

VOLUME 13, NOMOR 1, APRIL 2018

ISSN: 1907 - 2813



dharma pendidikan

Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran



Diterbitkan Oleh :

SEKOLAH TINGGI KEGURUAN DAN ILMU PENDIDIKAN "PGRI" NGANJUK

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COMIC STRIPS AS THE MEDIA TO BUILD WRITING SKILL OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract: This article reports the results of a research dealing with: (1) the students' writing skill which is taught using picture series, (2) the students' writing skill which is taught using comic strips, (3) whether comic strips is more effective than picture series in teaching writing to the seventh grade students of a state islamic junior high school in Nganjuk. The research method was experimental method. The subjects of the research were the seventh grade students. There were two classes taken in this research, one as the experimental class and the another one as the control class. Each class consisted of 30 students. The experimental class was taught using comic strips and the control class was taught using picture series. The data were obtained by conducting a test after providing eighth meetings as the treatment for each class. The researcher analyzed the data using t-test to find whether comic strips was more effective than picture series in teaching writing. Based on the data analysis, the research findings are: (1) the students who were taught using picture series had low writing skill, (2) the students who were taught using comic strips had good writing skill, (3) the comic strips is more effective than picture series to teach writing for the seventh grade students of junior high school. It was showed from the computation of the t-test analysis at the significant level of 5% ($\text{sig} = 0.05$). The calculation showed that t value of 5.825 with the significant level of less than 0.05 is 0.000.

Keyword: Comic Strips; Picture Series; Experimental Research

Introduction

In learning English students should master the four skills that which can help them to communicate using English well, they are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Besides, there are some language components in English like pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, structures, and fluency that support the students to master English. Writing is one of English skills that should be taught integratedly, but it is regarded as the most difficult language skill to be learnt by the students. Murcia (2000: 261) states that writing is the most difficult language skill which requires a higher level of productive language control than the other skills. In fact, the students are not capable to make a good writing. They cannot make a good writing because of poor vocabulary, difficulty in generating their idea, poor grammar, and so on. Comic strips as the one of authentic material can be used as the media as a media in teaching and learning writing on the consideration that it can facilitate the teachers to guide the process of the students'

writing activities. Gonzalez-Espada (2003) defines comic strips as the sequence of panels where the story is presented, usually by dialogue, narration, or purely visual symbols. This media can cover all of indicators in writing. By using comic strips, the students can organize their idea that is related to the topic or content area. The students also try to read the dialogue written in the comic strips and try to get the idea and the meaning of the vocabulary. Besides, the students can get more grammatical structure by reading the sentence and dialogue at the comic strips. After that the students start to write down an essay based on the topic or content area that they choose. It can develop the content and the mechanics of writing.

Fisher & Frey (2004) in her article mentions that comics provide authentic language learning opportunities for all students. The dramatically reduced text of many comics make them manageable and language profitable for even beginning level readers. It is also explained that comics, with their emphasis on engaging content and an expanded use of visual material, are an especially effective medium in the context of brain-based teaching, which emphasizes hands-on, manipulative-based activities. The brain has little time for nonsense. It's a meaning-maker, constantly searching for patterns, connecting bits of new information to old, fashioning wholes from parts and parts from wholes. It's also shamelessly self-centered. The brain makes sense of the world in terms of personal learner needs (Amstrong, 2014: 2).

The researcher considers that the use of comic strips as an appropriate strategy is to develop the students' writing skill in producing good descriptive texts. Comic strips assist the students in generating ideas and providing words for their writing. Djwandono (1999: 73) and Brown (2004: 226-228) also explain the relationship between visual media and test of writing composition. They state that one of the effective ways in testing writing skill is by assigning the students to write a composition based on ideas they gather from pictures. Comic strips is appropriate for the writing assesment based on this characteristic because they are series of pictures completed by some dialoges and story in which the students are expected to gain the ideas easily from the chronological order of the story. The students are also able to practice grammatical rules through this media by

changing direct speech in the speech balloon into indirect speech. This kind of assessment is essential in developing the students' writing skill (Brown, 2004: 226).

