DEVELOPING WRITING SKILL
OF GRADE EIGHTH STUDENTS AT SMP OTAK KANAN PALU
THROUGH DICTO-COMP TECHNIQUE

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to verify the use of Dicto-Comp technique in developing students' writing skill. This research applied pre-experimental research design on one group pretest-postest design. The population of this research was the grade VIII students of SMP Otak Kanan Palu which consist of 23 people. The research sample was selected by using total sampling technique. The data were collected from tests that given as pre-test and post-test. The data were analyzed using both Descriptive Statistical Analysis and Inferential Statistical Analysis. The result of pre test shows that the mean score is 64.82 and the result of post test is 71.74. By applying 0.05 level of significance and the degree of freedom (df) 22, the results indicate that t-observed (10,81) is higher than t-value (2.074). In other words, Dicto-comp technique in language teaching can improve students' writing skill on writing descriptive text.

Keywords: Writing Skill, Descriptive Text, Dicto-Comp.

BACKGROUND

The teaching of English as a foreign language in Indonesia is directed to equip the students with the working knowledge of English. The language skills to be mastered are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Writing will provide a basic for development of other language skills. Due to the importance of writing mention above, the teachers have to develop students' writing by developing students' ability to write well.

In the teaching and learning process of English, writing has important roles for the junior high school students, as stated in the School-Based Curriculum (SBC or *KTSP*). The teaching and learning process in junior high school is aimed at making the students achieve the functional level of literacy, which is to communicate orally and textually, in order to accomplish daily issues. Writing skill is definitely needed to be taught and learned in order to support the language skills mastery. Teachers, therefore, should explore a new productive strategy in brightening writing classes in order to encourage students in learning writing skill. They should create interesting and entertaining materials to motivate the students' active responds in doing writing exercise.

The teaching and learning activities in the classroom are always oriented to the mastery of the four language skills. The students are expected to have the ability in using English for communication as in interpreting and expressing ideas, feelings, and experiences through oral and written English. Since the expectation is prominent, many efforts have been done by the teachers, educators, and policy makers to make the students be able to communicate in English language itself. After the teaching and learning process and all the materials were given to the students, there

was expectation that students made a progress in their study.

Teenager students nowadays are more interested into one active class activities where they do a lot of responses such as reading aloud, or doing speaking practice with their friends, listening music, watching English movies, instead of doing writing activities where this kind of activities tend to be a stressful one to students. This happens to lead student being lack in improving the knowledge and their skills in writing. This definitely causes difficulties for students working on the way of writing in accordance with the rules of writing that has been specified.

To overcome the difficulties during the writing process especially the difficulties in generating ideas based on the topic given, encountering the appropriate vocabulary in writing, and arranging the idea coherently in the new language, the researcher conducted an experiment on writing descriptive composition using Dictation-Composition. The researcher deliberately chose dicto-comp because it is one kind of technique for teaching guided writing. Guided writing itself is a suggested technique for teaching writing to the EFL students at the early stage. Based on that led the researcher to formulate the research questions as follows:

"Does dicto-comp technique in language teaching influence students' writing skill on writing descriptive text?"

Writing Skill

Communication can be done both in spoken and written forms. It is not a simple process as the writer has to express his ideas as good as possible to what he will write. It is done to convey the message to the reader clearly. This is why writing skill is considered as the most difficult skill to learn. Generally writing can be defined as a process of encoding a message to transfer meaning to the readers. According to **Ebbit and Ebbit** (2000), writing is the act of joining words into sentences on paper. It means that writing is necessarily the act of finding words to express definite, fully formed ideas. It is strengthened by Heaton (1989) that writing skills are complex and sometimes difficult to teach, requiring master not only of grammatical and rhetorical devices but also of conceptual and judgmental elements.

D'Angelo (1980) states that writing would still be valuable in education because it facilitates thought. Writing helps the student to think more critically. When they write, students compose meanings by putting facts and ideas together in their compositions. Writing also contributes to students' personal development. As the students are asked to write their personal experience indirectly, they learn how to record, clarify, and organize their experience. This leads the students to come to a better understanding of themselves. This proves that the importance of writing has spread over many areas in this life. Hence, it would be better to prepare the students to be able to master the writing skill at the early stage of writing class so that they can start and develop the habit of thinking on paper as well.

