

# TEACHING WRITING A DESCRIPTIVE TEXT BY USING ENVIRONMENTAL OBSERVATION STRATEGY

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## Abstrak

Tujuan penulisan artikel ini adalah untuk menjelaskan bagaimana cara menggunakan Environmental Observation Strategy. Kemampuan siswa SMP dalam memahami deskriptif teks masih sangat kurang disebabkan karena penggunaan media yang tidak menarik oleh guru dalam pengajaran. Deskriptif teks adalah suatu jenis teks yang berisikan gambaran atau ciri-ciri dari suatu benda, kejadian dan orang termasuk juga sifat dan tingkah laku seseorang. Salah satu media pengajaran yang dapat membantu siswa dalam memahami deskriptif teks adalah Environmental Observation Strategy. Pengajaran menulis dengan menggunakan strategi Environmental Observation Strategy terlebih dahulu dimulai dengan membagi siswa dalam kelompok yang beranggotakan lima orang. Kemudian mereka akan mengobservasi topik yang telah diberikan guru sebelumnya dimana masing-masing anggota dalam kelompok harus membuat ide atau gagasan yang mereka dapat selama melakukan observasi tersebut. Waktu yang diberikan guru berkisar 10-15 menit. Setelah semua ide dari masing – masing anggota kelompok didapat, maka kelompok tersebut akan menuangkan ide tersebut dalam bentuk deskriptif teks. Penerapan Environmental Observation Strategy diharapkan bisa meningkatkan kemampuan dan motivasi belajar siswa, terutama dalam bidang menulis.

**Key Word:** teaching, writing, descriptive text, junior high school

## A. Introduction

As a universal language, English is being spoken all over the world. People use it as a tool for international communication that enables them to interact with others from different-language countries. English language teaching in Indonesia has endured several changing. The changing is aimed as an effort to the outcomes of teaching English itself.

Lately, a new curriculum (KTSP) as a standard of education system has been introduced by the government to the implementation of the teaching English through Genre Based Approach. Hence, all of the English teachers are expected to

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implement that approach in the teaching of English in order to create such communicative language learning. However, there some teachers still do not go along with the term of the KTSP particularly in the term of genre based teaching which asked in the curriculum. This occurs because the teacher did not consider about the circumstances of learners ability in learning English itself.

Writing is one of the language skills, besides listening, speaking and reading that must be mastered by English learners. They have to able to express their thoughts in writing to develop their ideas, and make readers interest when their writing read. Through writing, they can also transfer information and knowledge to others. In other words, writing can be said as a mean of communication between the writer and the reader.

Carol Schoen, *et al* ( 1982,1979) says that the concept of writing as a " of processes" that remain our primary concern. Tompkins (2000: 10) stated that the stages in writing activity; (1) Prewriting stages is student getting ready to write, 2) Drafting is students focus on getting their own ideas in their own environment.3) Revising is student clarify and refine ideas in their compositions during the revising stages. Students reread their work and share it with a partner or small group; they then make changes in the writing based on the feedback from their peers 4) Editing is putting the piece of writing into in final form or it seem like the process of correcting mechanical errors 5) Publishing is student publish their writing and share it in front of the class. Nunan (2003:23) said that writing is a both a process and product. The writer imagines, organizes, drafts, edits, reads, and rereads.

Harmer (2007) also says that writing can be defined as writing- for-learning and writing-for-writing. Writing-for-learning means writing as a tool to practice the language they have learned, and in writing-for-writing, it is a tool to develop the students' ability as writer. So, people have their own purpose to write, they can learn to write by trying to write something and to develop their writing ability

Learning to communicate in English, both in oral forms and written forms, is difficult for students, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, where the exposure to English is very limited. However, there are a lot of problems that the teacher and the students faced in teaching learning process; such as, lack of media, lack of vocabularies, lack of strategy, and also lack of motivation from the students itself. The students have many difficulties in writing a text. They must master this English skill because the curriculum has designed the material about this. It is clearly stated in *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan(KTSP) 2006* that English teaching at junior high school can make the students communicate both in oral and written forms.

In teaching writing, there are two aspects to be considered by the teacher. First, Biare ( 2011) mentions that in teaching writing the result have to be achieved at the end of teaching and the learning process have to be started. That are the product must achieve the goal of learning and the process of writing must take the students learn how to write in a right way.

