THE USE OF SEMANTIC MAPPING TECNIQUE TO IMPROVE WRITING SKILL IN THE DESCRIPTIVE TEXT

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Abstract: The study is aimed at describing the improvement of the students’ writing skill of descriptive text after semantic mapping technique was applied at MTS Al Ma’arif Singosari Malang and focused on solving the problem of the students generate and organize ideas for writing a topic. There two topics that are discussed. They are a place and an animal. The research design of this study is the classroom action research. The subject of this study is seventh grade students in junior high school, and it consists of 38 students. The test in this study was the students make descriptive text after making semantic mapping. The score is taken from grammar, vocabulary, content, organization, and mechanics. The finding of this study using semantic mapping could improve the students’ writing skill. It was proved by the result of the test, students’ self-assessment, and students respond for the implementation of semantic mapping. The result of test is cycle I indicates that 28.9% or 11 students whose scores can reach the criteria of success. Thus, 71.1% or 27 students were failed and the cycle II showed that (63.1%) or 24 of students’ score can reach the minimum passing score

Key words: Writing Ability, Descriptive Writing, and Semantic Mapping.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of language skills that more complex and difficult than others, because the students must master in grammar and vocabulary. The students must have concept of writing not only in their brain but they also have to translate it in writing language, and it is difficult to write concepts that exist in our brain (Hairi, 2010:3). Writing is a process that requires making choices. How to decide what want to communicate and how to express the thoughts, and what combination of words and sentence structures will best convey those thoughts. So writing is how the man to communicate his thoughts and feelings by visible signs, understandable not only to himself but also to all other persons (Gelb, 1963:11).

In addition, Flachmann (2011:1) said that writing is the process of explaining what a words, an object, and or an idea is. A good definition focuses on what is special about a word, object, or idea and what sets it apart from similar words, objects, or ideas. Denis and Chanquoy (2001:1) defined that is a complex task that needs a coordinated implementation of a large set of metal activities, so the writers have to clearly delimitate the nature, the goal and the communicative function of the text.

The writing process has four steps: (1) The prewriting phase is includes discussion of the purpose writing the theme or topic, ideas elated to the word, feeling and thought.(2) The writing phase includes pausing and rereading as the writing is occurring, Interaction with other, consulting resources, talking to one self and reformulating the ideas and organization of the composition. (3) Editing is very important part
of writing process. Editing is checking mistake and making correction. You can also make change to the content the ideas and information in you writing. (4) The post writing phase encompasses all behaviors that follow the actual writing act and make include the writer solicitation of approval form other, proof reading, contemplating the product, and finally its disposition (Petty & Jensen, 1980:363-365).

According to Heffernan and Lincoln (1982:52), there are four forms of writing, they are; the first is narration that is the form of writing used to relate the things that happened, and it normally shows the order of the acts or events in which they happened. Narration places occurrences in time and tells what happen according to natural time sequence, type narration include short story, novel and new story as well large part of our everyday social interaction in the form letters and conversation. The second is description which is form of writing about the external features of people or things. To describe a thing is to say how it looks, feels, sounds, smells, or tastes. (Hefferman & Lincoln,1982:52) A successful description does not depend on merely visual effect, however, it attempts to evoke all the sense by identifying a subject’s significant feature and by arranging those feature in an appropriate pattern. The third is exposition, it is explanatory writing. Its purpose is to explain or clarify a certain point. It also is used in giving information, and interpreting meaning it includes editorial, essay and informative instructional material. Used in combination with narrative, exposition support and illustrates. Used part form narrative, it stand alone as an essay. Used alone or with narrative, exposition may be developed in number of ways. Exposition may be used to explain a process, definition, analysis and criticism. (Hefferman & Lincoln,1982:56-57). The last is argumentation that is used in persuading and convincing. It is read to exposition and is often combined with it. Argumentation is used to make a case or to prove and disprove statements or proposition.

