

IMPROVING STUDENTS` SKILLS IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXTS BY USING GROUP DISCUSSION ONLINE: A STUDY AT SMPN 15 MALANG

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Abstract: This study is to describe how Online Group Discussion can improve the seventh-grade students` writing skill in descriptive text. This study was a Classroom Action Research (CAR) in two cycles process starting from making lesson plan, implementation, observation, and reflection. The quantitative data were obtained from the test and questionnaire; the qualitative data were obtained from observation of the teaching and learning process, the students` answers, and the researcher`s field-notes. After the implementation of the plan in cycle 2, the criteria of success were fulfilled. The mean score is 77.2 better than first test, 75.8. It means that the writing descriptive text of the students in the seventh grade students at SMPN 15 Malang improve. Based on these results, it is recommended that teachers apply online group discussion in teaching descriptive text.

Key words: Writing Skill, Descriptive Text, Online Group Discussion

INTRODUCTION

Writing is the most difficult skill to be learned for the foreign language learners. According to Rass (2001:30) writing is a difficult skill for native speakers and non-native speakers; because writers must be able to write it in multiple issues such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabularies and mechanics such as punctuation, spelling, and capitalization. Furthermore, Heasley and Lyons (2006) stated that writing is important not only as a skill for future success, but also as a measure of student learning as a requirement for school advancement. (Rahmadani et al.:1) Sajeevlal (2016:461) added that concentrating only on spoken English is not enough; written competency has also become indispensable for an EFL learner. However, writing as one of the most important skills in studying English as a communicative skill, plays an important role for the students to express their ideas, thoughts and feelings

Based on the observation in the seventh-grade students at SMPN 15 MALANG, most of students complain that they cannot link the sentence into coherent ideas. Most of students know or have ideas to write but they do not know how to put it into the words. Students had difficulties in writing simple descriptive text. It was because they had lack of vocabularies and they were worried to make mistakes in grammar. Besides that, the students also had low reading interest and low

motivation in learning English. In the preliminary research, the writer found several empirical problems in the teaching and learning process in writing descriptive text. Firstly, when the teacher asked students to write descriptive text for several meetings, most of the students did not understand yet the structure of descriptive text (lexicon grammatical and generic structure). Thus, the teachers need to apply a learning model that more attention to empower students by managing learning activities that are student-centered which focus on the student itself.

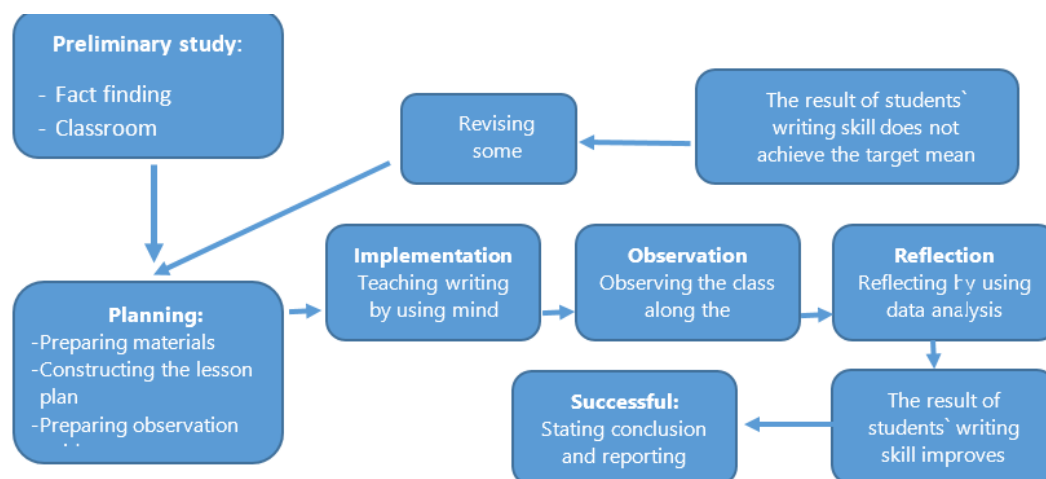
In this study, the researcher modified Online Group Discussion using annotation feature in zoom application, but only in arranging descriptive text. The purpose of this modification is too short in time and make it easy. Firstly, the students will be invited in online discussion 4-5 groups. Each group will be given task from the teacher to make a descriptive text based on the picture given. Here, the group will practice as a small group discussion. After they have finished the text, they will show to other group to get some comments or even questions to other group's work by using annotation feature in zoom application. Then, after they have finished to all groups, they return to their own group and conduct a discussion with their group again to present any comments or question on their own work. The effectiveness of Online Group Discussion in several studies has lead the researcher to consider implementing this teaching techniques to solve the problems encountered by students of SMPN 15 Malang in writing descriptive texts. There are several similarities between the situation of previous studies and the situation of the students of SMPN 15 Malang. The similar condition and situation may support the possible success of implementing Online Group Discussion to solve the problems at SMPN 15 Malang.