The researcher used comic strips as the media in teaching writing because comic strips are easy access, providing grammatical structure, as a motivating literary text structure, and can help the students to reach their language ideas. On the other hand, there are some advantages of using comic strips, the teacher must use potential motivation from the comic book and comic strips, the use of comic strips make the students lazier to learn materials that do not use picture, and using comic strips sometimes make the students confused about the language used.

Based on the previous review of theories and rationale, the hypothesis can be formulated that using comic strips in teaching learning of writing is more effective than using picture series.

Research Methodology

The research was conducted in a state Islamic junior high school (MTsN) in Nganjuk. This school was chosen because the school had good facilities like LCD, multimedia room which could support the media that was used in conducting the research. Another reason was that comic strips has never been applied in this school. That was known by the researcher after conducting the preliminary observation and interviewing some teachers there.

The technique was used in this research was experiment research. The researcher used this technique because this research had purpose to know whether comic strips is more effective than picture series in teaching writing to the seventh grade students of a state Islamic junior high school in Nganjuk. Sugiyono (2008: 107) states that in an experimental research there is a treatment while in naturalistic research there is not. So, the experimental method can be defined as a research used to find the influence of particular treatment towards the another one in a controlled condition.

This research is designed to describe and to prove the influence of comic strips to the students' writing skill. The independent variable of this research is teaching media (X). This teaching media are the factor of this research which are manipulated to know the effect and the relationship to the phenomenon that is

investigated. The teaching media which are used in this reserach is comic strips and picture series. These two different media are appliedd differently for the groups of the students. In this case, comic strips is applied in experimental class and piture series is applied in control class. While the students' writing skill is dependnt variable (Y).

The population of this study is the seventh grade students of an islamic state junior high school in Nganjuk. It has 306 students that are devided into seven regular classes (AB, C, D, E, F, G), three excellent classes, and one accelerated class. Each class consists of 30 students except the excellent program. The researcher takes the regular classes as the population in this research because the regular classes are homogenous. There is no placement test for the students to group the students in a particular class based on their test score.

The sample was taken by using cluster random sampling because the population was considered as groups. In this case, class was considered as unit of group, and seven classes are homogenous. By using cluster random sampling, two classes were taken as sample, those were VII D and VII A, then those two classes were randomly chosen as an experimental class (VII D) and a control class (VII A). Each class was divided into two groups, students who had high level of intelligence and students who had low level of intelligence. Class VII D was taught by using comic strips and class VII A was taught by using picture series.

The data were collected by conducting test. Before the instrument used in the real test, there was a try out on the instrument. The aim of the conducting the try-out test was to get information dealing with the readability of the test. To score the students' written test, the researcher used analytical scoring rubric. Classroom evaluation of learning is best served through analytical scoring, in which as many as five major elements of writing are scored. The five categories are: Content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. To anaylze the data in this research, the researcher used t-test to analyze the data. Here the formula of t-test:

$$t = \frac{Md}{\sqrt{\frac{\sum x^2 d}{N(N-1)}}}$$

Result and Discussion

Based on the data of pre-test and post-test from control and experimental class, it was got that the average score of control and experimental class was between 5-50 with the average of pre-test of experimental class was 29.14 dan the control class was 29.43. the result of the post-test of experimental class after getting treatment using comic strips was between 60-95 with the lowest score was 60 and the highest score was 95. The average of of post-test score of control class after getting treatment using picture series was between 50-85 with the lowest score was 50 and the highest score was 85. The average of of the control class score was 72.

Based on the computation of the t-test, it can be seen that the average of post-test score with the equal variances assumed was 5.82 with significant degree of 0.000. Because the significance result is $0.000 < 0.05$ so the H_a is accepted. So it can be concluded that the use of comic strips is more effective than using picture series as the media to teach writing.

