



USING CUBING STRATEGY IN TEACHING EXPLANATION TEXT FOR ELEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract

This paper discusses how to use Cubing Strategy in teaching Explanation text at Senior High School. Based on the writers' experience in teaching English, many students find difficulties in writing explanation text. Considering this problem, the teacher needs to apply a strategy in teaching and learning process to help the students understand the text. Cubing Strategy is a creative, hands-on activity which develops critical thinking and promotes deeper understanding and in-depth exploration of a topic. It uses a cube-shaped graphic organizer to prompt students to look at a topic from many different angles and levels. On each side of a cube, the student writes answers to prompts or questions. By applying the Cubing Strategy in writing an explanation text, the students may create a better explanation text.

Key words: *Writing, Explanation Text, Cubing Strategy.*

A. INTRODUCTION

English is the language used by most countries among other languages in the world. It has become the most widely studied foreign language today. English is also intensively used in international communication, in written as well as in spoken communication. In addition, many books of science and technology, art, and other published issues written in English.

In Indonesia, English has become the first foreign language which is taught from junior high school level up to university with four skills to be mastered. They are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Writing is one of the four language skills which very important to learn. As it is known, writing is not easy. Through writing, each person is able to convey feelings, ideas, and announcements to others. Sharples (1999: 8) says "writing is an opportunity; it

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allows students to express something about themselves, explore and explain ideas”.

Oshima and Hogue (1999: 3) mention that writing, particularly academic writing is not easy. It takes time and practice to develop this skill. For both native and new learners of English, it is important to note that writing is a process, not a “product”, it means someone should not focus on the result because not all of them can give satisfy result. Yet if someone can follow the process well, it will give good result. The writer must think first about the topic, try to know the topic and find some information about the topic. After that they can start to write the texts they want.

There are many types of English texts which have to be learned by students in Senior High School level such as, recount, explanation, narrative, procedure, spoof, descriptive text, etc. They are required to master those types of texts in English, one of which is explanation text. Anderson and Anderson (1997: 80) says“the explanation text type tells how or why something occurs”. It looks at the steps rather than the things. To help students create explanation text easily, teachers need to apply an engaging strategy in the learning process. Teachers need to choose the appropriate strategy in order to help students to write explanation text. In this paper, the writer will introduce one of the strategies for writing explanation text that is by using Cubing Strategy (Cowan and Cowan in Sejnost (1980:124)).

The Cubing Strategy is a strategy that can be used to help Senior High School students. As it is known, most students in senior high school have difficulty in writing especially writing an explanation text. Many of the students write a monotone explanation text which means they do not develop their ideas yet. They can develop it into the good explanation text by adding some describing sentences. Furthermore, the other problem in writing explanation text is the teacher does not use the appropriate technique. The teacher just explains it and gives them the example. Therefore, the writer proposes that Cubing Strategy is an effective strategy to help students learning explanation text in order to develop the students’ idea on writing it.

B. The Nature of Writing

Writing has developed for several thousand years, and nowadays is more important than ever. It is the popular and prevalent method of creating connections among people. Berlin in Yi (2009) assumes that writing is a creative act and that the process is important as a discovery of the true self. Meanwhile, Nunan (2003: 88) says“writing is both physical and mental act”. Writing as physical act, refers to communicate words or ideas to some medium. While as mental act, it refers to work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into readable statement or paragraph. According to Kirzner and Mandell (2014) writing can be defined as activities of sharing ideas, opinions and arguments to other people through a paragraph, an essay, or a

journal. Furthermore, they state that writing is a combination of process and product.

Writing can help the students to think critically and deeply to build a good writing. Writing is also necessary component of education, livelihood, and functional basics and society. By learning writing, the students can get knowledge how to write effectively, how to express ideas, how to share their thoughts with anyone else through writing.

1. Explanation Text

One type of text which should be learned by students is explanation text. Anderson and Anderson (1997: 80) state that the explaining text type tells how or why something occurs. It looks at the steps rather than the things. In other words, explanation text is to say ‘why’ and ‘how’ of the forming of the phenomena. It is often found in science, geography and history text books. The purpose of an explanation text is to tell each step of the process (the how) and to give reasons (the why). Explanation is a piece of text that deals with the processes involved in understanding and making explicit the how and/ or why of particular phenomena, events, and concepts occur in scientific and technical fields. Grammatical features in explanation text include passive voice, simple present tense, conjunctions of time and cause, noun groups and complex sentences.

There are three steps for constructing a written explanation according to Anderson and Anderson (1997: 80). *The first step* is a general statement. It is about the event or thing that will be explained. The first paragraph has a general statement that introduces or identifies the scientific or technical phenomenon. It gives the audience a brief introduction to the event or thing and an understanding of the type of text that is to follow.

Then, a series of paragraphs that tell the *how* or *whys*. In this paragraph, the writer tells the sequence of explanation text. It consists more than one paragraph. At this stage students’ explanations are developing causal relationships as well as sequential ones. The logically sequenced paragraphs explain why or how something happens rather than focusing on an object.

The last step is a concluding paragraph as a closing. The writer concludes what he/ she had explained in this paragraph. An optional concluding statement can tie up the explanation.

