ENHANCING EIGHTH GRADERS’ WRITING SKILL USING POW + TREE MNEMONIC STRATEGY AND PICTURE SERIES (ACTION RESEARCH)

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Abstract
Writing English recount text is not an easy skill to study for most eighth grade students to do since it is considered a foreign language in Indonesia. Many students are unable to generate, organize ideas and translate ideas into a written-text. Such a difficulty to write was also described to the eighth graders of SMPIT AL-MUMTAZ Pontianak, especially Class D female students. To improve their writing skill, the researcher did the classroom action research. It aimed at improving students’ writing skill at recount text through POW+TREE mnemonic strategy equipped with picture series in two cycles. The participants involved 27 students from the eighth grade of SMPIT AL-MUMTAZ. To collect the data the researcher used observations, interviews, and tests. The mean in pre-test and post-test showed in a different score. The pre-test was about 69 in which the mean was unable to reach the school minimum passing grade (KKM) since it is 75 of the KKM. As soon as the researcher conducted treatment and did a post-test then, the students’ result test improved into 80 of the mean score. Therefore, it is suggested that POW+TREE strategy and Picture series can be used by English teachers as an alternative strategy and material to improve students’ writing skill.

Key Words: Writing Skill, POW Mnemonic, TREE Strategy, Picture Series, Classroom Action Research.

INTRODUCTION
In recent years, English writing skill has been an important skill of the communication since a change of life style in society of the English writing skill usage among listening, reading and speaking language skills. Graham, et al (2019: 4) cited that people share information their friends and colleagues to the world through the usage of the English writing. Then the skill becomes a vital communicative instrument used by society around the globe and influences the society to learn to write so that they have capability of making a letter and e-mail then send the letter or email as to their family, friends, as well as their business partner neither in their regions nor their own country around.

What is more related to the importance of English writing ability stated by Klimova (2013: 9) that in a school, students have to own writing ability in order to get up the next grade and prepare for employment. That is why, writing contributes a significant role for students to pass the school and face workplace environment. Therefore, there is Junior High School Syllabus of Kurikulum 2013 (called Curriculum 2013), in which JHS (Junior High School) students are
required to be able to write essays and short functional texts, in which one of the texts is well-known recount text.

However, being able to writing the text is found difficult to do since it is not the native language which the students use in Indonesia. Based on Leki and Caron’s study in Nation (2013: 263) showed that second and foreign language learners, learning English found difficulty to write because of lackness of vocabulary exposure. It means that vocabulary exposure should be an indicator to facilitate the learners to produce a text.

Based on Sari’s research for students’ problem in writing recount text (2017: 15) showed that producing writing is found difficulty on the way of generating, organizing ideas and translating the ideas into a readable text. It can be seen that most of students consider writing very difficult to perform in mastering it. As the consequences, this is what causes the students’ reluctance to write.

The fact that such difficulty was described to the eighth graders of class C at SMPIT AL-MUMTAZ, learning to write recount texts. The students’ writing difficulty generally is caused by several factors, based on both class observation to students’ learning and teacher’ teaching behavior in the class and the researcher’s interview to the English teacher of the class.

Firstly, the students were reluctant once they were taking writing activities because they; most of the students, achieve a limited amount of vocabulary knowledge on the foreign language. During the observation, the students came to ask their teacher and their friends who have some vocabulary knowledge of the language for the appropriate words in the time they were having a writing task. As a consequence, they wrote a very short paragraph of recount text since they had difficulty in identifying a choice of vocabulary. Meanwhile a few of them, who have some vocabulary knowledge, had less affordable effort to explore as their well and creative writing as they had intended because they unintentionally needed to help their classmates to transform their mate’s native language of writing into the target ones. As a result both of the students perceived that writing is just a required learning activity and not a meaningful one.

Besides, recount text is about telling a person’s experience with sequential events, Hyland in Sari (2017: 16). Students; then, should write their experiential activities with a control and free writing task. In order to make such a written composition, students also need to write it based sources or ideas directly or indirectly drawn from experiences, (Dreher and Kletzien, 2015:140). Then, the students are able to write by drawing on their experiences, supported by their background knowledge of the genre and the language structure to develop their composition.