Writing is a skill that everybody can learn with practice over and over again. In lines with this, Langan (2001) states "Writing is a skill like driving, typing, or cooking and like any skill, it can be learned." Many students believe that writing is a natural gift as a result they never make a truly honest effort to learn to write. Shortly, it makes sense that the more the students practice writing, the better they will write. Gebhard, (1996) States that "the usual things associated with writing are word choice, the use of appropriate grammar (such as subject-verb agreement, tense, and article use), syntax (word order), mechanics (e.g. punctuation, spelling, and handwriting), and organization of ideas into coherent and cohesive form."

Organization

Organization of writing is the way of how the writer arranges and organizes the ideas of the message in their writing. The students have to learn how to construct their ideas becomes a sentence instead of from sentences become paragraph. It will make the sentence well and easy to understand. This concludes that organization is the way of writer organizes the idea to get the unity and coherence in their writing.

Grammar

Grammar is the set of structural rules governing the composition of clauses, phrases, and words in any given natural language. Swan (1998) states, "Grammar is the rule that says how words changed to show different meanings, and they are combined into sentences." Grammar and writing cannot be separated from each other. In writing, grammar is very important, because it helps to construct sentences. However, the lack of grammar mastery will definitely make both writer and reader find difficulty in composing and understanding the writing.

Vocabulary

Learn a language cannot be separated from vocabulary. People who learn language will improve their vocabulary. Rivers (1981) states that it is impossible to learn language without vocabulary. Based on that, vocabulary is an important part in learn language especially in writing. It affects someone's writing skill. Appropriate vocabulary is needed to convey real meaning in writing. They have to be careful in using the words. A mistake when choose a word will change the meaning of the writing. That is why it is important to master vocabulary as much as possible as it will help the writer in doing writing.

Punctuation

The use of punctuation is very important in writing. The writer has to know the rules in using punctuation in order to make the messages are clear to the readers. The punctuation also has function as signals in written languages which help the reader clarify the meaning of sentences and interpret the correct meaning and separate group of word in a sentence, as stated by Neufeld (1987).

Capitalization

Capitalization or capital letter is important mechanic in writing since it helps writer to distinguish person's name, place and other things in the sentences. Heaton (1989) states, "the use of capitalization in writing can clarify the ideas. If the sentences are not correctly, ambiguous meaning and misunderstanding will appear. It also differentiates one sentence to other." It used to distinguish certain words to make your sentences and thoughts more clear for reader.

Spelling

Spelling is also important in writing. To write English well, the writer should be able to master how to write words as well as too. When writer make an error in spelling the word, it can lead a reader to confusion. Little mistake can change the meaning. This is why writers should pay attention when they write.

Descriptive Text

There are several genres of the texts that have to be taught in grade X. They are narrative text, descriptive text, news item text and recount text. And one of them, clearly, is Descriptive Text. Tompkins and Hoskisson (1991) briefly state, "Descriptive writing is painting pictures with words". It means that descriptive writing tries to visualize something, such as an object, or a person as vivid as they can in order that the reader can see it accurately and clearly. Meanwhile, Winterwood and Patruicia (1988) state, "description is discourse that helps us visualize. It focuses upon the

appearance or the nature of an object. 'In description, we see vividly and concretely; we perceive the object with a kind of fullness for which exposition does not strive." As conclusion, descriptive writing is a writing that explains the detail of an object to the reader or the listener as if he/she sees, hears, feels, or even experiences the object directly. In other words, the purpose of writing a description is to bring something, such as the object, the place, or a person to life for the reader (Brown, Nilson, and Shaw:1984).

Description is about sensory experience-how something looks, sounds, and tastes. Mostly it is about visual experience, but description also deals with other kinds of perception. This kind of text is to give a brief explanation of the object such as person, place, or things as if the reader can visualize and feel it. Furaidah et al. (2007) explain that descriptive text is a paragraph which consists of three important qualities such as dominant impression, mood, and logical development. It is used to give vivid details of an object either it is a person, place or thing. It includes details that appeal to the five senses: sight, taste, touch, smell, and hearing. Dietsch (2009) adds that an effective description has a specific purpose; details are not just pleasant filler. Significant physical details can capture the essence of a person, place, or object. Concrete words reveal perceptions obtained through the five senses: seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling.

