

USING THE CLUSTERING TECHNIQUE IN TEACHING WRITING A DESCRIPTIVE TEXT TO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Feradilla Eramona¹, Muhd. Al Hafizh²
English Department
Faculty of Languages and Arts
State University of Padang
email: feradilla_eramona12@yahoo.com

Abstrak

Salah satu tujuan dari Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP 2006) mata pelajaran Bahasa Inggris adalah siswa mampu menulis. Dengan demikian, siswa memiliki kemampuan untuk menulis teks monolog sesuai dengan tuntutan kurikulum. Siswa banyak mengalami masalah pada saat menulis. Mereka merasa tidak mempunyai ide tentang topik yang diberikan, mereka kesulitan dalam mengembangkan ide tersebut dan mereka tidak bisa mengelompokkan ide tersebut secara benar, khususnya pada menulis teks deskriptif. Berdasarkan masalah diatas, dalam makalah ini memaparkan salah satu solusi yaitu teknik pengajaran writing di Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP) dengan menggunakan *Clustering Technique*. Clustering Technique adalah teknik yang mengelompokkan ide dari yang umum menjadi yang lebih spesifik dan lebih terarah. Teknik ini dapat digunakan untuk membantu siswa dalam mencurahkan ide – ide yang mereka punya, mengembangkan ide yang mereka punya tersebut dan dapat mengelompokkan ide – ide tersebut secara benar. Teknik ini menggambarkan dan mengelompokkan ide secara terinci sehingga siswa mudah dalam menulis. Teknik ini dapat bermanfaat bagi guru dalam peningkatan motivasi anak-anak dalam belajar Bahasa Inggris khususnya dalam menulis dan hal ini dapat memberikan dampak positif dalam proses belajar mengajar.

Kata Kunci: teaching writing, descriptive text, clustering technique, junior high school students

A. INTRODUCTION

English is one of the international languages used by most of people in the world. In Indonesia, English has become the first foreign language which is taught from junior high school up to university. English is also one of the compulsory subjects to pass the National Examination. One of the aims of teaching English is to develop students' ability for communication. In learning English, there are four skills to be mastered, they are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening

¹ Student of English Language Teaching Program of FBS UNP graduated on March 2014

² Advisor, Lecturer in Faculty of Languages and Arts, State University of Padang

and reading are receptive skills, on the other hand speaking and writing are productive skills.

Writing is one of the skills that should be mastered by the students. Based on the writer's experience during the teaching practice at Junior High School in the second semester 2012/2013, writing is difficult for them because to write a text, students as the writer needs critical thinking to produce ideas, words, sentences and paragraphs. Writing also requires background knowledge and competence of vocabulary, spelling, grammar, punctuation, coherence, etc.

In learning writing, there are some difficulties faced by the students. First, they do not have ideas to write. Second, they have lack of vocabulary. Third, they have difficulties in organizing their ideas. Fourth, they have low motivation to write. Therefore, the teacher should be able to organize good learning-teaching activities and prepare a good technique to help students in writing a text. According to Tompkins (2000) mentions that the emphasis of writing is shifted from what the writers think and do as they write to the product of writing. In addition Richard (2002) says that writing is the most difficult skill for foreign language learners to be mastered. They have to put together string of grammatically correct sentences. It is in line with Harmer (2004) who say that writing (as one of the four skills that are listening, speaking, reading, and writing) has always formed the syllabus of English teaching.

In teaching writing, the teacher should focus on the Competence Standard-*Standar Kompetensi (SK)* and Basic Competence *Kompetensi Dasar(KD)* in curriculum. Based on the basic competence of teaching writing at junior high school, there are two kinds of text that need to be taught: descriptive text and procedure text. Both of them are taught in the first grade of junior high school. The achievement indicator is that the students have ability at developing and producing simple written monolog texts in the form of descriptive and procedure text. According to Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan (*Depdiknas* 2006) teaching English at junior high school is expected to raise functional level. The functional level means that the students are able to communicate in oral and written form. According to Peha (2002) states that in teaching and learning process of writing at Junior High school, teacher takes an important part for students' development. The teacher helps them how to write well. It includes how to generate ideas and how to develop them into a good paragraph. One of the text that will teach is descriptive text.