However, the students; based on the researcher’s interview to the teacher about her students’ writing activity, found difficulty to identify ideas to write because they lacked to find ideas and they were also confused to organize their sequential ideas into their own recount text. Besides, they had low proficiency about grammatical items as the students often used simple present instead of past tense in writing recount text. Whereas they are grammatically supposed to write in the simple past usage. As the consequences, their recount text writing tasks are
visibly found several mistakes on content, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and letter formation.

What worse comes to worst, they had unwillingness to take writing learning process, especially to produce a task about recount text as they hesitate over the correctness of their handwriting, spelling, incapability of complete the task instructed by teachers. They also had no ideas of how to develop their ideas in their writing drafts the task based on principled components of the skill (Mishan and Timmis, 2015:131).

While the researcher was doing pre-observation towards an English teacher, teaching the eighth graders of Class C, she was pedagogically delivering writing course, specifically at recount text using presentation, demonstration and practice method. Chronologically, she taught concept of the text along with its communicative purpose and language features of the text as language structures and showed several models of recount texts using, followed with assignment, instructed to the students for the last stage of teaching. Such a teacher’s pedagogy, illustrated is categorized as a teacher-centered-learning for their students’ successful learning. Yet, this made students passive and time consuming since they indifferently listened teacher’s explanation in a whole time of teaching and learning process, and had a limited time find sources of writing to incorporate the sources into their own text.

As the problem described previously, a variety of teaching styles is supposed to be implemented by the English to create a comfortably and effectively teaching and learning atmosphere in classrooms. Based on Zhoe’ study (2011: 73) emphasized that teachers should alter various teaching styles such as using an effective language teaching approach and implementing methods and strategies of the approach, followed through supplementary materials so as to improve students’ actively learning involvement and their outcomes. Then the teacher; as recommended by the researcher, should use POW + TREE Strategy to teach students to write a text as well. Hoover et al (2012: 20) said that POW + TREE stands for Pick ideas, Organize, combined with Topic, Reason, Ending and Examine in this writing stages and then Write them. Then the strategy encourages students to have ideas automatically and write the ideas in their writing without time consuming for finding ideas.

Graham et al (2019: 126) explained that this strategy is suitable for teaching at informational text, especially recount texts since teachers provide content such as vocabulary knowledge and provide the use of source material like key sentences sequential events for students to only organize and write a recount text, based a theme provided. Therefore, the students may prevent time spent finding appropriate vocabulary and fuzziness of organizing sequential events into their written recount text because of being given source contents ideas sentences construction so that the students are effectively able to develop their writing.

Besides, the strategy needs to be blended or supplemented by materials to support effective teaching and learning process of writing skill at recount text since Mishan and Timmis (2015: 5) stated that teachers use strategies and material while learning and teaching process are conducted. Therefore the teacher also
needs to use picture series of teaching material at recount text. Brown in (2064: 39) explained the picture that it is described as a teaching and learning material containing several pictures in which each picture is connected each other to describe a story line. Then the material is in line with recount text’ purpose. Furthermore, Yunus in Sigh et al (2017: 78) said that picture series is used as an effective material for stimulating students for their writing, especially writing a story or sequence of events. Then the picture can be used for a teacher to deliver the English lesson and for learners to learn to write a story of recount texts and can stimulate students’ ideas to start to make a writing product.

Considering the usefulness of using the strategy and the material, the researcher conducted action research to improve the writing skill of eighth graders’ of Class C at SMPIT AL-Mumtaz junior high school students’ through POW + TREE Mnemonic Strategy blended through picture series of teaching material.

**METHODOLOGY**

This research was categorized into Classroom Action Research. Cohen et al in Dwi (2016: 14) explained that the research is a procedural and practical research, systematically conducted by practitioner to bridge a gap from research to practice. It means that the research is conducted by a practitioner to fill in something missing in a teaching and learning process in classroom by gathering information of the gap and improving it. Besides Creswell (2012: 577) added that in conducting the research, the practitioners (an individual teacher, a team within a school or inquiry group, undertaking such a research) gather information about issues or problem they face and systematically improve their particular teaching setting. Then, the researchers, conducting the research in the classroom, aims to improve the practice of teaching and learning process by studying the issue and solve the issue so at to improve the quality of their class practice effectively.