2. Cubing Strategy

There are many writing strategies that can help students learn in writing. One of the strategies that can be used by the teacher in teaching explanation

text is Cubing strategy. Perez (2013: 35) states that Cubing is a strategy designed to help students think about topic or idea from many different angles. Furthermore by using it, students also can analyze a topic in depth. It gives them steps to catch their focus in writing by following six sides of cubing. Forget (2004: 124) mentions the six sides are describing, comparing, associating, analyzing, applying, and arguing. It will help students to develop their idea about the topic from variety of dimensions. Nazario (2013: 329) proposes six perspectives of Cubing strategy as follows:

1. **Describe it:** How would you describe this topic/issue/event/person? Describe key characteristics/points/and/or attributes including size, shape, and colors.
2. **Compare it:** What is it similar to?
3. **Associate it:** What does it make you think of? How does the topic connect to other topics/issues/subjects? How does this decision/event connect to other decisions/events? How does this person/character relate to other people/characters?
4. **Analyze it:** Tell how it is made or what it is composed of. How would you break the topic/problem/issue/event/decision into smaller parts?
5. **Apply it:** What can you do with it? How is it used? How does it help you understand other topics/issues/decisions/events?
6. **Argue for or against it:** Take a stand and list reasons for supporting or not supporting it.

Teaching writing by using cubing can be done by the teacher to provide an invention process of considering a topic from six different perspectives. The teacher can apply this technique about 40 minutes, even more if needed.

C. IMPLEMENTATION OF CUBING STRATEGY

a. Pre teaching activity

1. Greeting

Greeting is a good way for teacher to create a good sense between the teacher and the students. Through greeting, the students can be motivated to be active, enjoy, and comfort in class. Furthermore, by greeting them, the teacher can build relationships to enhance their emotional needs.

2. Checklist attendance

Besides greeting, checklist attendance is an activity which should be done by teacher to know the students attendance and condition in that day. The teachers check the students one by one.

3. Review the students' previous material

This activity is also necessary to remind them the previous material in order to test them whether they still remember the previous material or

not. It will give them time to prepare themselves starting the new material.

b. Whilst-Teaching Activity

1. Observing

In this stage, the teacher provides one example of Cubing. The cubing is shown by using a projector with some explanatory notes. First, the students are asked how many sides a cube has. It will be much better to show them the example of a short and simple explanation text using cubing strategy. When the students already observe it, the teacher should stimulate them to ask questions and give opinions related to the title.

Next, the teacher asks the students to pay attention to the Cubing framework which has been prepared by the teacher before. The teacher needs to emphasize that cubing has six sides and each of them has different command. The teacher explains each commands from each sideto the students in order to make them understand what they should do in using Cubing strategy in writing an explanation text.

2. Questioning

In this stage, the students collect data to gain their understanding about explanation text. They are given a simple explanation text by the teacher. Then, the teacher divides them into some groups. After that, the teacher ask them to find information as much as they can about explanation text, the goal, the generic structures, the language features, the simple example of explanation text, and etc. If there is a difficulty, they can ask to their teacher.

3. Experimenting

In experimenting activity, the students are given the cube image with the instructions in each side. Then, the teacher also gives six manila papers for each group. After that, the teacher determines one topic about explanation text. It is better for the teacher to choose the topic related to the students' daily lives or the familiar topic, for example the topic about how coffee is made.

After giving them the topic, the teacher asks them to see the first stage of cubing strategy, it is “describe it”. In this first stage, they are asked to describe about coffee itself. They can describe about where the coffee is found, how its smell is, and the types of the coffee.

Then, topic that has been give by the teacher is developed. They come to the second and third stages, they are “compare it” and “associate it”. In this “compare it”, they explain about what it is similar to. Because the topic is about coffee, so in this stage they are asked to compare about coffee and other thing, or example is tea. The students can compare about its taste, its smell, and its color. Not only the similarities, but they can also

write about the differences of coffee and tea. The teacher gives them some minutes for writing it.

Next, they come to the third stage, it is “associate it”. This stage asks the students to associate the topic to the issues or write what they think of when talking about the topic.

The next activity is “analyze it” and “apply it”. The first thing that should be done by the students is how something is made or happened. Because the topic is about how coffee is made, the students should explain about the process of it. The teacher can guide them to write the process by giving them the clues. The teacher tells them the process in general.

After that, they are asked to write how coffee is liked by many people in every age. It is called “apply it” stage. The students write about what they can do with the coffee, how it is used or consumed and when they usually consume it.

After finishing the five stages of cubing strategy, it is time for the students to come to the closing of their explanation text. In closing paragraph, the students come to the last command. It is “argue for or against it”. They write their opinion about coffee, or personal experience in making or/ and consuming it.

4. Associating

It is their turn to associate the information they got before writing an explanation text. They have been already asked to collect data about explanation text by the teacher. In this stage, they should group the paragraph according to the generic structures of explanation text. They have to discuss in their group to determine it. Then, the teacher asks them to check the language features they use, and also edit the grammar errors.

5. Communicating

Then, they present or speak about their explanation text using cubing command. The teacher invites one by one of group to come to in front of the class. This activity is done in order to assess how far the students understand about explanation text. In addition, it will also give time for them to state their ideas about their friends’ text. The students are expected to be active and enthusiastic in the classroom.

c. Post Teaching Activity

In this activity, the teacher asks the students to glue their manila papers to become a cube, so each group will have one cube with an explanation text on the sides. Then, the teacher gives conclusion about the topic or she/he can also ask one or more students to conclude the lesson. If they do not understand enough, the teacher can give chance for them to ask some questions if they do not understand about the material given. In addition, the teacher needs to give

homework about writing a simple explanation text using six cubing commands. The teacher will determine the topic or the title of explanation text which will be written by students as their homework.

D. CONCLUSION

Writing is necessary component of education, livelihood, and functional basics and society. By learning writing, the students can get knowledge how to write effectively, how to express ideas, how to share their thoughts with anyone else. In senior high school, the students are taught to write an explanation text. It is a text type which tells how or why something occurs. Many students get difficulties in writing text especially explanation text which is taught to eleventh grade students. That is why the teacher needs appropriate strategy to help students writing it. One of the appropriate one is Cubing Strategy. It helps students to create the text from six points of view with different commands in each side. It is the problem-solving technique, which helps thinking about the topic.

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