There are most problems of teaching English writing in every school which the teacher has to solve it, like in MTS Al- Ma’arif Singosari Malang. In this school, the students got difficulty to write because they did not know what they should write. And most of them didn’t understand generic function, structure, and lexicon of grammatical feature in descriptive text. They are only asked by the teacher to translate and fill the blank in exercise in only one book “LKS”, They did not understand meaning descriptive text itself. The score of the students’ writing achievement proved an unsatisfactory ability. Their scores are 53.65 in average.

There are techniques to solve the problems of teaching English writing like using semantic mapping. According to Harmer (2007: 236), as he said semantic mapping or word maps are “word maps are an extremely engaging way of building up vocabulary knowledge as well as provoking students into retrieving and using what they know. It is a prewriting technique by drawing a diagram of words using lines, boxes, arrows, circles, words, and phrases to show how new words and ideas are related to the topic. The other theories were stated by Vogt as cited (Irwin, 1990:28), semantic mapping is a process for constructing visual displays of categories and their relationship. It is a categorical structuring of information in graphic form. It is an “individualized” content approach which allows students to relate new words to their own experiences and prior knowledge. For example, the study of ‘ weather’ words might include brisk, sultry, squall, alert, high pressure, torrid, tornado, cyclone, barometer, traveler advisor.

According to Col and Spector (1993) that there are forms of semantic mapping, such as: star diagram, spider diagram, fishbone map, cluster diagrams, tree diagram, chain diagrams, cycle diagrams, and vocabulary map graphic organizer.

According to Johnson and Pearson (1984) that procedure semantic mapping technique as followed: the firstly, Write a key word or topic related to classroom work on a sheet of paper, the blackboard, or a transparent slide. Secondly, encourage the students to think of as many words as they can that are related to the selected key word or topic. Thirdly, Guide
the students to list the words by categories. Then, have students label the categories. After that, discuss the relationships between these words.

On the basis of the background of the study stated, the research problem is formulated as follows: “how can the use of semantic mapping technique improve writing skill of descriptive text of seventh grade students at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al Ma’arif Singosari Malang?” Meanwhile, this study aims at describing the way of semantic mapping technique to improve writing skill of descriptive text at Madrasah Aliyah Al Ma’arif Singosari Malang.

This study focuses on the strategy teaching writing descriptive text though using semantic mapping technique to solve the problems of writing skill of seventh grade students at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Al Ma’arif Singosari Malang. The limitation of this study is researcher ask the student to write a short descriptive text about describing an animal and a place through semantic mapping technique. And to the score, the researcher involves general score from rating scale component such as grammar, vocabulary, relevant, and fluency.

This study is expected to give meaningful contribution to both the students and the English teacher. The result of this study is expected to support the teachers in teaching writing in the classroom and to give alternative and effective technique information to improve students’ writing skill of descriptive text and help the students in the school where this study is conducting more easily in learning English to improve their writing skill of descriptive text.

METHOD

The design of this study is classroom action research (CAR). According to Mills (2003:1) as cited in Hopkin (2008) Class action research is systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers to collect information about how the school work, how the teacher teach, and how students, the information to improve student learning outcomes and look for a solution of the problem issues. The researcher conduct the research started from planning, implementation the action, observation, and reflecting on the data gained from the teaching and learning process – which runs into two cycles, each of which covers three meetings.

This researcher chooses at MTS AL-MA’ARIF SINGOSARI MALANG. The location of this school is in Jl. Masjid No 33 Singosari. This research held in the second semester of the 2012/2013 academic year. The subjects of this research are 38 students of class VII F at MTS AL-Ma’arif Singosari Malang. The seventh grade were chosen since descriptive text is taught to seventh grade and this is suitable for the research that conducted by the researcher, who use semantic mapping technique to improve the students’ writing skill. The students of class VII F were chosen since the students recommended by the English teacher to improve their English skill in descriptive text.

In conducting this study, it determined that the researcher as the practitioner teacher carried out the lesson plan while the teacher played the role of an observer in conducting the observation during the teaching and learning process. The execution of the strategy was applied while the teaching was going on. In this case, semantic mapping technique was used during the teaching and learning process as a part of teaching of the descriptive writing skill.

