

## **PICTURE THIS! TEACHING WRITING BY USING PICTURES TO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

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### **Abstract**

Writing is an action of expressing feelings and ideas into a written form. It is assumed as the most difficult of the four skills, especially for children. However, it is believed that by using interesting media, such as pictures, in which the children can have a lot of fun while learning may improve the students' skill in writing. Therefore, this study aims to find out whether the use of pictures can significantly improve the students' writing ability. An experimental study with one group pretest-posttest design was undertaken by giving the students a pretest and a posttest. The population of this research was the whole seventh grade students at SMPN 16 Banda Aceh. Meanwhile, the sample of this study were only 18 students at classVII-4 which were chosen by using random sampling. The mean score of the pretest is 63.11, while the posttest mean score is 77. The results of the study shows that the t-test value was 9.645, while the t-table value was 2.120. This means that the t-table value was lower than the t-test value ( $t_s = 9.645 > t_t = 2.120$ ). In conclusion, there was a significant improvement on students' writing ability after they were taught by using pictures.

**Keywords:** Writing, Picture, Descriptive Text

### **INTRODUCTION**

Among the four English language skills, writing skill is important to be learnt by students in schools because of some reasons. Richard and Renandya (2002, p. 303) argued that students need to know how to generate ideas and need to know how to organize the ideas in a good arrangement so that the students can produce a good writing. According to Wyrick (2011), writing is a productive skill which can be used to help people to express their thought and feelings. It means that writing is a way of sharing information, thoughts, and ideas with ourselves and others. It is reasonable because through writing, people can express their feelings, ideas, and thoughts.

Even though writing is an important productive skill which has to be mastered by students, writing is assumed as the most difficult skill to be learned compared to any other skills because it requires the students to think continuously during the writing process so that their ideas and thought can be put into written form. As stated by Harmer (1991, p. 52), among the other three skills, writing has become the most complicated skill to be learned because writing is a production skill and need a feedback.

Furthermore, Heaton (1995) stated that writing skill is complex and sometimes difficult to teach, requiring mastery not only grammatical and rhetorical devices but also conceptual and judgmental elements. This means that teaching writing skill needs appropriate strategies in order to improve the learners' writing ability. Riskayanti, Muslem and Gani (2016) argued that teachers who teach writing should find creative

ways to design activities in the classroom which can motivate and increase students' eagerness to learn. To do that, teachers must create a conducive learning activity that requires students to use the target language. Therefore, it is important for a teacher to teach the writing skill by using the right strategy so that it can increase the students' ability in writing.

Based on a preliminary study which has been conducted by the writers on February 5<sup>th</sup> 2018, it was found that the seventh grade students of SMPN 16 Banda Aceh still have problem in writing a descriptive text. Having been investigated their current writing skill by giving them a written test; their difficulties were namely lack of vocabulary, lack of grammar knowledge, and limited idea. The teacher in that school said that the students in SMPN 16 Banda Aceh were just new to learning English. That is why their performance seems low. The students were not learning English in the elementary school because of the new regulation from the government. From the problem above, the writers were inspired to conduct this research at SMPN 16 Banda Aceh to find out whether teaching by using pictures can improve the students' ability in writing.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **The Definition of Writing**

Writing is an action of expressing feeling and idea in written form. Writing consists of words, and then those words are combined into certain formations to form sentences which then gathered together into paragraphs (Crème & Lea, 2003). According to Wyrick (2011), writing is a productive skill which can be used to help students express their thought and feelings. It means that writing skill is one of important skills that have to be mastered by students since it is a way of sharing information, thoughts, and ideas with ourselves and other. In addition, Nunan (2003, p. 88) explained that writing is a process of thinking to obtain ideas and then expressing it in the sentences or paragraph form. It means that writing is an act of thinking and producing ideas in written form.

Like speaking, writing is also a way to produce language but in a written form instead of verbal one (Meyers, 2005). In addition, Meyers (2005) stated that writing is a process of discovering and organizing ideas by pouring them into a writing product through reshaping and revising. Through writing, people can express their feelings, ideas, and thoughts. Therefore, it can be said that writing is a way of communication.

### **Aspects of Writing**

There are several aspects of writing that needs to be mastered in order to write a good writing. Brown (2004) mentioned five aspects of writing as follow:

1. Content  
Content is the essence of writing which reflects the main idea of the paragraph or the text. The main idea can be seen in the topic sentence of the paragraph.
2. Vocabulary  
The writer is considered good in writing when he/she can choose the appropriate words that synchronize with the content of the paragraph or the text. A good writer also selects the words that can be understood by the readers.
3. Grammar

The writer's proficiency in writing can be seen from his/her grammar which is used in the writing. This aspect can be identified from the well-formed sentence in a paragraph or text.