Furthermore, the researcher used an action research model developed by Kemmis and Taggart in Dwi (2016: 14). This model is systematically conducted into four steps such as planning, action, observation, followed through reflection. Therefore, the researcher did the research at junior high school of SMPIT AL-Mumtaz Pontianak. The participants of the research were taken from the eighth grade students in Academic year of 2019-2020, especially 27 participants of Class C.

In conducting the research, the researcher needs research instruments to collect the data such as observations, interviews, as well as a test. The observations were conducted to find out information about students’ learning engagement of their learning process before the action and whilst action. Interviews were done to collect information about students’ existed learning problem and their learning engagement at Writing. Then, the test was used to analyze and make comparison of students’ different writing achievement in pre-research and post-research. Therefore, the researcher need to analyze the data using numerical scale of quantitative data analysis by computing mean score of the students’ test as a learning indicator of entire participants.
The researcher procedurally began interviewing the English teacher of the class and also made an observation of students’ learning behavior towards the students’ recount text writing. After interviewing and observing, the researcher found a teaching and learning gap of writing recount text. Soon the gap was identified, the researcher then, made an analysis about it. The researcher did a follow-up to the previous procedures by preparing POW+TREE mnemonic strategy in teaching lesson plan, equipped through developed supplementary materials of picture series. Then, cyclical actions were treated to the students, learning to write recount text using the technique and the material.

From the cyclical treatment conducted, the researcher achieved the data or the students’ writing score. The researcher made a systematic analysis of the data for the purpose of getting reflection about his for further action if students’ learning behavior and outcomes towards their writing at recount text would be less improved or even higher than it. Besides, the researcher would stop the treatment if the students’ mean score of the outcomes improved higher than the minimum passing grade criteria (KKM).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

After finding out the students’ ability in learning to write recount text from the pre-test, the test, then gave the researcher a full description of the class situation. Therefore, the researcher made some teaching plan to overcome students’ learning obstacle to write the text they faced. Next, the researcher made a with the English teacher of the class for teaching scenario, equipped the materials implemented in cyclical process. consultation

The researcher implemented POW+TREE mnemonic strategy, equipped by picture series for two cycles. The teaching procedure of using the strategy and material were illustrated based on teaching scenario by Graham et al (2019: 123-126), as follows: (1) The teacher asked the students about their experience, starting orientation, series of event to reorientation of their experience in order to build up their knowledge of the recount content. (2) The researcher related their experience with a writing topic by providing vocabulary knowledge. (3) The researcher then gave the students vocabulary exercise, based on the previous section like matching the words with their meaning. Soon after the exercise was completed, the students discussed the answer with their mates. It was done in order to promote their memorization towards the vocabulary knowledge. Besides, the students were able to reuse the vocabulary to organize their writing. For the further activity. (4) Yet, using the words to organize sentence construction to a composition of recount text, the students were expected to consume much time. The researcher; therefore, introduced the students POW+TREE mnemonic strategy to write a recount text. (5) Next, the researcher explained the students each step of the strategy by instructing them to pick or arrange a topic and key phrase orderly from jumbled ones written in a material provided so that the students were able to get pre-writing and write a drafting. (6) as soon as the students had done the pick, then they organized notes from the topic and key phases they arranged using TREE mnemonic strategy by considering topic
sentence of a recount text they would write about, providing two reasons equipped with explanations for the arranged pre-writing and draft and ending to organize the notes. (7) the researcher also equipped the writing strategy with picture series in the material so that the material was able to stimulate the students’ ideas more clearly and the students were also able to ensure their’ ideas based on a story line. (8) Then, it was time for the students to rewrite them into paragraphs based on the generic structure of recount texts. Besides, the students edited their writing by looking at language structure (subject and object pronoun, sentence connector and tense, related to recount text writing) provided in the material, developed by the researcher.