The implementation of the action was done in two cycles in six meetings; two meetings for cycle 1, two meeting for cycle 2, and two meeting with the exact dates for the test.

The researcher should prepare an appropriate instrument to get a valid and reliable data. Some instruments which prepared are; questionnaire, field note and test form.

The researcher is helped by teacher’s observer to give suggestion and advice to the researcher about the teaching and learning process. The instruments would analysis and conclude to obtain the needed information. The explaining of each instrument as follow:

The field notes had relation to the students’ activities during the teaching process. In writing field note, the researcher was as a teacher and he also was observer and he asks his friend who almost study in UNISMA to help him as observer. He wrote the field notes
during the teaching learning process. This field note consisted of two items. The first item was special notes for students in the learning process. It included students’ attendance and situation of the learning process. The second item was the observer’s comment and suggestion. It included something to be improved and lose. The field note were concluded by the researcher and observer

1). Questionnaire is given to the students to collect the information directly specially related to the technique that used by researcher. The questionnaire is include data of the students’ respond in implementation of using semantic mapping technique in teaching descriptive text, their motivation in writing descriptive text after using this technique and also the improvement of the writing skill before and after using semantic mapping technique. This questionnaire were be analyzed by using percentage method

2). The test score is gotten from students writing of descriptive text after the researcher direct them by using semantic mapping. There are five items to be scored such as grammar, vocabulary, mechanic, fluency, and relevant. To get reliable data, the result of students’ writing is scored by observer and the score that is used in this study are the mean score from the researcher’s in each student.

Results from Cycle I

The Students’ Achievement

Based on the analysis on the Students’ Compositions in cycle I (table 3), the findings show that the students’ achievement in writing a descriptive text in cycle I was not satisfactory yet. It was found that the percentage of the students achieving the score grater that or equal to 70 was only 11 of 38 (28.9%) students. It means that the result did not meet the criterion of success which is 1) the students’ writing skill was improved if the mean score of the students’ writing test result fulfilled the target mean score at least 70 and 2) 50% of the research subjects (19 of 38 students) achieved writing test score at least 70.00 which it is standard minimum score.

It happened because the students still could not yet make a good descriptive text. The fact showed that the students’ essays were lack in organization, grammar and content. There were still many mistakes made by the students in their writings. The result of the writing assessment administrated showed that the students still made some mistakes in terms of content, organization, and grammar.

Most of the students’ writings did not present some detail information yet. The topic sentence or min ideas of their paragraphs stated somewhat unclear or inaccurate. Their writings were organized with ideas that were generally related but it did not have sentence connectors while some others loosely organized but main ideas clear, logical, but incomplete sequencing. Besides, their writings still contained grammatical mistakes. The mistakes made by the students made their writings not easy to understand.

The Students’ Involvement

Based on the analysis on the data gained from field note in cycle I, the finding show that (1) In the two meeting, only two students did not come to the class because they were sickness in second meeting, (2) Students’ attitude during the class was fine and good. Students listened the researcher carefully. Therefore, there are students did not concentration because of sleepiness. But it is not disturbance in process learning, (3) Students always responded to the researcher. Most of students asked the researcher about the explanation if they didn’t understand. (4) Students were motivated well and they looked enthusiasm, although there were some students talked to his/her friend.(5)The students are crowded when they made group (6) The students could follow most of instructions which were given by researcher. (7) There are passive students in first meeting because they are in one group. And the second meeting, the researcher made them in different group so they could follow
the instruction. So, the findings were concluded that the condition of the process teaching learning was categorized as good. And this helped students’ improvement in their score although their score was not reached to criteria of success. It happened since during the teaching and learning process in the four meetings, the students faced the some problems. Most of the students had problem related to the vocabulary items, organization, and grammar so were still confused to generate ideas because of their limited vocabularies, not understand to place words by words in every sentence.