#### 4. Organization

It refers to the writer's ability in organizing the sentence and the paragraph so that the ideas of the text can be received by the reader smoothly.

#### 5. Mechanics

Mechanics in a paragraph or text is also a crucial part in learning writing. Oshima (1997, p. 10) said that mechanic in writing is identified as the usage of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization within paragraphs.

### **Descriptive Text**

Descriptive text is one of many text genres in writing. Descriptive text is a text that is written to describe or portray an object so that the reader has the experience of seeing and experiencing it himself (Akhadiah, 1997). Furthermore, according to Keraf (2000), descriptive text is a text where the writer transfers the images and feelings that the writer experienced to the reader. It means that an essay that is written to describe an object or a phenomenon so that the reader can imagine and feel about what the writer writes in the text is called descriptive text. Therefore, descriptive text contains in-depth information about the object that is being described in the text, such as shapes, sizes, smells, sounds, tastes, etc.

A descriptive text contains two parts, namely identification and description (Antono, Jahur & Djusma, 2008). Identification deals with the introduction of the object that wants to be described, meanwhile the description contains about the characteristics of the object. This type of text has several language features. The tenses that are used in descriptive text can be present or past tense. The use of adjective words is important in writing descriptive text because adjective words help a lot in describing an object.

### **The Use of Picture in Teaching Writing**

Strategy in teaching is an important thing especially in teaching language, because the strategy determines whether students get motivation to learn or not. In teaching language skill like writing, picture can be useful particularly in teaching writing a descriptive text. As stated above, descriptive text is a text which contains about description of an object. Thus, the use of picture as media in teaching descriptive text to represent the object that is being written may be needed. Miarso (1999) stated that the functions of picture as teaching media are to make an abstract thing becomes concrete and to represent the object that is hard to be found. It is reasonable since the picture can represent an object that is difficult to be brought to the class such as elephant, tiger, whale, etc.

In teaching by using pictures, there are some procedures that should be considered by the teacher. Ariningsih (2010) noted that the teacher should consider whether the pictures used are interesting for the students. By choosing the appropriate picture, the teacher then can show it to the students whether by sticking it to the whiteboard or by projecting it through laptop by using projector. After the students look at the picture, then the students may get some ideas because they can see the object directly instead of imagining it.

There are several studies that are carried out related to the use of picture in teaching English especially writing skill. The recent study was conducted by Sesrica, Jismulatif, and Afrianto (2017). In that research, it revealed that the use of picture as media in teaching writing descriptive text may improve the students' ability in writing descriptive text. Also, another research with similar topic had been conducted by Chairana (2007) at SMPN 13 Semarang. It showed that the use of picture in teaching writing can improve the students' ability in writing descriptive text. In addition, Fitriani (2009) did a similar research at SMPN 26 Semarang and the result of her study also revealed that the use of picture as media in teaching writing can improve student's ability in writing descriptive text. Therefore, all of the previous studies found that the use of picture as media in teaching writing descriptive text can improve students' writing ability.

## **METHOD**

This research is a quantitative research. According to Muijs (2004), quantitative research is *"explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analysed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics)"*. It means that this research is about to describe the phenomenon based on the quantitative data which is collected from the class and then analyzed it by using statistical formula in order to prove the hypothesis. Furthermore, this quantitative research is in the form of experimental study. Muijs (2004) defined that experimental study is an experiment including a test under certain conditions that is conducted to examine the validity of hypothesis. Furthermore, this research applied pre-experimental research design with one group pretest-posttest design. Ary, et. al. (2006) stated that one group pretest-posttest design consists of three steps; conducting the pretest, applying the experimental treatment, and conducting the posttest. This research was conducted at SMPN 16 Banda Aceh. The sample is the students of class VII-4 which consist of 18 students.

