

TEACHING WRITING A DESCRIPTIVE TEXT BY USING TOOTHPICK GAME TO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstrak

Penulisan makalah ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan penggunaan *toothpick game* sebagai salah satu kegiatan yang menarik dalam menulis sebuah *descriptive text* yang difokuskan pada siswa kelas 8 Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP). Siswa Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP) pada umumnya kesulitan dalam membuat sebuah *descriptive text*. Siswa seringkali kesulitan menciptakan ide tentang topik yang diberikan. Kurangnya kreatifitas dalam pengajaran menulis *descriptive text*, menjadi penyebab lain menulis kurang begitu menarik bagi siswa. *Toothpick game* merupakan salah satu permainan yang diaplikasikan dalam pengajaran menulis teks deskriptif di kelas untuk mempermudah siswa untuk menemukan ide-ide dalam mendeskripsikan suatu topik. *Toothpick game* dilengkapi dengan gambar-gambar yang menarik dan beberapa tusuk gigi sehingga siswa akan termotivasi untuk menulis. Dalam permainan ini siswa berlomba dalam menulis kalimat yang menggambarkan tentang bagian gambar yang disentuh oleh tusuk gigi. Didalam melakukan permainan ini siswa melakukan secara berkelompok. Permainan ini digunakan dalam kegiatan *whilst-teaching activity*. Dengan menggunakan permainan ini diharapkan siswa mampu menulis teks deskriptif dengan baik dan benar.

Kata Kunci: *pengajaran menulis, teks deskriptif, pengajaran di SMP, toothpick game*

A. INTRODUCTION

As one of English language skills, writing is important to be learnt by students at junior high school. According to Nunan (2003:88) writing is the mental work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into statements and paragraphs that will be clear to a reader. So, the students need to master writing skill because it can be used to express the students' ideas as well as feelings and communication with others.

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Based on curriculum 2013, there are five genres which have to be mastered by the students such as narrative text, descriptive text, recount text, procedure text and report text. In its application the students are expected to understand about the purpose of the text, language features, and generic structure of the text. Descriptive text have some characteristics that make it difference with other genres. Boardmand and Frydenberg (2002:6) mention the goal of descriptive text is to give the readers about a clear mental picture of what is being described.

Based on writer's observation during teaching practice at junior high school, most of the students especially at the 8th grade were still low ability in writing a descriptive text and it was far from the expectation. This is indicated by some situations and problems in the process of teaching writing. The first problem comes from students themselves. The students are the lack of ideas, lack of vocabularies, lack of the knowlegde about the right grammar, spelling, and punctuation. These were reasons why students assume that writing is difficult and a boring activity since they did not know how and what they should write. Besides, the students had lack of motivation to write. This is occurs because the students do not have self confidence. The students are afraid if they make mistakes in writing including vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, organization, and mechanism, they will be laughed by their friends.

In order to motivate students in learning English especially in writing, there are some activities that can be used for the teacher to solve students' problem in writing. Using toothpick game is one way to improve student's ability in writing descriptive text. It is a kind of game to practice making sentences describing the pictures. Toothpick game has purpose to make students easier to express their ideas and be creative. It also can be used to increase students' interest in learning process.

There are several definitions of writing. Kate and Guy (in Nacira 2010:17) say that writing is a process of exploring one's thoughts and learning from the act of writing itself from what thoughts are. In other words, it is a way of communicating with people.

Some people hold the false belief that writing is a talent that some have and others do not. This belief make them never make an effort to learn writing. According to Langan (2012: 9) writing is a skill, and like most other skills, such as typing, driving, or cooking, it can be learned. Therefore, everyone can learn writing with more practice and it can be mastered by hard work.

In writing class, especially in junior high school, teacher should give clear instruction to the students and help them. According to Scrivener in Ernida (2006) a typical route for classroom work might involve some steps on helping students to write. They are introducing the topic, introducing and summarizing the main writing task, brainstorming ideas, selecting and rejecting ideas, deciding on specific requirements; style, information, layout.

Further, teaching of writing in Junior High School should be done appropriately. Students of Junior high school are in the age of 12 to 14 years old and categorized as adolescent. The teacher should know the characteristic of the students and use an

appropriate approach. Dorn and Soffos (in Irawati and Maharani 2012:7) say that in teaching writing to young learners, teachers have to recognize the complexity of the process and also think a moment about what happens in the mind of their students as they create a written work.

Based on curriculum 2013, one of the genres that should be taught in grade eight in junior high school is a descriptive text. According to Boardman and Frydenberg (2002:6) descriptive text is a text that describes about something looks like. He also mentions that the goal of a descriptive paragraph gives the reader a clear mental picture of what is being described. Furthermore, Gerrot and Wignell (1994) defines that the social function of descriptive text is to describe a particular person, place or thing. So, descriptive text is a kind of text that enables the reader to visualize it.

Based on the explanation above, the writer is interested in discussing the use of toothpick game to help junior high school students in writing a descriptive text. The writer focuses on writing ability of the students since the demand to improve English ability in curriculum 2013. It is hoped that this activity brings enjoyment for students in learning process.

B. DISCUSSION

Before applying teaching writing a descriptive text by using toothpick game to junior high school students, a teacher should have preparation. This is because it determines the successful of teaching and learning process. The teacher has to do following preparations such as material, media, and lesson plan. These are should suitable in the syllabus and depends on curriculum that used.