Shakespeare (2004) tell that there are some process in teach a writer : planning, drafting, editing, final version. The first is planning, before starting to write, the student try and decide what is they are going to say. For some students this may involve making detailed notes. The second one is drafting, the teacher can refer to the first version of a piece of writing as a draft. Go at a text is often done on the assumption that it will be

amended later. Next is editing (reflecting and revising), perhaps the way something is written is ambiguous or confusing, or the information is not clear, the teacher can give comments and make suggestions. The last step is final, the students is ready to send the written text to intended audience.

Depdiknas (2006) also states that the scope of English subject for junior high school students as follows: the ability to understand and produce the texts both in spoken and written is implemented in four English language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), the ability to understand and produce many kind s of functional texts, monolog texts and essays including procedure, descriptive, recount, narrative, and report texts and the supporting competencies are linguistic competency (using the grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and spelling), socio cultural competency (using the utterances in every context), and strategy competency (solving the problems that appear in communication process).

Based on KTSP, junior high school students are taught several texts in learning and teaching process. They are descriptive, recount, narrative, report and procedure. The curriculum also states that in teaching writing the teacher also teaches simple transactional and interpersonal text that use some expression such as asking and giving opinion, giving compliment and making announcement and invitation.

Based on the writer's experience as a trainee teacher at SMP N 1 V Koto Kp. Dalam, there were a lot of problems that the teacher and students faced in teaching learning process; such as, lack of motivation, lack of media, lack of vocabularies, lack of strategy, and also lack of motivation from the students itself. The students's motivation and improvement of the lesson during the learning process was less. The teachers had responsibility about it. They had to follow many kinds of workshop to make teaching preparation and to change their teaching method itself. Unfortunately, the most important thing is in giving motivation, and lack of strategy to the students while learning process. This condition makes students not interested in learning. Thus, the students did not feel exciting to write and it is hard for a junior high school student to develop their ideas in writing, such as descriptive text.

Descriptive text is one of genre of texts. This text is one of the texts that have to be taught to Junior High school students. It is hoped that students in junior high school will communicate each other in oral and written form of communication. Descriptive text is difficult enough to learn by the students.

Keraf (2000) mentions in descriptive writing, the writer transfers the images, the feeling that writer experienced to the reader. The writer tries to convey the image, feeling and experience to readers in order to readers can imagine or as if, they are also engaged on it. However, students make clear description in order to make the reader can imagine the object that being described such as students describe about their class.

Kane (2000: 352),retrieved on January 12, 2012 stated that descriptive text is description about sensory experience—how something looks, sounds, tastes. Mostly it is about visual experience, but description also deals with other kinds of perception. The purpose of descriptive text is to describe and reveal a particular person, place, or thing in details or specific to make the reader be able to visualize the description. It can be concluded that descriptive text is used to describe everything, which is seen by writer in detail.

The rhetorical structure or generic structure of a descriptive text consists of identification and description. Identification explains about the topic or identifying what or who want to be described and descriptions. It is explains about details of the topic: describing parts, qualities and characteristics. Description occurs about the explanation or delineation about something.

Depdiknas (2004) states the grammatical or language features of descriptive text are: it focuses on specific participant. It means that having one clear object that is to be described, it uses attributive and identifying process. Attributive process is used to assign the quality of object. Attribute process is used in active clause such as "it has White fur". Identifying process is used in passive clause such as "the white fur is owned by the cat", it uses adjective to modify noun. For example big house, beautiful beach, beautiful girl and etc, it uses linking verbs, because it describes an object and it uses simple present tense, because everything that is described should be true.

According to the problem above, this paper will be describes about improving students' motivation and ability in writing descriptive text by using Environmental Observation Strategy. Word "environment" is most commonly used describing "natural environment". Environment includes all elements, factors, and conditions that have some impact for humans. Natural environment is contrasted with the built environment, which comprises the areas and component that are strongly influence by humans. In addition, environment is the familiar places that occur in human life. However, if students observe around their environment, they will more easily to describe it because it is familiar for them. For example: teacher asks them to observe about their class, automatically they have known or familiar with their class so that they will more interested to write their descriptive text.

Kendra Cherry( in about.com Guide) said that observation is the research method commonly used by psychologists and other social scientist. This technique involves observing subjects in their natural environment. Observation differs from structured observation in that it involves looking at a behavior as it occurs in it environment. However, observation can help teachers to improve students writing by asking students to observe their environment such as class in descriptive text.