A descriptive text is one of the monolog texts which is assumed as one of the texts that difficult to be learned by the students because students needs critical thinking to write a paragraph. A descriptive text is a text which describes the features of people, animals, things or places. According to Abisamra (2005) states that descriptive text is a text that tells the reader what the thing is, or what the thing does. Based on Collin (2009) descriptive text is to describe specific of places, this text usually describe about location, size, old, content and others characteristics. The generic structure of descriptive text consists of identification and description. It is supported by Gerot and Wignell (1994) also state the generic structures of descriptive text that are identification and description. Identification is the part of text that introduces the character, and description is the part of text

that describes the character. In writing a descriptive text, the students often find some difficulties. They usually feel difficult to organize their ideas, to connect one idea to other ideas and to develop their ideas and imagination.

To solve these problems, the teacher should choose good technique to teach writing in order to make the students interested in learning writing in English, especially in writing a descriptive text. There are a lot of techniques that can be applied by the teacher. For this case, the writer would like to propose an alternative technique that is the one which is commonly known as “clustering technique.”

Clustering technique is a technique to turn a broad subject into a limited and more manageable topic for a short essay or text. According to Langan (2002), clustering technique is also known as diagramming or mapping, is a technique that can be used to generate ideas in writing. This technique is helpful to think in a visual way. In clustering technique, there are lines, boxes, arrows, and circles to show relationships among the ideas and details. It is added by Pharr and Santi (2005) in clustering the students write a topic in the center of a piece of paper, then write ideas suggested by the topic around it, connecting these to the topic with lines, follow the same procedures with their subtopics. So, this technique can help the students to stimulate their ideas and to organize them before they develop into paragraphs. Besides that, this technique can motivate them to write. By applying this technique in writing class, especially in teaching writing a descriptive text, the teacher is supposed to be able to assist the students to improve their motivation to write, to generate their ideas and to make them interested in learning writing a descriptive text.

B. The Use Of The Clustering Technique In Teaching Writing A Descriptive Text To Junior High School Students

Teaching Preparation

There are some points that must be considered by the teacher before teaching and learning process. The teaching and learning process will run well if the teacher has good preparation before starting the lesson. There are some teaching preparations that need to be concerned by the teacher to teach writing by using clustering technique.

-Lesson Plan

One of the most important things that should be prepared by the teacher is the lesson plan. It is such a guide for the teacher to do activities in classroom when delivering the lesson. So, the teacher has to arrange it carefully in order to run the activities systematically and to achieve the goals of teaching and learning process. In making the lesson plan, the teacher should pay attention to several elements, such as the objectives, time allocation, activities, material, and evaluation.

The first is objectives. Objectives are the goals which are expected to be achieved by the students at the end of the learning. The teacher should tell the students the objectives of their learning to let them know what to achieve. By stating the objectives of the learning, the teacher can evaluate the students' comprehension about the lesson.

The second is time allocation. The teacher has to consider the time allocation of the lesson in a meeting. It is used to measure how the teacher should spend the time in every step of teaching so that it can make a meaningful learning process and all the objectives expected in the meeting can be achieved.

The third is material of the lesson. Material is what the teacher uses to teach the students in teaching and learning process. Material helps the teacher to explain the lesson. In addition, the teacher should choose the material to be given to the students. In choosing the material, the teacher is not only able to use the material form textbook but he/she can also combine it with authentic material. The teacher can find the authentic material from the sample or thing in the classroom, internet, newspaper, magazine, etc. The teacher should choose the authentic material that is suitable with the topic of the lesson that will be taught to catch the students' interest in the learning process.

