought and feeling-thinking of shaping experiences. “Good writing does not just happen. The best writers spend a great deal of time thinking, planning, rewriting and editing” (west, 2005).

Writing is a complex skill because there are many aspects should be considered in writing. As Reid (1994:81) says writing is a complex skill because there are some components should be focus in writing, such as the purpose of writing and writer's knowledge or writing, such as paragraph's component and pattern organization. In additional, it is stated in National Writing Project (2001:1) that writing itself is complex, often disorderly, and frequently frustrating. Best on the theories above, it can be state that writing is one of production skill that is very complex and it use to develop communication skill.

THE COMPONENTS OF WRITING

According to Hughes (1989: 91), there are five aspects in making a good writing. They are:

1. Grammar

It is important for the students to master because it is the basic to understand a language. The basic grammar helps students to compose a text. In this case, we use the passive voice.

2. Vocabulary

In order to write well, the ability to choose and use the appropriate vocabulary should be mastered. So, they can explore more deeply about what ideas they want to express properly.

In this case, lack of vocabulary cause the students' difficult to develop their idea in written form.

3. Mechanics

Mechanics include some matters such as spelling, punctuation and capitalization. Spelling is important in order to make a meaningful writing. The meaning will be changed if a word is misspelled. Punctuation is a command for the reader to raise his voice or drop his speed and stop reading. If the writer missed it, the meaning will be changed.

4. Fluency (style and ease of communication)

A paragraph is said fluent when the choice of structure and vocabulary consistently appropriate.

5. Form (organization)

It is important for a paragraph to have form (organization), which means that all of the sentences in it discuss only one main idea, the paragraph has to have good form (organization). In this case, students have to understand the generic structure of a text (descriptive text in this case) in order to write a good text.

THE NATURE OF DESCRIPTIVE TEXT

Description is one of the types of writing. In a descriptive writing, the writer tries to describe something. The writers express their ideas from near to far, left to right, top to bottom. Good description should involved working a number of details in some spatial arrangement; first, consider your purpose, do you want to arise the respondents to your

readers? Second, the writer must think what to describe, maybe developing smell and taste and touch as well (Mahan in Fadhillah S., 2007).

1. Chain Writing in Descriptive Text

Descriptive text is written objectively, using only the facts. When writing descriptive text the writers keep their essay on topic by applying descriptive text to their subject only. Descriptive text also intends to paint a vivid picture that elicits sensations or arouses emotion in the reader. However, in either form, descriptive text adds strength to the writers essay by adding interesting and specific details to the composition. The writers choose the details carefully. The objective is to leave the reader with just one impression. When writing the descriptive text, the writers start building the description by chain writing the facts. For example; when the writers want to describe about an apple, the writers begin to write the facts with; red apple, brown stem, small black blemish near the top, thin skin, juicy, crunchy, round, heavy and solid. By the time the writers finish this process, the writers have written an objective description and only need to put it into sentences and insert them into appropriate paragraphs in descriptive text. In writing the subjective description, the writers also add the adjectives to some of the facts: red apple, small black blemish that are more descriptive.

In line with Shawn (2009) states that chain writing in descriptive text is a writing process that builds from word chain of a topic. The writers then start to build the paragraphs based on the fact lists of the topic.

2. The Nature of Chain Writing

Shawn (2009) states that, chain writing is a writing process that builds from word chains of a topic. It enables students interpret and evaluate a topic in order to contribute to the writing of a paragraph. Chain writing is able to reduce inhibitions about writing; it also develops spontaneous writing in the following steps:

- a) Have the students form small groups of no more than four. Each student needs a pen, and each group needs one piece of paper. It is a good idea to remind students of useful expressions and write these on the board.
- b) The first student begins by writing the first sentence. He or she then passes it on to the student on the right, who writes the next sentence. Students should work as a team and help each other.
- c) The students continue until they have written a short composition.
- d) Finally, the students should read it together in their group and try to improve it.