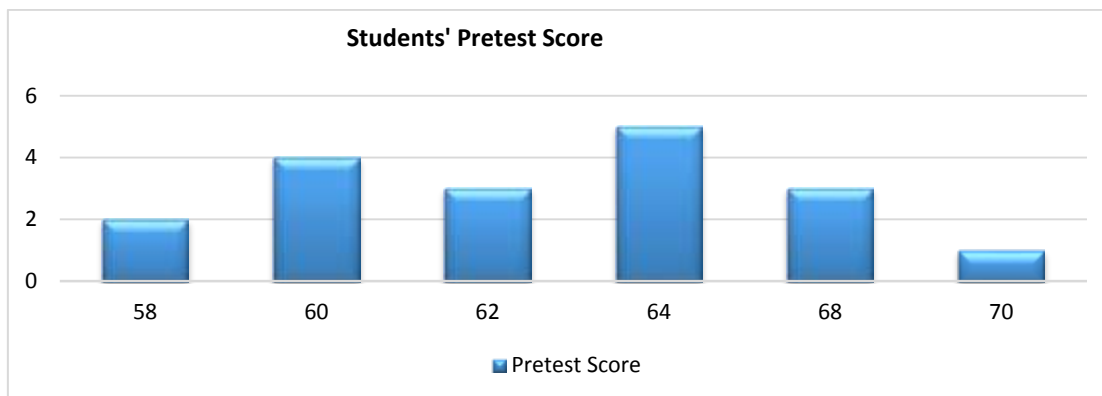
## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In order to know the students writing ability, in the first meeting the writer gave them a pretest. Then the treatments were done in the next three meetings. Finally, the posttest was given in order to know the latest students' writing skill.

### **The Result of Tests**

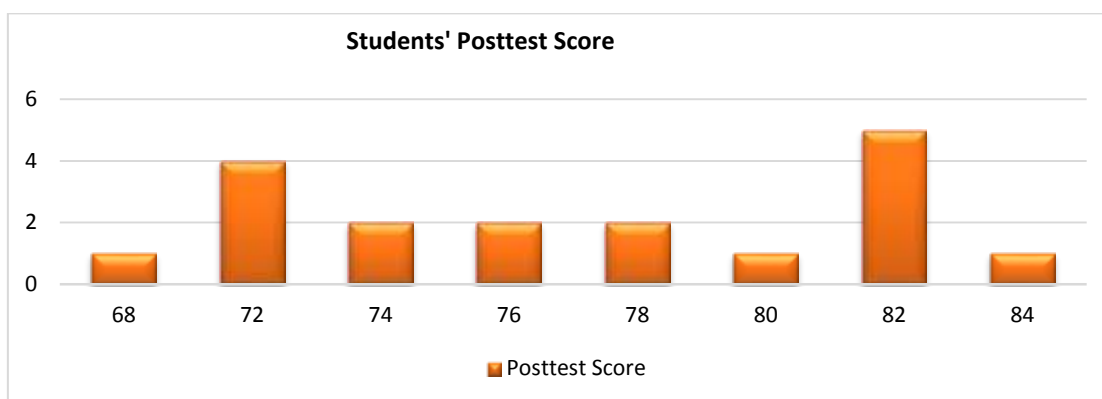
The data which obtained from the pretest and posttest were scored based on the writing rubric adapted from Brown (2004). The writers only assessed two out of five writing aspects, namely content and vocabulary.

The pretest was carried out in the first meeting. During the pretest, the students were asked to write a descriptive text about "Tiger" in approximately 20 to 30 words. The result can be seen in the following figure.



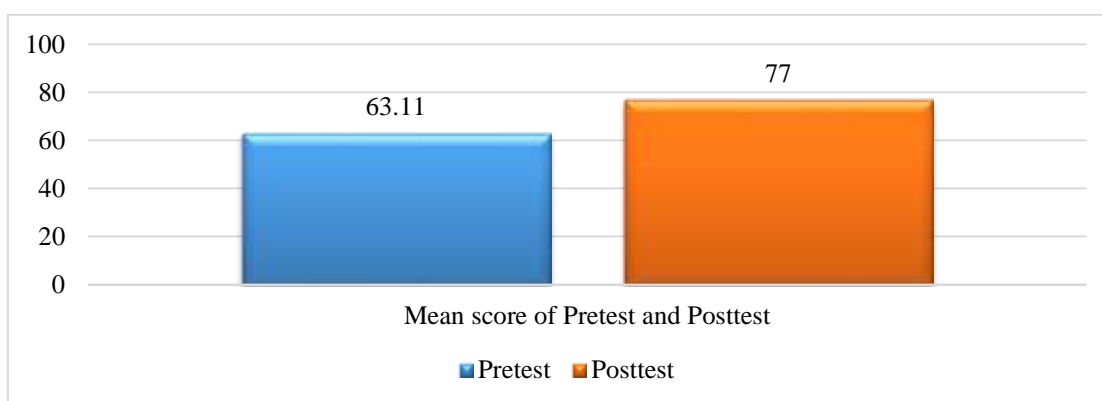
**Figure 1.** The frequencies of students' pretest score

The posttest was carried out in the fifth meeting or in the last meeting. During the posttest, the students were asked to write a descriptive text about "Elephant" in approximately 20 to 30 words. The result can be seen in the following figure.