**Revision on the Strategy**

The revision for the following action was focused on the procedures of the implementation of the model of semantic mapping and their mistakes of the writing. First, when the teacher asked the students to make semantic mapping, he give the picture on the whiteboard. It was done to give clear object (picture) for the students so that they could describe the picture in semantic mapping clearly and fell easy to make write descriptive text. Second, the teacher clarified his explanation by describing the strange words or sentences clearly and repeatedly when the students looked confused to interest the students. Third, the teacher gave the model of descriptive text to direct them in their writing correctly fourth, the teacher explained the different vocabularies like verb, noun, noun phrases and adjective so that they could put every vocabulary in the sentence correctly. Fifth, the teacher assigned the students to do the tasks individually in second meeting so that all of them focus in their work.

**Results from Cycle II**

**The Students’ Achievement**

Based on the analysis on the Students’ Compositions in cycle II (table 4), the findings show that the students’ achievement in writing a descriptive text in cycle II was satisfactory yet. It was found that the percentage of the students achieving the score greater that or equal to 70 was only 24 (63.1%) out of 38 students. It means that the result reached the criterion of success which is 1) the students’ writing skill was improved if the mean score of the students’ writing test result fulfilled the target mean score at least 70 and 2) 50% of the research subjects (19 of 38 students) achieved writing test score at least 70.00 which it is standard minimum score.

Generally the students could procedure describe text correctly because of their ability to write which had better content, organization, and grammar than in the previous that is cycle I. most of the students’ paragraphs fairly well organized and generally their writing still contained some grammatical mistakes. So, the researcher concluded that more students understand about descriptive text although the students need to practice and explain the descriptive text again so that they get excellent score.

**The Students’ Involvement**

Based on the analysis on the data gained from field note in cycle I, the finding show that (1) In the two meeting of the second cycle, one student did not come to the class in first meeting. (2) Students’ attitude during the class was fine and good. Students listened to the researcher carefully. There is not students did not concentration because of sleepiness like in cycle 1. Because he asked the observer sit near the student who is sleepiness. (3) Students always responded to the researcher. Most of students asked the researcher about the explanation if they didn’t understand. (4) Students were motivated well and they looked enthusiasm and seriousness although there were more students talked to his/her friend or asked the researcher about their errors in the work before. (5) The students could choose their group. (6)The students could follow most of instructions which were given by researcher.

Based on the analysis on the data gained form questionnaire that they had high interest and motivation because mostly they answered strongly agree and agree and only few students who answered less agree and disagree. So that teaching English writing
skill through semantic mapping technique succeeded to increase students’ interest and their motivation. So, it was concluded that they had high respond in implementation of using semantic mapping technique in teaching descriptive text, their motivation in writing descriptive text after using this technique in well, they felt easy and enjoy in learning English though semantic mapping technique, and They felt the improvement of the writing skill after using semantic mapping technique

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this study, the researcher found that during teaching learning process, the student’s quality learning activity in the class was improving and the student’s activities more active and enjoy in the class. This situation was happened because of some factors, such as: the student’s enthusiasm in learning process improve day by day, there was improvement in student’s attention to the researcher while explaining the subject, student was active in doing asking and answering the question and doing the activities, although students still make mistake in each work. In this case, the some students make mistake in their test in cycle I and the cycle I was not success, so the researcher explain again and focus on their mistakes in cycle II until they understand. Because they focus and be careful in test of cycle II, the study is successful.

The finding of this study notes showed that the implementation of the first cycle was not satisfying because the students’ result of test was not qualified to criteria of success in this research. In cycle I, 11 of 38 (28.9%) students was qualified to standard minimum was it is 70.00 and the students’ score showed that it was satisfying in cycle II. The average of converted scores on writing ability in second cycle which was administered during the implementation of second cycle, it was found out that 24 (63.1%) out of 38 students reached the minimum mastery leaning score 70.