3. The Procedure of Teaching Writing Descriptive Text by Using Chain Writing

According to Sharon Hargis (2009), chain writing is a writing process that forms by words related to the topic, the words then combined to compose a paragraph. Chain writing helps students to develop their idea spontaneous. Hargis states the procedure of teaching writing descriptive text by using chain writing in the following steps:

- a) Write examples of chain writing.

- b) Choose a topic then describe the topic by writing the words related to the topic, and then make a simple paragraph based on the words written.
- c) The students given three or more topics to choose.
- d) The students asked to write words related the topic; for example: the environment of the topic, its shape (thing), what they like (person), as many as possible.
- e) After the students finished writing the words, they asked to write paragraphs that build from the words, and make a good descriptive text.

Teacher may help the students with difficult words and the composition of the paragraphs so they can compose a good descriptive text. A little bit different to Sharon Hargis, Jan Matsuoka mentions the procedure of teaching writing descriptive text by using chain writing as follow:

- a) Show a picture, and then describe the picture by writing words in chain (each word must relate to the topic).
- b) Then write a descriptive paragraph by using the words chain.
- c) Asked the students to work in pair.
- d) The teacher gives a new picture, and then asked them to describe the picture by writing words list and finally build a descriptive paragraph.
- e) Their works will be evaluated by their classmates.
- f) The teacher guides them in difficult words.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED STUDIES

There are some studies about improving students' ability in writing descriptive text conducted by some researchers. Some researchers have conducted the studies related with this research "Improving the Ability of the First Year Students of SMA N 1 Lubuk Jambi Taluk Kuantan in Writing Descriptive Text by Using Chain Writing". The studies below related with the writer study:

The study conducted by Nuri Utami (2009), which was entitled "Using Pictures to Improve the Ability of the Second Year Students of SMP N 3 Dayun in Writing Descriptive Paragraph". The objective the study was to find out whether or not using pictures can improve students ability in writing descriptive paragraph. It was an action research. The sample of the study was the second year students of SMP N 3 Dayun. The instrument of the study that the writer used to collect the data was an essay test. The finding of the study showed that the second year students' ability in writing descriptive paragraph was in the good level.

The similarities are that they both conducted an action research, they have the same objective; to find out whether their methodology can improve students ability in writing descriptive paragraph/ text. They also have differences, first, Nuri Utami focused on descriptive paragraph while the writer focused on descriptive text. Second, Nuri Utami used picture to improve the students' ability in writing descriptive paragraph, the writer used chain writing to improve the students' ability in writing descriptive text.

The study conducted by Uyun Nafiah MS (2010) which was entitled "A Study on the Ability of the Fifth Semester Students of English Department FKIP UNRI in Writing Descriptive Essay". The objective of the study was to know the ability of the fifth

semester students of English study program in writing descriptive essay. It was a descriptive research. The sample of the study was the fifth semester students of English study program. The writer used one variable to collect the data. The finding of the study showed that the fifth semester students of English department in writing descriptive essay were in the average to good level.

The differences are Uyun conducted a descriptive research and the writer conducted an action research, the sample of the study; Uyun used the fifth semester students of English department, the writer used the first year students of SMA N 1 Lubuk Jambi. They also have different objective of the study. Uyun's objective of the study was to know the ability of the fifth semester students of English department in writing descriptive essay while the writer's was to find out whether or not the chain writing can improve the students ability in writing descriptive text.

The study conducted by Wartini (2009) which was entitled "Using Pictures to Improve Students' Ability in Comprehending Descriptive Texts by the Fourth Year Students of SDN 006 Bangun Purba Rokan Hulu". The finding of the study showed that the fourth year students in comprehending descriptive were in the good level.

The similarities are both writers conducted an action research. They also have differences, first, Wartini focused in comprehending descriptive texts and the writer focused in writing descriptive texts. Second, Wartini used picture to improve the students' ability in comprehending descriptive texts and the writer used chain writing to improve students' ability in writing descriptive texts. Third, Wartini used the fourth year students of elementary school as the sample of the study and the writer used the first year students of senior high school as the sample of the study.

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