The fourth is activities. Activities are what the teacher and students do in teaching and learning process in the classroom. The activities should be meaningful to get the students' understanding about the lesson. The teacher should also invite the students to be active in the activities during the learning process.

The last is evaluation. Evaluation is used to measure how far the students understand what the teacher has explained. It can be done by asking some questions directly, giving some exercises, homework or quizzes.

In teaching a descriptive text to junior high school students, the teacher should choose a quite easy topic which is familiar to the students because it is the first time for them to learn about descriptive text. The teacher can prepare the interesting material in order to make students get interested in learning the lesson. Besides that, the teacher also has to prepare some examples of material as an assignment for them. The teacher can ask them to do the exercises and identify the elements of descriptive text. So, by practicing a lot the students will understand about the topic that was already taught by the teacher and they will easily write a descriptive text by their own.

-Media

Media that can be used in teaching writing a descriptive text are some pictures as samples. In this teaching and learning process, the pictures used can be some pictures of famous artists that are familiar to the students, for example: Sule, Iqbal from "Coboy Junior" group band, Suzy from "Miss A" group band and some of other actresses or actors. The writer chooses those pictures because recently they are very famous group bands and actors in teenager era. The pictures as the learning media will help the students to understand the lesson given by the teacher because they are interesting and can catch the students' attention. The teacher can use laptop connected to in-focus to show the pictures. However, the teacher also needs to prepare the manual ones if there is no in-focus at school or if the electricity is off. If there is no media that can be used, the teacher can also choose one of the students as a model. It will be better if the teacher chooses the most favorite student in the class.

-Technique

Technique is a procedure or skill for completing a specific task. In teaching and learning process, technique is also one of the important parts. There are a lot of teaching techniques that can be applied by the teacher in teaching and learning process in the classroom. The technique also helps the teacher to deliver the lesson about the generic structure of the text and to provide some exercises to the students. In this phase the writer choose the clustering technique in teaching writing a descriptive text.

Teaching Procedures

1. Pre-teaching Activity

In this phase, the teacher prepares the class condition to study. Firstly, the teacher greets students and prays together with the students. Then, the teacher checks the students' attendance. After that, the teacher activates the students' background knowledge or schemata by asking some questions about the subject that is going to be taught. The teacher may give the warm up activities, for example: "Do you like watching TV or movie?" So, do you have an idol?" Who is your favorite artist or actor?" The students answer the questions from the teacher. After getting the best answers, the teacher links them with the lesson for that meeting. The teacher writes the topic on the white board. Next, the teacher also tells the achievement indicators and the objectives of the lesson that need to be reached.

In addition, the teacher also tells the students that they are going to learn descriptive text by using clustering technique. Furthermore, the teacher explains about clustering technique. The clustering technique is like a diagram that is centered by a circle in the middle of the paper. The circle in the middle of the paper is filled by the topic of the paragraph. Then, the topic is followed by some circles around as supporting ideas of the topic. The students can use arrows to connect ideas with the topic

2. Whilst-Teaching Activities

Whilst-teaching activity is the main or core activity and also one of the most important activities in teaching and learning process because this activity becomes the main point in teaching the material of the lesson. There are three steps in whilst-teaching that should be followed by the teacher: exploration, elaboration and confirmation.

A.Exploration

In exploration, the teacher invites the students to be more active in the class. She/he makes the students find the answers of his/her questions. The teacher also uses the media in teaching and learning process. The teacher also should keep the interaction with the students in order to achieve the goals of the lesson.

First, the teacher asks about the most famous artist or actor recently. Then, the students choose one of them, for example Sule. The teacher shows his picture to the students and let them mention the characteristics of him. While the students are mentioning them, the teacher writes the characteristics on the white board.