Implementation Semantic Mapping Technique in Teaching Descriptive Text

Based on the data obtained from the implementation of semantic mapping technique in the writing class, it could be concluded that the semantic mapping could help focus, organize, and sequence writing for the students so that they will can think a topic and write what relate with the topic easily. Then they are helped to make writing text. Vadilah (2011:4) states that using semantic mapping would be the student can discover the relationship between the words which they have known, and they can learn new word from this strategy which make them more recognize which word they need for their better understanding in English. According to Kurniaawati (2011:69) by using semantic mapping during prewriting stage, the students could generate, develop the ideas and organized. Then the words are grouped into its categories. Thus, the ideas could be developed easily and more completely.

Besides, most of the students also commented positively to the implementation of semantic mapping technique in writing teaching learning process activities. The fact, during implementing the semantic mapping in a group was effective for students. It was showed in the first activity that the students were decided into some groups. They were active in discussion delivering their own ideas. They shared their each idea, so the students can consider their idea with their partner in a group. And the arguments were more varieties because came from more than one side.

The students’ progress of content was influenced by implementing the semantic mapping technique. They design their ideas into subtopics through semantic mapping technique, so they could develop their ideas and vocabularies based on the topic of semantic mapping in writing. Using semantic mapping, the students can use more variety vocabularies, so their writing is not monotone. The students were accustomed to think critically on delivering their idea of the topic represented in descriptive text since they had to contribute by giving the ideas.

Meanwhile, the students’ improvement on organization was obtained through parts of the argument that had been discussed during
the implementation. The technique helps the students to identify the language features and the generic structure in text. In the first meeting the researcher had already explained clearly about organization. Showed the example of descriptive text, and decided in parts of language features. So, it made the students easier to comprehend the paragraph. Moreover, the students were also accustomed to the features the language features of descriptive text; compound sentence, complex sentence, the use of subjunctive opinion, etc. by having this technique the students can implement their ability in improving their organization of writing.

All in all, the result of analysis shows that semantic mapping technique could be applied to improve the students’ writing skill. This technique also stimulated the students’ awareness on their own writing, so that they could produce the better writing product. During the implementation the students showed great enthusiastic and paid attention. It is proven improving students’ ability in writing which could be n from the achievement test after the implementation of the semantic mapping technique. Therefore, based on the improvement of students’ writing score, the semantic mapping technique was done successfully to help students of seventh grade at Mts Al Ma’arif Singosari Malang to improve their writing skill.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

The researcher draws the conclusion based on the findings presented in the previous chapter. The conclusion was focused in “improving students’ writing skill using semantic mapping. Based on the result of analyzed data and data in observation in the class, it was concluded that the technique of using semantic mapping technique had improved the students’ writing skill. In the process of learning English in this activity, the student looked interested and enthusiastic when the technique was applied in teaching learning English. All of the students be active participation and motivate in learning English.

The implementation of semantic mapping has improved the students’ writing skill. It was proved that improvement score from the pre-test and post-test. The students’ average score of pre-test was only 53.57, and after giving treatment, the students’ average score of post-test is improvement to 60.34 in cycle I and the students’ average score of post-test is 72.21 in cycle II. It as shown in figure:

In this case, there is teaching procedure of descriptive text through semantic mapping that used by researcher in helping students to build the related to the topic and writing activity in which semantic mapping is applied. First, pre-activity the writing material as a foundation to write, such as the generic structure of descriptive text namely identification and description, and language features of descriptive text about the simple present tense, adjective and noun phrases. Then, the researcher give the students a topic, direct them to collect the information which they mention new words related to the topic, ask them brainstorm both individually and class contribution, draw semantic maps, make the first draft, write, and make the final draft.

The suggestion for the English teachers, they can use semantic mapping as an alternative technique in teaching writing because the English teacher can direct the students to generate and organize ideas before they begin writing. Using semantic mapping in teaching writing skill is very effective technique to increase students’ writing achievement.

It is also better for other researcher who have similar problems in teaching writing to continue this research in order to the next research will be more useful both students and teachers in learning English writing by using semantic mapping because this technique has succeeded to improve students’ writing skill and to make students more interested in writing descriptive text. The future researchers are also suggested to conduct a similar study on the other skill likes listening, reading, and speaking at other level of students for the improvement of teaching English.
REFERENCES