The interested thing of conducting research on writing skill because the students of junior high school supposed to be able to write simple descriptive text, but on the contrary, most of students of SMPN 15 Malang, seventh class could not make simple descriptive text and the teacher wanted to facilitate and help students in writing descriptive text. Students need to know how to write descriptive text since descriptive text is used in every single thing, not only in teaching learning process, but also in social aspect such as describing pet, tourism place, or person surrounding them. Therefore, in this study the researcher focuses on writing descriptive text entitled "Improving Students' Writing Skill in Descriptive Texts by Using Online Group Discussion: A Study at SMP 15 Malang". The problem of this research is "How can Online Group Discussion improve the seventh-grade students' writing skill in descriptive texts at SMPN 15 Malang". The objectives of this study is to describe how Online Group Discussion can improve the seventh-grade students' writing skill in descriptive text at SMPN 15 Malang.

METHOD

This research applied classroom action research (CAR) with cycle model to identify ways/procedure increase student's writing skill of descriptive text by using Online Group Discussion method. This classroom action research was conducted in one cycle consisted of four stages of activities: planning of the action, implementation of the action, class observation and evaluation, and data analysis and reflection of the action. Elliot (1991:53) stated that action research constitutes a resolution to the theory-practice issue as it is perceived by the teachers. Therefore, this research was intended to overcome the student's problems in writing descriptive text by using online group discussion method.

The procedures of implementation are (1) Choosing the material of descriptive text that match with basic competence for seventh grade students, (2) Constructing lesson plan for cycle 1 that consisted of three meetings, (3) Distributing the student's worksheet that can be useful to help teacher in the implementation of the action, (4) every meeting the teacher researcher evaluated the teaching and learning process of the students' performance in writing descriptive text in the classroom, (5) The teacher researcher also determined the criteria of the success of the research. The criteria were emphasized on the process and of learning writing skill. There were some of criteria that were used in this research to measure whether the action was successful or not



Planning of the action was the first step of action research. It was done after collecting the data in the preliminary study which uncover the problems faced by students and teacher in teaching writing descriptive text. The researcher arranged the plan to improve the student' writing skill in teaching writing descriptive texts. After finding out the problems faced by students, the researcher planned the action to solve problems. One of the solutions to the problems was implementing online group discussion.

In the implementation of planning of the action. The researcher, which was also the teacher, trained the students in writing class using the lesson plan that has been planned. In the first cycle, the researcher needed three meetings which apply the group discussion method. If the first cycle succeeds and get satisfactory result, the researcher will stop and make a report. But if it is not, then the second cycle will be conducted.

The next is observation, The researcher used three instruments to collect the data. They are (1) observation checklist. The activities in teaching and learning process is observed systematically. The researcher collects all relevant data to the teaching and learning process. The observation focuses on the teacher performance in implementing the lesson and students create writing during teaching and learning process. Moreover, observation checklist is much useful in helping researcher to conclude whether the activeness of the students in writing class improved. (2) field note. Field notes are used to record any important data that are not included in the observation checklist but considered very important such as situation during teaching and learning process. (3) writing test. The researcher gives written test to the students in the end of the cycle. Test is appropriate with the material that is thought to the students. It used to know the student's score in writing skill at the end of cycle.