So, if we combine the definition of environment and observation it can conclude that environmental observation is a kind of alternative strategy that can be used by teachers to apply the strategy in writing. This strategy is important in order to make the learning process alive. Using this strategy is not quite different with writing as a cooperative activity. Harmer(2007) states that in language classes teachers and students can take advantages of the presence of others to make writing as cooperative activity, with great benefit to all those involved.

Hayes and Flower (1980) described the writing process in terms of the task environment, which included the writing assignment and the text produced so far, the writes's long-term memory, including knowledge of topic, knowledge of audience, stored writing plans, and a number of cognitive processes, including planning, translating though into text, and revising. Hayes (1996) said that model

of writing sees the writing process as consisting of two main parts: the task environment and the individual. The task environment can be divided into the social environment and physical environment. The social environment consist of audience ( real or imagine) for one's writing, as well as any collaborators in the writing process. The physical environment includes the text written so far, which influences and shapes the writer's further efforts, and the composing medium, handwriting or word processing. The individual aspects of writing involve interactions among four components: working memory, motivation and affect, cognitive processes, and long-term memory.

Albert Bandura (2012), says that learning theory based on the ideas that students learn by watching what others do, and that human thought processes are central to understanding personality. This theory provides a framework for understanding, predicting and changing human behaviour. Based on that statements above it can be conclude that students learn the object that will they observe by understanding that object first. One of example object is school environments which is include school library, school canteen, classroom, etc.

For example school canteen or cafeteria classrooms, etc. Besides that, Environmental Observation Strategy, each student will get their own turn to create their ideas into one paragraph, after that they contributed their paragraph to their each groups. It is important for each group to write their own writing to contribution their achievement as a final result of writing activity.

## **B. The Implementation of Environmental Observation Strategy**

### **1. Teacher's Preparation**

Teachers have to do a preparation before they come to the classroom in order to do the teaching-learning process run well. The main thing that has to be done is making a lesson plan. It really helps the teachers to know what steps or procedures that they will take in the classroom and achieve the aim of teaching and learning. In short, the teacher should prepare and plan well the material before come to the class.

Before coming to the classroom, it is important for the teacher to consider several steps. There are several steps that should be done before teaching:

1. The teacher prepares the classroom.
2. The teacher selects the teaching materials that are suitable for the level of the students. Write a descriptive text about school environment that consist of classroom, school canteen etc.
3. The teacher prepares command, instruction, new materials and the others. They should be interesting in teaching writing. The teacher prepares some themes of descriptive text to make the students more understand about material that they will learn.
4. The teacher uses the environmental observation method. In preparing that method, the teacher should consider the interest and level of the students. The principle activities for teaching writing technique are the one that can motivate students to develop their comprehension.

## **2. Teaching Process**

The writing process is the way of looking at writing instruction in which the emphasis is shifted from students' finished products to what students think and do as they write. Those implementations of environmental observation method in writing descriptive text are:

### **a. Pre- teaching activities (10 minutes)**

In this stage, the teacher is expected to bridge the student's mind with the topic being discussed. The teacher builds the student's knowledge by showing the pictures and guiding the students to consider different positions about familiar topic. Teacher shows some pictures such as school environment (see Appendix ). After that teacher ask students some question that related to that picture.

### **b. Whilst – teaching activity (60 minutes)**

#### **1) Exploration**

In exploration section, the teacher builds the students' knowledge by asking about their classroom. The appropriate question that may be ask is “ let's see your classroom, what do you think about our classroom?”But, the teacher will introduce about environmental observation method first. Descriptive text is modeled explicitly by posing the issue as a question and using familiar language that clearly develops an argument for each point of view. For example, the topic which is going to be discussed is about school environment including: classroom, school building, canteen, library, and School Park. The teacher choose one topic such as school library. Students have to know about that topic that is being discussed. It can make the students become more interested about it because they are familiar about that topic. After the topic is clear for students, the teacher asks the students about major focus would be on the identification of differing the object, and getting the students directly to group themselves according to their viewpoint. In this activity, the teacher guides them how to describe something that familiar with them. Teacher ask some object that related to the topics and students have to know about several questions about that object related with the topic (see Appendix 2).

The questions are:

- a) What do you think about our classroom?
- b) What can we find in our classroom?
- c) How many students in our classroom?
- d) How many chairs in our classroom?