Generic Structure of Descriptive Text

The generic structure of descriptive text consists of identification and description. Sudarmawati and Grace (2007) express as follow:
1) Identification: mention the name, occupation, profession, career and special participant.
2) Description: mention the physical features, the way he/she dresses, his/her personality and also mention the part, quality, and the characteristic of the subject being described.

Identification means identifies objects to be described its part, qualities, and describes or identify phenomenon to be described or mention the name, occupation, profession and career. For instance, it could be particular person *(JK. Rowling)*, Place *(Hogwarts School)*, or thing *(magic wand)*. Description means describing the phenomenon in parts, qualities, or/and characteristic such as parts of place, the quantities about place of the story, and the characteristic of story.

Language Features of Descriptive Text

Language features as Descriptive Text have an important role in determining the genres of the text. It also been mentioned that language features of descriptive text are built up from the use of special noun, simple present tense, detailed noun phrases that give information about subject, various kinds of adjectives that give information about subject, thinking verbs and feeling verbs, action verbs, and adverbial figurative language (Depdiknas, 2004).

Descriptive also has language features such as: (1) the use of adjectives and compound adjectives; (2) the use of Linking Verbs/relating verbs; (3) the use Simple Present Tense; (4) the use of degree of comparison; (5) focus on specific participants; (6) use of attribute and identifying processes; (7) frequent use classifier in nominal groups.

Dicto-Comp Technique

The name comes from dictation and composition. It provides the learners with ideas, language items, and text organization, so that they can focus on the skill aspect. Montalvan (1999) states that, "One of the very best ways to use dictation is the dicto-comp; an effective exercise can be used even at the beginning levels." Means this technique more or less can

cover the difficulties faced by the students during the writing class. Moreover, based on the theory of dicto-comp, the students learn how to explain the idea of the passage in their own words, but they do it in controlled situation. Practically, dicto-comp not only requires the students to write, but also to summarize, to organize, to memorize, and to use vocabulary or phrases based on the information read by the teacher. Shortly, through dicto-comp the students learn how to communicate with their idea by using English in particular context through writing.

The assumption that competence in a language involves more than the Mastery of its component parts such as phonology syntax and lexical, has been well-documented over the past decade. Social realistic literature, especially, suggests that competence in a language includes and applied knowledge of the relationship between the social context and linguistic form.

The term communicative competence has been used to describe these apply knowledge in the context of oral skills, and a good deal of attention has been focused on developing instructional technique is starting to develop communicative competence in foreign language learners. With the overwhelming emphasis on techniques to develop listening and speaking skills, the area of writing has been somewhat neglected, especially with regard to hearing it as involving more than the manipulation of grammatical structures in written form.

There has been a growing realization that the rhetorical or discourse function of language must be addressed in the teaching of writing, a point that is overlooked in traditional controlled composition techniques. Communicative competence as far as the writing skill is concerned necessarily entails mystery of the existent rhetorical patterns well as syntax and lexicon.

Controlled composition techniques, while adequately addressing sentence level writing, do not appreciate the integrative nature of the conversation skills nor do they adequately deal with the rhetorical functions of language. On the other hand, free composition advocates, while recognizing the integrated language skills that are involved in writing, do not deal with sentence level or rhetorical factors in a systematic way.

Teaching Writing Skill through Dicto-Comp Techniques

The dicto-comp exercise has generally been used as a technique to stimulate writing. Based on auditory memory expansion, it consists of a passage which is read to students several times. After the final reading, students are asked to reproduce the passage, adhering to the original version as closely as possible. This technique is designed to tap students' ability to write both a dictation and a composition. The present paper discusses and illustrates the structured use of the dicto-comp where the focus is on composition rather than auditory memory expansion.