In this research, the reflection of the implementation of the action in each cycle is collected and correlated each other to get conclusion. The decision is continuing the action in the next cycle when criteria of success in the first cycle is not fulfilled. The criteria of success were based on the researcher observation during teaching and learning activities and also from mean score of students' vocabulary test. In this case, the researcher found the mean score of the students was 60. Some students did not have English in their elementary school, whereas the standard of this school was 65. The minimum standard score is derive from the result of determining the minimum score. There are three points should be considered, they are (1) students' characteristics (intake), (2) material characteristics (complexity) and (3) school capacity.

FINDINGS

Preliminary observation was conducted within the period of the teaching and learning process before the implementation of the classroom action research to collect information regarding students in to the seventh-grade students of SMPN 15 Malang, academic year of 2020/2021. The class consisted of 25 students who were of 13 males and 12 females. Due to the situation of pandemic covid-19, the preliminary observation was held online.

The general condition of English learning in the class was running like it used to be. It seemed that the students could not always keep attention toward the lesson. For instance, on Thursday, the students kept good attention and they were really active in the class. However, on other day, they could not focus with material given by the English teacher, even several students acted like trouble makers. The condition would be different in the next meeting. Sometimes, they seemed very passive in the class. They felt very lazy paying attention on the teacher explanation. However, several students were found focused on the lesson. Regarding students' interest in English learning process, the teacher researcher found that the students' in the class, lack of motivation in learning English, because they felt English was difficult. However, there also some students tried to like English learning process. The students' problem in learning English is become one of the problem, one of the problem was the students had to make writing descriptive text and they had increased their vocabulary.

The following is the student's responses related to the implementation of online group discussion in teaching and learning process especially for descriptive text material. It was based on the questionnaire. There were 10 questions given to the students and they just chose yes or no to the question given. Based on the result of conducting observation, the researcher found that the students had difficulties in writing Descriptive Text. Mostly the students' difficulty was on how to explore their ideas related to the material given by the teacher about Descriptive Text. At that time, the students needed to make description based on the picture given by the teacher. Most of the students got difficulty in the process of exploring their ideas.

Preliminary test was done before the implementation of Online Group Discussion on Tuesday, March 2nd 2021 online using zoom platform. The teacher shared a picture of one of tourism places then the students were asked to make a descriptive text based on the clue given. The researcher gave 55 minutes to complete the preliminary test. There were 25 students taking the preliminary test. The standard criteria for minimum score was 75. The mean score was 64.8 of the students' total score, 1,620. There were 9 students who achieved the standard criteria, and 16 students failed to achieved the criteria. There were only 40% of the students who could achieved