Picture series are provided without any dialogue and sentence. They are the illustration of three or nine pictures that can be used as two dimensional representation of person, place or thing presented in logical or continuous actions, situations, and thoughts in a row coming one after another and can be used in teaching and learning process from kindergarten to adults. By using picture series the students cannot learn more about the language use on their writing text. They just listen to their teacher's explanation about it and make their own example of the sentences. Ibnue in his article (2011) states that the use of picture series in teaching and learning process is not interesting to pupils because there are no sentences and dialogues to read. So the students cannot explore their language skill more. It makes the students have limited knowledge about the written language and the use of native language. Besides, the students also have low interest in picture series because it is not exciting and sometimes the story of picture series is not clear for them so they feel confused about it. Teachers that use picture series as the media in teaching writing must consider about the clarity of the picture they use because there is no other can be explored by the students except the picture itself. Brown and Lewis (1964: 445) explain that there are some

points which must be considered in using picture series as the media in teaching and learning process, one of them is whether the picture series are sufficiently large and simple to be seen clearly by the students or no. It is very important thing to be attended by the teachers before providing the picture series in the classroom. The students must understand the picture easily so the teacher must find the simple one to make the students get the idea from the picture series. Because not all of the picture series can be provided as clear as possible. The students need to analyze the picture series, the characters and the activities done by the characters because there is no sentence can be read as the information for the students and teacher.

The use of comic strips in teaching writing guides the students in generating the ideas, collecting data that will be written, and finishing the text. The use of comic strips leads the students to product a good writing text by following some stages. Using comic strips makes the students interested in teaching and learning process because comic strips are visual graphic so that the students can explore it easier. Besides, comic strips engage through thinking, creating, and writing, it is a perfect avenue for writing dialogue and incites students with low interest in writing. In teaching and learning process using comic strips, the students can organize the idea in writing the story through story telling and story boarding. The students are more enthusiastic in teaching and learning process using comic strips because they can read the text (dialogue, prolog) and they can describe the characters by using the picture. Comic strips can also be used to understand the linguistics because language is very essential in communicating with the others especially in writing process. Cohn (2012: 2) states that believing “comics” are object of inquiry would be akin to linguistist focusing on “novels” as an opposed to studying English, the language that novels are witten in. Analogously, the sequential images used in comics constitute their own “visual language” (details of which will be expanded on at length further on). Thus, the behavioral domains of writing (written/ vernal language) and drawing (visual language) should be the object of linguistic inquiry, stripping away the social categories like “comics,” graphic novels,” manga,” etc. By using comic strips the students also can learn the language use of their writing text. The

students can improve their knowledge about the use of some expression in native language. Davis (2006) mentions the variety of skills which can be taught using comic strips such as practicing describing characters using adjectives, learning synonyms and antonyms to expand vocabulary, practicing writing direct speech, practicing formation of different verb tense, and introducing paralinguistic lexical items without a written correlate. Davis states that the use of comic strips can make the students understand about the vocabulary they use since the picture and the dialogue cooperate with each other meaning that most of the expression shown by the characters who reflect the content of the dialogue. Besides, the students can get advantage by predicting the words used in the comic strips through the picture. Davis adds that the use of comic strips also gives contribution to mechanics aspect especially to spelling and punctuation.

Pitoy (2012) explains that the stories of comic strips can be used as the communicative source for the language exposure. The exposure itself can help the students understanding the particular information in reading activity. It implies that the use of comic strips can make the students to understand the story of comic strips well and they can deliver the story of it to their writing. Olson (2007: 10-11) stressed that comic strips were beneficial “because they provide brief conversations in English with pictures that help convey the meaning of the words”. For a visual learner, especially one who may be below grade level in reading, or a kinesthetic learner who resists reading, the pictures in a comic strip reinforcing the concepts could potentially make the content more accessible. Based on the statement, it can be concluded that comic strips are more effective than picture series to teach writing skill.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that in general comic strips is effective media to teach writing for the seventh grade students of junior school. This can be seen from the findings of this research that students taught by using comic strips are able to produce better writing skill than those taught by using picture series.

As the recommendation teacher should use comic strips to teach writing to improve the students’ writing skill. Second, the use of comic strips can encourage

the teacher to develop their creativity to improve the quality of teaching and learning process in using the various kinds of teaching media. Third, students should encourage themselves and be aware that they have to be more active in their involvement in the teaching learning process. Fourth, students must have great motivation in learning English especially in improving their writing skill.

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