After that, the teacher gives explanation to the students about the vocabulary that have already mentioned by them. The teacher differentiates the characteristics

into some categories such as face, hair, age, etc. Then, the teacher lets the students to read the vocabularies written on the white board.

Next, the teacher explains what descriptive text is and social function of descriptive text. The teacher explains that the main purpose of descriptive text is to describe particular thing, person or place. In this case, the teacher explains that the descriptive text that they are going to learn is about describing a person that they like. Besides that, the teacher also explains the use of clustering technique in writing descriptive text. The Clustering technique is a technique that can be useful to guide them to make a good paragraph.

In applying the clustering technique, the first thing that the teacher does is writing the diagram of clustering technique. Then, the teacher shows the picture again. The teacher asks the student “who is he?” “What is his job?” “And what is the color of his hair?” etc. All of the answers must be written in the diagram of the clustering technique. Next, the teacher explains the function of the clustering technique. After that, the teacher and students choose the correct characteristics of Sule and eliminate the others.

Next, the teacher lets the students to develop the diagram above into sentences and arrange them into a good descriptive paragraph. “In order to make a descriptive text, you must start from the general information to the specific information.” The teacher writes the paragraph on the white board as a sample of the descriptive text.

Then, the teacher explains the generic structure of the descriptive text which consists of *identification* and *description*. The teacher explains each part of the generic structure. The teacher gives the arrows to differentiate those two parts of generic structure. Then, the teacher checks students’ understanding, “Do you understand so far?” Next, the teacher continues to explain the language features of the text by underlining the words (see appendix 4). After the students understand about the language features of the text, the teacher asks them to copy on their notebook as material for them so that they can learn it again at home.

B.Elaboration

In this phase, the students are given some exercises. The purpose is to check their understanding about the descriptive text. The teacher prepares some exercises related to the topic. In this case, the topic is about describing singer. The teacher decides how much the time to finish the exercises is. After that, the teacher leads the discussion to discuss the correct answers of the exercises.

In this section the teacher asks the students to do the first exercise in pairs. The first exercise is that the students are asked to fill the diagram of clustering technique. The teacher prepares a piece of paper for each group. The first activity to do is that the students fill the diagram of clustering technique based on the picture that is provided by the teacher. After all of the pairs have finished the first activity, the teacher and the students discuss it together. After that, the students are asked to continue to the second activity. In this activity, they are expected to fill in the blanks to complete the paragraphs of descriptive text related to the diagram given. After their have finished it, teacher leads the discussion about the correct answers of the blanks in the text and they also discuss the generic structure of the text.

After finishing the second activity, the teacher asks students to continue to the third activity. The students are asked to make a good descriptive text by using clustering technique individually. The topic is about a person. The teacher provides some pictures and students choose one of the pictures to be developed into a good descriptive text. The teacher gives a reward for the student who can finish the text first. “Well students, you must differentiate the parts of generic structure of the descriptive text. One of you who can finish the text firstly will be asked to write the text on the white board and she/he will get a gift from me. So, you must write it correctly.”

C. Confirmation

Confirmation is the step when the teacher gives feedback to the students. In this case, the teacher gives feedback to the students’ tasks. The feedback is that the teacher leads the discussion about the paragraphs that have already been written by one of the students. The teacher demands the students to pay attention to the generic structure and language features of the descriptive text. Teacher also gives a bit explanation again to make a clear understanding for the students. Then, the teacher collects all of the students’ exercises and revises them. In the next meeting, the teacher will give it back to each of the student.

3. Post Teaching Activity

Post teaching activity is an activity that should be done by the teacher to close the activities in teaching and learning process. In post-teaching activity, the teacher closes the lesson by making the conclusion, giving feedback and giving homework to the students.

In this case, before ending the class the teacher and the students conclude the lesson for that meeting. Before teacher gives conclusion about the lesson, teacher invites the students to tell the conclusion first. After that, the teacher gives a clearly conclusion about the lesson of descriptive text in that meeting. The teacher also gives homework to the students. The topic for their homework is about their mother. Finally, the teacher dismisses the class.