In order to collect data of the students’ learning engagement and behavior during the actions, the researcher used the teacher’s observation note and students’ interview. In cycle 1, the students seemed to get confused to learn to write a text using the strategy equipped the material since learning to write through them was newly introduced. There were also many jumbled key phases or about 24 jumbled ones that; as the consequences, made students take 20 minutes to arrange them orderly though there were 12 picture series to guide the students the story plot. Besides, the jumbled ones needed to be given clues of language structure of the recount text such as subject and object pronoun, possessive pronoun and etc. so that the students were easily able to relate the arranged them into a meaningful text, for example ..... (Subject pronoun) have an outdoor program in Kura-kura beach.... (adverb of time).

The researcher; based on the observation note, needed to simplify the jumbled ones by modifying them into several or about 10 jumbled sub-tables in a main table, filled with arranged key topic and phrases and giving language structure clues for particular phrases equipped with 6-8 sequential pictures in the material.

In the second cycle, the data of the observation notes and interviews were discovered that the students could easily arrange the topic to the phrases into a prewriting. Furthermore, they were not only able to construct their sentences grammatically but also capable of composing their own recount text essay cohesively with the help of both the clues of language structure, provided on the key phrases and picture series. Such the modification gave more stimulating and understandable for the students in the process of organizing their notes and of writing their draft into a grammatical, cohesive, and meaningful text.

To get the data of students’ ability in writing recount texts using POW+TREE mnemonic strategy, equipped by picture series, the researcher distributed several tests to the students such as a pre-test before treatment and a post-test after the treatment, given. The number of the student were 27 female students. After the pre-test distribution, the researcher computed the data using mean different analysis. The result of the students’ ability to write recount texts, taken in each cycle can be seen in Graphic1.
Based on the graphic 1 of the students' test result in the pre-test was shown that the students' average score was about 62 which was under the minimum passing grade in a specific skill in the form of number, well-known KKM. For this skill, the researcher determined score 75 of the KKM as the passing indicator that the students had to be assumed to have for their ability to write a text. They had difficulty in generating and organizing theory ideas to write. Besides, they used the present tense to write recount text.

In cycle one, after the researcher implemented POW+TREE strategy, equipped by picture series in the teaching and learning process. The result of the students' writing ability showed some improvements in the content and organization in which the students were able to compose their writing text longer and more organized though most of them had difficulty in the language use such as their compositions were found several shortcomings on subject and object pronoun and verb 2 transformation of past tense. As a result, their mean score was 73 which had been unable to get the passing grade. Then, the researcher went on to the second cycle.

In the second cycle, the students' writing ability showed significant improvements. Their mean score were effectively able to reach out 80 in the post-test. Therefore, It indicated that the students’ writing ability; slowly but surely, improved from the cycle one to the cycle two and after teaching and learning process, using POW+TREE strategy, equipped by picture.

From the explanation stated previously, it could be concluded that POW+TREE strategy, equipped by picture series were able to help the students to improve their writing ability at recount texts.

Graphic 1. The Students Mean’s Score Comparasion

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CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on both the data finding, analyzed and result of the data calculation, they can be concluded as follows. First, POW+TREE strategy, equipped by picture series were suitable to improve students’ learning engagement and behavior. Before implementing the treatments, the students reluctantly composed their paragraphs in a very short writing text because of their vocabulary exposure limitation. In terms of their limited vocabulary mastery, they were; besides, found difficulty to make construction of sentences and organization of sequential content into grammatical cohesive recount texts which lead to incapability of the writing task completion.

Soon after the implementation of the treatments given, the students involved their writing activity actively. Their learning behavior was found that they were effectively able to stimulate the students to compose their own text grammatically, cohesively and meaningfully since the strategy provided the use of source material and picture series. Second, it was about the improvement of students’ writing ability. The result of the test showed that the mean score in pre-test was still low about 62 for the minimum passing grade. After the treatments were given in teaching and learning process to write at recount texts, the students’ achievement increased effectively. It was shown in cycle 1 that their mean score improved about score 73 of the KKM. However, the mean score was unable to reach the minimum passing grade (score 75) yet. Therefore there was cycle 2 implemented with modification of the strategy and material which resulted from an effective improvement. It was shown they were able to reach out to the minimum passing about 80 of their mean’ score.

It can be concluded that improving students’ writing ability through POW+TREE strategy, equipped by picture series would be an effective strategy and suitable material in teaching writing.

REFERENCES