**Figure 2.** The frequencies of students' pretest score

After getting the pretest and posttest score, the writers compared the mean score of both tests in order to know the difference between them.



**Figure 3.** Comparison of pretest and posttest score

From the figure above, it can be seen that the mean score of the pretest is 63.11, while the posttest mean score is 77. It means, the mean of posttest score is higher than the mean of pretest score. The difference between the score is 13.89.

In testing the hypothesis, the writers used significant value of 5% ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ), while the degree of freedom of this research is 16. So, the critical value of the t-score from the t-table is 2.120. From the result of analysis, the writer found that the t-score from this study is 9.645, which is higher than the t-table ( $t_s = 9.645 > t_t = 2.120$ ). Therefore, because the t-score or the t-test result is higher than the t-table value, the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) is accepted while the null hypothesis ( $H_o$ ) is rejected.

### **Discussion**

From the findings of this research, it shows that the alternate hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) is accepted. It means that there is significant improvement on students' writing ability after they were taught by using pictures. There is an increase of the mean score from the pretest to the posttest. The mean score of the pretest is 63.11, while the mean score of the posttest is 77. It can also be seen that there is a significant increase in the total score of the students from the pretest to the posttest. The total score was increasing significantly 250 points.

This research shows that the use of picture was effective in teaching writing especially descriptive text. The finding in this research is in line with the recent similar study which was conducted by Sesrica, Jismulatif, and Afrianto (2017) who found that the use of picture as media in teaching writing descriptive text could increase the students' ability in writing descriptive text.

Furthermore, the result of this study is also similar to the result of the study conducted by Fitriani (2009) at SMPN 26 Semarang. Fitriani (2009) also investigated whether the use of picture as media in teaching writing can improve student's ability in writing descriptive text. The result showed that the students' score was increasing the students were taught by using picture. Another research which was also had identical result with this research is the research from Chairena (2007). The result of Chairena's research (2007) showed that the use of picture in teaching writing could significantly improve the students' ability in writing descriptive text. Therefore, the result of this research had identical result with the previous studies because this research result also showed that there was significant improvement in students' writing proficiency.

Regarding to the result of this research, there was an increase in students' mean score in writing descriptive text. In terms of improvement, their scores from pretest to posttest were having significant increase even though there were few students who still got the score under KKM. It means that the use of picture as media in teaching writing descriptive text at SMPN 16 was effective. The writers believed that this happened because the students in VII-4 class at SMPN 16 were just new in learning English only since they got into junior high school. This is because English language is not taught anymore in elementary school.

The writers saw that the students wanted to learn English and were enthusiast to follow the English lesson. The students wanted to try to correct their mistakes from the pretest so that it would not happen again in the posttest. Because of doing so, the students' scores from the pretest and the posttest also improved. It is proven by the increase of the students' mean score in this research. Since the improvement was significant, the writers believed that the students were feeling more comfortable when learning by using pictures especially in writing descriptive text, because the students

did not have to imagine the shape of the object. Instead, they could see the object from the pictures. So it helped them during the writing process. It means that the students at SMPN 16 are still potential to develop their English proficiency.

In summary, the use of picture in teaching writing descriptive text in SMPN 16 Banda Aceh is effective. It can be said that, teaching writing by using picture can significantly improve the students' writing ability especially writing a descriptive text. Thus, using picture can be one of the alternative media for the English teacher for teaching writing descriptive text since it is proven to give the advantages to the students and to improve students' writing ability.

## CONCLUSIONS

From the result of this study which was conducted on the class VII-4 of SMPN 16 Banda Aceh, the writers found that there was a significant improvement on the students' score from the pretest to the posttest. It was proven by the difference of the mean score of the pretest which is 63.11, while the posttest mean score is 77. It can be seen that the score differences is 13.89 point. Furthermore, the result of t-test was 9.645, while the t-table value was 2.120. So, the t-table value was lower than the t-test value ( $t_s = 9.645 < t_t = 2.120$ ). It means that the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) was accepted (there is significant improvement on students' writing ability after they are taught by using pictures) while the null hypothesis ( $H_o$ ) was rejected (there is no significant improvement on students' writing ability after they are taught by using pictures).

Moreover, the writers would like to propose some suggestions to the English teachers. In English teaching and learning process, it is hoped that the teachers can choose appropriate teaching media that can help the students easily understand the material, in this case writing descriptive text. It means, English teachers are suggested to use pictures when explaining the material to the students during the teaching process. The teachers are also suggested to use media that can make students more attracted to learn such as projector to show the pictures so that the students do not get bored.

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