The Advantages of Using Clustering Technique in Writing A Descriptive Text

Clustering technique is known as a useful technique to help and guide students in generating their ideas in writing a paragraph, especially in writing a descriptive text. Clustering technique is a good technique that can be applied in writing a descriptive text. The use of clustering technique in writing descriptive text gives some advantages.

First, this technique is helpful for the students to develop and organize their ideas systematically. This technique also encourages them to think in English because it can stimulate them to deliver their ideas in written form.

Second, by using clustering technique students will be motivated to write a good paragraph, especially a descriptive text, because this technique is interesting.

Third, clustering technique can clearly show what the students think. So, their ideas will appear clearly. Fourth, this technique is easy to be applied by the teacher. The teacher can apply it without using a lot of teaching media. Moreover, if there is no media, the teacher still can do it manually by asking one of the students to be a model.

B. Conclusion and suggestion

Conclusion

Clustering technique is a technique to turn a broad subject into a limited and more manageable topic for a short essay or text. This technique is a good technique that can be used by the teacher and the students in teaching and learning process, especially in teaching and learning about writing a descriptive text. In this technique, the students sit in pairs and each of them discuss about the topic for their paragraph. They write the topic in the middle and supporting ideas around it. Topic and supporting ideas can be connected by using arrow to make it more manageable. It means that, by using clustering technique in teaching descriptive text the teacher and the students will achieve the goals of the lesson. The students can easily understand the lesson and they can write a descriptive text in the correct generic structure. Besides that, this technique is helpful for the students to develop and organize their ideas systematically and to make the students be motivated to write a good text especially descriptive text.

Suggestion

In this paper, the writer gives some suggestions in order to be successful in teaching writing a descriptive text to Junior High School students. First, it is suggested for the teacher to be creative in selecting and using an effective and appropriate technique in the writing classroom. Second, it is recommended for the teacher to use the clustering technique for teaching writing of describing objects, such as a person, a thing, and a place. Third, it is suggested for the teacher to choose an interesting descriptive text of describing a person in order that the students can deliver their ideas freely. Fourth, before teaching it is also suggested for the teacher to prepare an effective lesson plan because a well-organized lesson plan will support the teaching and learning process to run well, especially in using the clustering technique in teaching writing a descriptive text. Finally, the teacher is recommended to give some reinforcements and rewards to the first student who has done the exercise to motivate them in learning.

Note: This article is written based on the writer's paper whose advisor is Muhd. Al-Hafizh, S.S., M.A.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abisamra, Nada. 2005. *Teaching Writing Approaches and Activities*. Retrieved on October 27, 2013 From: [http://nadabs.triod.com/teaching writing.htm](http://nadabs.triod.com/teaching%20writing.htm).

Collin. 2009. *Descriptive Paragraph*. Retrieved on October 22,2013 from: www.Think.com/liste/market/coss/descriptiveparagraph

Depdiknas. 2006. *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan*. Retrieved on December 3,2013from:http://bsnpindonesia.org/id/wpcontent/uploads/kompetensi/Panduan_Umum_KTSP.pdf

Gerot, Linda and Wignell, Peter.1994. *Making Sense of Functional Grammar*. Sydney : Antipodean Educational Enterprises.

Harmer, Jeremy. 2004. *How to Teach Writing*. Malaysia: Longman.

Langan, Jhon. 2002. *English Skills*. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies.

Peha, Steve. 2002. *The Writing Process Notebook*. Retrieved on October 10, 2013 From: www.ttms.org.

Pharr, Donald and Santi V. Buscemi. 2005. *Writing Today Brief Edition*. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies.

Richard, Jack C. 2002. *Methodology Language Teaching. An Anthology of Current Practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Tompkins, Gail.E. 2000. *Teaching Writing Balancing Process and Product*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