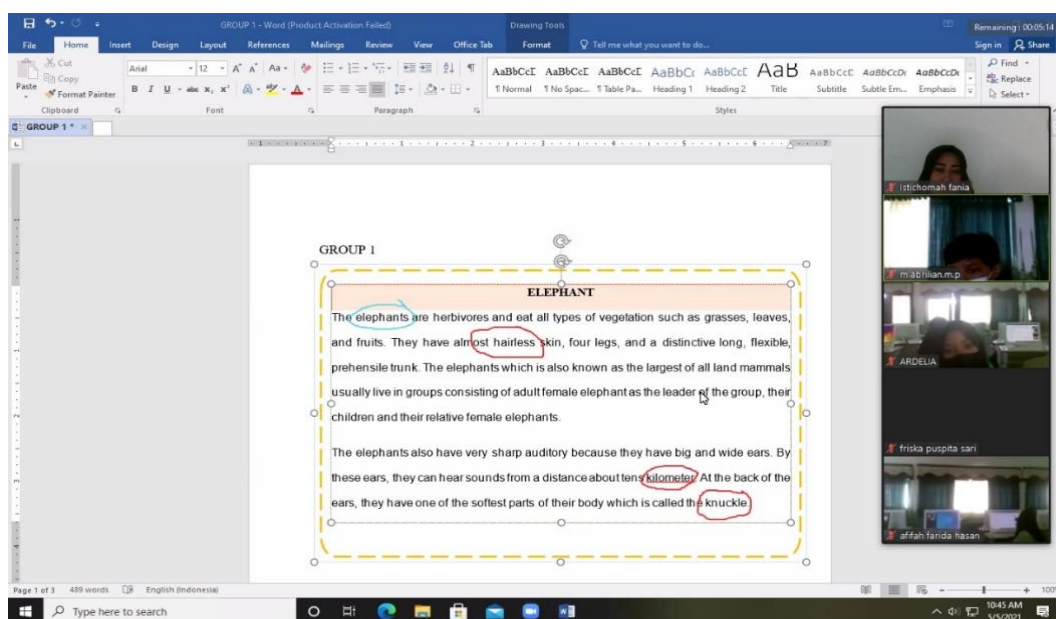
standard minimum score of 75. It meant that only 9 students who reached score above 70. This may show that students have low writing skill. There were several factors that may cause the poor achievement; (1) Students were reluctant even got difficulties to express their ideas in writing so that the students score in writing was low. (2) Students' lack of motivation in their writing so that the activeness in writing class was low, especially in learning online, they lack of spirit in join the class. (3) Students got afraid of making mistake and shy to show their writing. (4) Students tend to be lazy in learning online especially using new application where they have to familiar with

Cycle 1

The first cycle was conducted in March, 8th and 9th 2021 continued with post-test in March, 30th 2021. The cycle consisted of two meetings with 90 minutes duration for each meeting. In this cycle, the writer planned to use three meeting. The first meeting was conducted on March, 8th 2021, the second meeting was on March, 9th 2021, and the last meeting was on March, 15th 2021.

Plans for the instructional process of writing mastery were already designed via online using Group Discussion as the method to deliver the teaching material. The researcher prepared the lesson plan, material and tools or application needed. Due to the online teaching and learning process, the researcher used annotation feature in zoom application to support the teaching and learning process. The researcher had 90 minutes for every meeting, 10 minutes to greet, check the attendance, motivate and state the topic of the discussion or teaching material. The other 70 minutes were planned as teaching and learning activity which was used to review the material, discussed the text given by the researcher, introduced the main activity, practiced writing and discussed the error during the writing activity. Then, the las 5 minutes was used to close the lesson.

In implementing the actions, the researcher worked collaboratively with collaborator. During the actions, the researcher taught based on the lesson plans while there was one collaborator observed the teaching and learning process while completing the checklist and taking notes about anything happened in the online class. Sometimes the collaborator took picture for documentation.



Observation of the action was done by the researcher and the collaborator. There were two kinds of observation during the action. The first was observation that was intended to observe the way of the teacher in implementing online group discussion in the teaching learning process. And the second was the classroom observation that was intended to observe the student's activeness during the teaching learning process. The results showed that most of students were interested and curious when learning writing descriptive text by using online group discussion, the students were actively involved in the teaching and learning process by answering the teacher's questions. The next meeting the teacher researcher was expected to give reward to the students related to their product in making writing descriptive text so the students could be more enthusiastic in joining the teaching and learning process.

The observer also supported the findings by writing some points in the field notes. The field notes covered a brief explanation about the strengths, the weakness, and the suggestions given by the observer. In meeting 1, there were 2 points which were considered as the strengths; (1) the students were enthusiastic with the brainstorming in the pre-Task in which the researcher explain the purpose of the study and delivered some questions related to the material, most of the students actively answered teacher's question orally although their answered did not in the target language. (2) The students were enthusiastic when the researcher showed a video of group discussion taken from the internet (YouTube). Meanwhile, the weakness of this meeting was the researcher explained the material fast and gave a little time for doing the task. Most of the students did not finish yet with the task when the researcher continued to the next activities. This might the students kept silent during the activities because they tried to finish their previous task.