There are several stages to present teaching writing a descriptive text by using toothpick game. They are included in pre-teaching activity, whilst-teaching activity, and post-teaching activity. The first stage is pre-teaching activity. In this stage, teacher activates students' background knowledge by asking some questions related to the lesson that is going to be taught. The teacher might ask several questions such as:

“Have you ever watched harry potter movie?”

“How does harry potter look like?”

“How would you describe him?”

The second stages in the teaching and learning process is whilst-teaching activity. There are five phase in this stage. They are observing, questioning, experimenting, associating and networking.

Observing is a stage where the teacher begins to introduce the descriptive text to the students. The topic is about describing person. For the beginning, the teacher does brainstorming activities by showing to the students several cartoon pictures related to the topic. The teacher asks some questions related to the pictures to the students in order to lead them to the lesson. Furthermore, the teacher gives an example of descriptive text about person equipped with generic structure. The teacher asks students to read the text first. Then, teacher guides the students to discuss about what

the text tells about. The teacher explains about the concept of descriptive text. It starts from the definition of the text, social function, generic structure of the text, and also the language features of the text. In addition, the teacher will guide their student in questioning about the text they have observed before coming to the next stages.

In questioning, the teacher gives chance to the students to ask about the text that has given before. The students ask questions that related to the text that they still do not understand. It can be about the generic structure or the language features of the text. For example, if the students are still do not understand about simple present tense, the teacher will explain simple present tense. Furthermore, the teacher discusses the questions together with the students. This activity is to help the student understand about writing descriptive text and encourage student's motivation in learning. In addition, this stage will increase student's vocabulary.

Associating is the activity when the teacher leads the students to write and arrange a paragraph together. The teacher teaches the students about how to write a descriptive text based on the picture. The first thing, the teacher gives examples of vocabularies that used in describing a person. Then, the teacher teaches about how to make a list informations that describing the person in the picture with the first sentence has done by the teacher as the example. Then teacher asks students to make it on the white board. The teacher teaches the simple present tense while correcting the grammar mistakes that might be made by the students. After that, the teacher teaches how to determine the sentence which is including in identification or description as the generic structure. The teacher gives the example first. Furthermore, the teacher introduces about toothpick game to the students. By using this game, teacher can see the students' comprehension about the lesson. In playing the game, the students' task is to write a sentence which describes the part of picture that touched by the toothpicks. Here is example of how to put toothpicks on to the picture:



In picture 1 student will write a sentence that describing about the hair of the man such as the type of hair and the color. Picture 2 students will write about the clothes. Picture 3 students will write about the activity that the man is doing. Picture 4 students will write about the pack. So, this procedure will be same for the next.

Experimenting is the activity of the students to produce a written text by themselves. It also aims to give reflection to the students whether the teaching learning process is success or fail. In this stage, teacher explains how to use toothpick game in writing a descriptive text to the students. In this game, the students will be worked in group. The teacher divides the students into several groups consist of four. Furthermore, the teacher gives the same picture and some toothpicks to each group. So in groups, the students will take it in turns to produce sentences based on the part of picture that toothpick touched. The group who places the most toothpicks first is the winner.

Networking is the activity where the students show their writing to other students. Other students can give comments and the teacher will check the sentence whether it is correct or not. The group gets one point for each toothpick including the sentence describing the part of the picture correctly. In addition, in experimenting the teacher provides a positive feedback and emphasizing through oral or written, sign or gift.

Finally, the last stage of teaching activity is post teaching activity. It has purpose to close the teaching and learning activity which can be done through creating summary or reinforce the important point by the teacher to the students. In this activity, the teacher gives chance to the students to ask some questions whether they find the difficulties in learning the descriptive text. If there are some students still do not understand about it, so the teacher has to give the explanation more. This has to be done to make the entire students master in writing a descriptive text so that they can understand how to write a descriptive text. Finally, the teacher has to conclude and review the lesson to the whole class in order to make sure that the students are really understand about writing a descriptive text. For the last, to close the class the teacher gives a home work to students.

There are several advantages of using toothpick game. First, it is an attracting and enjoyable activity for improving writing skill especially in writing a descriptive text for the students. Second, it enhances the imagination of the student in conveying and generating ideas, and practicing in making sentences. Third, it is for training the students to work in a team because they do not think by themselves but they think and work together and also has responsible to their group. In addition, toothpick game can transform a boring class into a challenging and more fun class, because it can reduce students' stress in studying, especially in writing.

C. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that in teaching writing skill, the teacher has to pay more attention in materials, media, and activity in order to help the students develop their writing ability. The teacher is expected to facilitate the learning

process by creating interesting activities to the students. One of them is by using toothpick game. Using toothpick game is a very brilliant idea to apply in practicing writing a descriptive text for junior high school students. The students can express and enhance students' imagination in conveying the ideas easily, because the game provides about the picture that helps to illustrate so that easy to produce the sentence. Besides, this game is to train the students's thought to produce expressive vocabulary and sentence quickly because it has limited time to write.

In order to be successful in teaching writing a descriptive text to junior high school students, teacher is suggested to make sure that the students have understood about the rule of the game. The teacher should use pictures that attract the students' attention to describe about the object in teaching process. The teacher should use applicable language so it will be easy to be understood by the students. In addition, teacher is suggested always to keep control to students' activities.

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