In formulating on approach to the teaching of writing which incorporates structured sentence level practice, free writing activities, and the discourse functions, we can adapt a technique known as dicto-comp. The exercise has generally been used as a technique to stimulate to writing. Based on auditory memory expansion, the exercise consists of a passage which is read to student several times. As also being explained by Wishon and Burks (1999), this technique is a variation on the dictation procedure. The teacher reads a short paragraph several times. The students listen carefully each time the paragraph is read. The paragraph may utilize vocabulary and structures studied in the course. After the teacher has finished reading the paragraph for the last

time, the students should write it as they remember it staying as close as possible to the original sequence of events. The students should not write while the teacher is reading the paragraph. They may write only after the complete paragraph has been read and understood. To the extent the students write what they remember exactly, this is a traditional dictation exercise, but to the extent that they have to fill in the memory gaps, making sense contextually, this is a pragmatic composition exercise. Emphasis should be on structural correctness of meaning at the lexical, syntactic and discourse levels.

Procedure of Teaching Writing Skill through Dicto-Comp Technique

The way to bring this technique while teaching writing is similar when we use dictation as a technique. In fact, dicto-comp is a part of it. At the beginning of the activities in the class, teacher has to do some kind of warming-up topic to see whether the students are familiar with the topic. In this case choosing a topic which is common or connect on students' prior knowledge will actually help both the teacher to transfer the knowledge and the student to receive it easily.

Students were asked to listen carefully about the passage of the topic that being chosen by the teacher. This passage was read by the teacher three times. During the process of the dictation phase, students were not allowed to take any notes. They were requested to pay attention to what the teacher read. And the teacher needed to make sure the way she/he presents the passage is similar in tone, pronunciation, speed, intonation and even the stress, in every time the passage was being read. When the teacher finished reading the passage at the third time, the students were being asked to write what they have heard. They had to write the passage point or messages as close as possible as the original passage. They may use their own words; in

fact, this is where the students were controlling their composition. The teacher may guide some students who found trouble in doing this task. Once the students finished the task, they may present their work at the front of classroom. These activities may be done as individual task or as group task. Once all have presented their works, the teacher may come to a conclusion where he explained or showed the correct way in doing task. So next time, students understand how to compose their writing easily.

Advantages of Dicto-Comp Technique

There are several advantages of dicto-comp. First, it is challenging. Students listen the passage only twice or three times and have to use their own knowledge of language to rewrite it. Second, Enabling peer teaching, if students with different abilities/ knowledge work together, the advanced student can teach the others. Third, integrating three language skills, which are listening, writing, and speaking. Next, Enhancing cooperative learning, which means students cooperate to combine their knowledge and skills, having the same access to the information.

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

The method that was used in this research is a pre-experimental research design on one group pretest-posttest design. This design is the quantitative research design most closely associated with action or applied research. This research used one group pretest posttest design. In this group was observed two time points, one before the treatment and one after the treatment. Changes in the outcome of interest are presumed to be result of the intervention or treatment the sample was given a test before and after the treatment.

The result of the analysis was used to find out the students' achievement in learning writing descriptively.

The mean score is also called the average score can be formulated as follows:

$$X = \frac{\sum x1}{n}$$

While analyzing the students significant score pretest and posttest.

$$t = \frac{Dx}{\sqrt{\dfrac{\sum D2 - \dfrac{(\sum D)2}{N}}{N\,(N-1)}}}$$

(Adopted from Crowl: 1996)

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In this research, the findings were concerned with the result of the pretest and posttest. The data gathered were analyzed though two sets of statistics, namely descriptive and inferential statistic analysis. Pretest was administered to the subjects under study to obtain their pre-exciting ability in writing. Posttest was conducted after giving the treatment to the students.

Descriptive statistic provides simple summaries about the sample and about the observations have been made. Crowl (1996) states it shows numbers and tabulations used to summarize and present quantitative information from the data gathered concisely. It is the term given to the analysis of the data that helps describe, show or summarize data in meaningful way. These measurements were used in order to give a clear description of the result of the pretest and posttest. The following are the tables of the frequency scores for both tests which clearly showed in the distribution of the data.