From this cycle, the researcher found the positive results. The first positive result was the increasing of the student's writing skill. The five indicators about the skill of organizing idea, developing the content, using correct grammar, using correct mechanism in writing and using expression were improved as the writer expected. The second, student's motivation also increase and tended to be active in writing class, it happened since group discussion provide visual elements and chance for the students to discuss anything related to the material with other students. Group discussion also can help other passive students to be active since they have to give their own idea or opinion related to the topic of the discussion. Group discussion also provide visual elements of pre-writing activity includes colors, image and iconic which can attract the students and guide the in writing process so that it was easier to be done by the students in a group. Another positive point was the class condition during the writing process was more conducive than before, the teacher can make sure that the students actively involved in the group discussion because they have to mention their name before giving the opinion or idea. It run well and most of students felt happy moreover they can chat with their friend via online for a long time did not meet each other. The students also paid attention to the lesson so that the class became more co-operative.

There were several obstacles faced by the students in the implementation of teaching learning process using group discussion online, they were (1) the students did not have enough vocabulary in exploring their idea into writing. A few students event felt difficult in spelling each vocabulary, to solve the problem teacher researcher needed to provide glossary to help students in understanding some vocabulary related to descriptive text. (2) it was the technical problem, the students sometime could not be reach (out of internet connection) while having discussion. It made

the students cached incomplete information about the material, to solve the problem the teacher researcher needed to share the information in whatsapp group.

NO	NAMES	SCORE	STANDARD ACHIEVEMENT
1.	AFGC	80	Achieved
2.	AWR	68	Failed
3.	ANA	65	Failed
4.	BZIP	80	Achieved
5.	DNZ	85	Achieved
6.	DS	65	Failed
7.	FIFR	75	Achieved
8.	GKF	68	Failed
9.	HMSI	75	Achieved
10.	HP	68	Failed
11.	IPNS	85	Achieved
12.	ISM	75	Achieved
13.	MPDA	80	Achieved
14.	MF	65	Failed
15.	MFH	75	Achieved
16.	MNI	90	Achieved
17.	MRRE	68	Failed
18.	NIP	75	Achieved
19.	RAF	65	Failed
20.	SBJ	75	Achieved
21.	SRK	85	Achieved
22.	SW	75	Achieved
23.	SPJ	75	Achieved
24.	VA	75	Achieved
25.	VI	75	Achieved
	TOTAL	1,895	Number of students achieving standard criteria: 17
	MEAN	75.8	Failed: 8

Cycle 2

In this cycle, the writer planned to use two meeting. The first meeting was conducted on May, 3rd 2021, the second meeting was on May, 4th 2021. The teacher researcher focused on improving student`s skill in terms of grammatical rules and how to develop an idea, especially vocabulary which was related to the descriptive text. The presentation of the findings is in line with the criteria of success that have been determined which cover the student`s involvement during the teaching learning process, the students` writing products, and the student`s responses toward the implementation of Online Group Discussion in improving the student`s writing skill.

In this cycle 2, the researcher did the same activities as like in cycle 1, the researcher only made variation on the teaching material. The teacher used the picture of animal and asked students to describe the picture into written form. Another addition thing in cycle 2, the teacher provide some vocabulary in the form of glossary to help students in exploring their ideas in making description. In meeting 1, there were 3 points which were considered as the strengths; (1) the students were enthusiastic with the brainstorming in the pre-Task. (2) The students were enthusiastic when the researcher showed a video of group discussion taken from the internet (YouTube). (3) the students were helped much with the existence of the glossary vocabulary. Meanwhile, the weakness of this

meeting was (1) the students felt bored to do the same activities, (2) conducting the online class took times because the students join the class in different time. It made the class begun late and it effect on the activities which had been designed in the lesson plan.