By answering the questions, it is hoped that the students get the guidelines information as the material for writing their descriptive paragraph. The teacher will ask students to answer the questions in turn as they know about the continuation of this technique later on. Moreover, the teacher writes down the sentences from all the answer by explaining the modality and simple present tense that is used.

After that, the teacher explains the communicative purpose of the text which is to look at more than one side of an issue. The activity is

followed by explaining the social function, generic structure, language features and lexicogramatical features.

## **2) Elaboration**

In elaboration activity, the students are divided into several groups. The teacher uses strategy which is called environmental observation strategy. This strategy is purposed to motivate students to write descriptive text easier and interesting.

Firstly, the student are divided into group of four, then teacher lists each group by using number 1, 2, 3, and so on. Next , the teacher ask the chairman of each groups to choose the topic in randomly. Each group will observe the topic that has been given by teacher before. The chairman of each group will ask their group to give their ideas in one paragraph and then for the end of their observation the chairman of each group complete their paragraph by combining or deleting the paragraph that their friends have written before. For the first paragraph which is called 'identification' will be written based on the discussion of the group members.

## **3) Confirmation**

In confirmation section, the teachers and the students all together try to find the difficulties in descriptive text. Then, teacher gives some viewpoints to the students and gives a chance for students in their each group to develop their paragraph. Teacher provides students by giving ten until fifteen minutes with an opportunity to edit and revise as part of any writing assessment in order for the task to be authentic with regard to classroom instruction. Before that, they should check their draft paragraph with another group in the class by doing group correction. Teacher checks whether the group corrector can understand their friends' writing and whether they can explain what it is so. Finally, takes the number of the group randomly to come to in front of the class showing their paragraph. This way has a purpose to make the students more understand about the lesson.

### **c. Post teaching activity (10 minutes)**

In this stage, the teacher gives feedback to the students toward the process and learning achievement, it can be like giving reward to every group that have finished their writing well. Then the teacher concludes or summarizes the lesson together with the students. The teacher reviews the activities that have been done consistently.

From this activity, we can find the purpose of environmental observation strategy in teaching and learning English. In addition, in this stage the teacher gives the exercises or homework to students to write their descriptive paragraph. For example about students house. This example are familiar with students so that they more exiting to describe it into descriptive text. Based on the three phases in teaching above, it can be concluded that by using the environmental observation

strategy the students will feel enthusiastic to learn because the topics are familiar with them.

### **3. The Advantages of Using Environmental Observation Method**

There are a lot of advantages of using environmental observation method in developing and motivating students to write descriptive text at Junior High School. They are as follow:

1. The classroom atmosphere encourages the students' motivation, since the students have a lot of chance to brainstorm their ideas and opinions, either individually or in groups.
2. Discussion allows students to learn from each other, and share the ideas related to the topic which is discussed.
3. This activity can make the students more enthusiastic and more cooperative each other in sharing their ideas.
4. This technique makes students become more open-minded to jot down their ideas to others.
5. This technique can improve students' collaboration in writing as it will lead them to make conclusion of the text.
6. The teacher can monitor the students understanding about the topic which is discussed.
7. This technique increases the students' motivation in writing, because the topics are familiar with them.

### **C. Conclusion and Suggestion**

*Based on the discussion in the Chapter III, it can be concluded that the Environmental Observation Method as an alternative in teaching English, especially in writing skill. The teacher has to know that by using Environmental Observation Method it can increase the students' attention and motivation during classroom writing activities. Besides, the students become easily to share their ideas in order to write a descriptive text. Then, it can encourage the students' motivation in writing and make their group work useful for them in learning English. After that, the teachers have the opportunity to teach of English, especially in writing, more delightful.*

In order to make students eager in studying English, especially in writing, some suggestions are given to the English teachers and it may be useful for them. It is recommended to the teacher using appropriate strategy in teaching writing than the traditional one (the teacher only teaches the students by English textbook and later ask students to answer those questions, which relate with the topic that is being taught) because today's education demands the teachers to be attractive and creative in the learning process. In addition, the teachers should encourage themselves to create new and creative ways of teaching by using various strategies, including environmental observation strategy so that the students more interested in learning and writing descriptive text.

**Note:** This article was written based on writer's paper that is supervised by Yuli Tiarina, M.Pd.



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