Distribution Of The Data

X0	F0	X1	F1
55	3	60	1
57	1	62	1
60	1	65	2
62	2	68	1
63	2	70	6
65	2	71	1
66	2	72	1
67	1	73	1
68	2	75	3
69	4	76	1
70	2	77	1
78	1	78	3
		82	1
Total F0	21	Total F1	23

Where :
X0 – X1 = Students' score in Pretest and Posttest
F0 – F1 = Amount of students' scores in Pretest and Posttest.

From the table above, it can be found that in the X0 column presented the lowest score of the students in pretest was 55, thus the highest score was 78. In addition, the column X1 showed that the lowest score of the students in posttest was 60, and the highest score was 82. Considering the above table, the scores of students in doing posttest were higher than the scores of students in doing pretests. This indicated that the students had a better performance in doing posttest after giving the treatment rather than in doing pretest. These data were also analyzed descriptively in terms of mode and mean.

The mean score is gained by dividing the total score by the total number of students taking the test. From the computation, the mean score of the pretest was 64.82 and the mean score of the posttest after the treatment was 71.74. The computation can be seen as follows:

Mean X1 (Pretest) $= \frac{\sum x1}{n} = \frac{1491}{23} = 64.82$

Mean X2 (Posttest) $= \frac{\sum x2}{n} = \frac{1650}{23} = 71.74$

The inferential analysis was conducted by researcher to see the difference of the mean scores between the pretest scores and the posttest score after being taught with the treatment. In inferential statistic analysis, the data were analyzed by using *t*-test. Before analyzing the data by using *t*-test, the researcher determined the *df* (degree of freedom) to find the *t*-value. The *df* value can be determined by the number of subject minus 1. In this study the subjects were 23, consequently the *df* = 23-1 = 22. The *t*-value in the *t*-table for *df* 22 at 0.05 level of significance is 2.074.

According to the data gathered, below is the result of subjects' score in pretest and posttest.

The Result of Mode and Mean Score

	N	Min	Max	Mode	Mean
Pretest	23	55.00	78.00	69.00	64.82
Posttest	23	60.00	82.00	70.00	71.74
Valid N	23				

Looking at the table above, it can be stated that in pretest students achieved the minimum score at 55 and the highest score at 78. Thus, the mode in the distribution was 69 and the mean score of all subjects was 64.82. Also, based on the table above, it is shown that in posttest students achieved the minimum score at 60 and the highest score at 82. In addition, the mode in the distribution was 70 and the mean score of all subjects was 71.74.

Considering the result of the total mean score of pretest and posttest, the data obtained have been analyzed by using paired sample T. Paired Sample T- test is one of inferential statistic analysis in which involves the two measurements of the same sample on a treatment or an influence. The result of the Paired Sample T-test can be seen as follows:

The Result of Paired Sample T

t-value	*t*-observed
2.074	10.81

From the table above, it can be seen that the t-observed is higher than t-value. In line with the hypothesis which stated that through Dicto-Comp technique on students' writing skill was improved, the result of the paired sample T showed that the *t*-observed was higher that *t*-table, it obviously accepted the hypothesis, as it can be seen that *t*-observed (10.81) > *t*-value (2.074).

SUGGESTION

There are several suggestions put forward for prospective implementation of the technique and also for further research. For The English Teacher, in line with writing is the most complex skill, the teacher should be aware in teaching writing. Teacher also may offer a different way in teaching writing so that make the students interested in learning English writing. There are lots of techniques in teaching writing that can be applied in the classroom. Dicto-Comp or Dictation Composition is one of learning technique that can be used, also if the teacher can expand it into the learning media digital, that would be better considering that nowadays, all people live in digital technology. And the teacher can use the topic related to daily life or environment in teaching writing specially or teaching English generally. This may also be a reference for the readers or future researcher that interested in improving writing skill or in Dicto-Comp technique.

For the students, based on the students' achievement in learning writing through dicto-comp technique, it indicates that this technique is a useful technique. It challenged students to express down on

paper the specific visual ideas they have to show in their story. This technique is also for practicing their listening comprehension. For the institution which is SMP Otak Kanan Palu, it is suggested to develop a variety of teaching and learning process since it could be fun and interesting with a new learning technique and media. Therefore the students are pushed to develop their ideas in writing English.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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