From cycle 2, the researcher found the positive results. The first positive result was the increasing of the student's writing skill. The five indicators about the skill of organizing idea, developing the content, using correct grammar, using correct mechanism in writing and using expression were improved as the writer expected. The second, the number of the students who achieved the minimum score was higher. Group discussion also provide visual elements of pre-writing activity includes colors, image and iconic which can attract the students and guide them in writing process so that it was easier to be done by the students in a group. Another positive point was the glossary which was provided by the teacher researcher helped the students to develop the idea in making descriptive text. Over all the teaching and learning process run well, only a few students felt bored with the same activities like in cycle 1.

NO	NAMES	SCORE	STANDARD ACHIEVEMENT
1.	AFGC	80	Achieved
2.	AWR	75	Achieved
3.	ANA	65	Failed
4.	BZIP	85	Achieved
5.	DNZ	85	Achieved
6.	DS	75	Achieved
7.	FIFR	78	Achieved
8.	GKF	75	Achieved
9.	HMSI	78	Achieved
10.	HP	65	Failed
11.	IPNS	90	Achieved
12.	ISM	75	Achieved
13.	MPDA	80	Achieved
14.	MF	75	Achieved
15.	MFH	75	Achieved
16.	MNI	92	Achieved
17.	MRRE	75	Achieved
18.	NIP	78	Achieved
19.	RAF	65	Failed
20.	SBJ	80	Achieved
21.	SRK	88	Achieved
22.	SW	75	Achieved
23.	SPJ	78	Achieved
24.	VA	75	Achieved
25.	VI	78	Achieved
	TOTAL	1.930	Number of students achieving standard criteria : 22
	MEAN	77.2	Failed: 3

After the treatment of group discussion online there are some important points that needed to be noticed. There is significant improvement of the student's skill in organizing ideas, developing ideas, using correct grammar, correct mechanism and choosing appropriate words on their writing after the treatment using group discussion online. The result of the analysis shows that the mean score of the students' cycle-test is higher than the mean score of the student's preliminary-test.

Preliminary Test	Cycle 1 test	The improvement
The mean score was 64.8	The mean score was 75.8	11%

Preliminary Test	Cycle 1 test	Cycle 2 test	The improvement
The mean score was 64.8	The mean score was 75.8	The mean score was 77.2	15%

This improvement is the result of the implementation of group discussion online which able to attract the student`s interest in learning English, especially in writing. The students enjoy discussion and exploring their ideas through their creativity and thinking skill. Most of students of the seventh grade SMPN 15 Malang love to speak and discuss, so they have good discussion in teaching and learning process and it became a favorite activity before writing. These conditions showed that the student`s motivation in writing improves.

CONCLUSION

The result of the research above shows that online group discussion improves the students` writing skill. This approach has some advantages both for the teachers and also for the students. It improves five writing aspects, namely the skill in organizing idea, developing the idea, using the correct grammar and punctuation, and the skill in using expressive sentence. It also improves their motivation in writing and become favorite activity before writing. The teaching and learning writing are no longer boring. From the statements above, it can be concluded that online group discussion improves the seventh-grade student`s writing descriptive texts skill of SMPN 15 Malang.

Generally, the advantages of online group discussion implementation can be seen from the better improvement in some writing aspect such as (1) The skill in organizing idea: online group discussion helps and guide the students to write down the idea keyword in chronological sequence start from identification and description. (2) The skill in developing the idea: by write down the keywords first, the students were helped to develop it into the sentences, paragraph and finally paper with no worries of missed any important thing on their writing because all the group idea needed had been written. (3) The skill in using correct grammar: in descriptive text the tense used is present tense. Online Group Discussion make student more aware in writing the keywords, so when they develop it into paragraph the incorrect grammar can be minimized or even deleted.(4) The skill in using correct mechanism: the use of capital word and punctuation are also important in writing and the students` awareness of those aspect is very low. Online Group Discussion as pre-writing activity help them to be aware of the mechanism. (5) The skill in choosing appropriate words: to avoid the boredom in reading the text, the researcher should choose the appropriate words to be arranged in interesting way and attract the reader. Online Group Discussion guides the students in writing the appropriate keywords needed.

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