

IMPROVING STUDENTS' DESCRIPTIVE TEXT WRITING ACHIEVEMENT BY USING ERROR CORRECTION FEEDBACK

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***Abstract :** Writing skill is a language skill that is very important to learn for students and considered as a complex and difficult subject. It is because writing forces students to think about the topic, develop the topic, and arrange ideas into a good composition. This research was intended to improve the seventh-A grade students' descriptive text writing achievement at MTs Zahrotul Islam Dringu Probolinggo by using error correction feedback. Therefore, classroom action research was conducted. In the writing achievement test cycle 1, the students who got score ≥ 70 were 20 students or 80% and the students who got score under 70 were 5 students or 20%. In conclusion, the use of error correction feedback could improve the seventh-A grade students' descriptive text writing achievement at MTs Zahrotul Islam Dringu Probolinggo.*

***Key Words :** error, correction, feedback, writing, achievement.*

INTRODUCTION

Language has been a means of communication since people were born. They use language in order to express their ideas, thoughts, and desires that are communicated in spoken or in written forms. They can also convey some information through language. One of the important languages in the world is English. English as an international language becomes a bridge of communication among people all over the world. In this globalization era, English plays an important role in many aspects of life. It can be used to develop education, politics, technology, science, information, overseas trade, tourism industry, and knowledge. In Indonesia, English is learned as a foreign language. It has been widely taught in schools, starting from the Elementary Schools (as a local content subject) and Junior and Senior High Schools (as a compulsory subject) up to universities.

Writing skill is a language skill that is very important to learn for students and considered as a complex and difficult subject. Learning to write in either a first or second language is one of the most difficult tasks a learner encounters and one that few people can be said to fully master (Richards, 1990:100). It is because writing forces students to think about the topic, develop the topic, and arrange ideas into a good composition.

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In order to master writing skill well, learners should learn the rules of language or to know how they work. In this case, it is obviously clear that learners cannot avoid making considerable errors. Errors always become common problems for learners in learning a new language at the beginning. Making errors is an inevitable part of the language learning process because learners cannot learn language without first systematically committing errors (Dulay *et al*, 1982:138). Hence, it can be concluded that almost all learners absolutely make errors when they are learning English because it is very difficult to separate errors in the process of learning to write in English. Besides, errors can occur as the result of the interference from the habit of the first language (Corder, 1981:73). It means that errors in learning language are caused by the interference of the learners' mother tongue or the use of their first language.

On August, 1st 2012, the researcher conducted preliminary study at MTs Zahrotul Islam Dringu Probolinggo which was done by interviewing the English teacher and observing the classroom. This preliminary activity was intended to get some information about the English teaching-learning process. By interviewing the English teacher and observing the classroom, it was found that most of the seventh grade students had low ability in writing. There were 67% out of all students in seventh-A class who got 70 points or higher. The English teacher explained that the students had difficulties in generating ideas, using grammatical structures, and expanding their vocabularies when they were asked to compose a good writing. The most common difficulty they faced was especially in grammar. The students were encouraged to express their ideas on paper without worrying much about the grammatical structures. As a result, they wrote almost no error-free sentences and only concerned on how to finish their writing instead of making a good writing.

The test results of writing for the seventh grade students were below the mastery score level used in the school that was 70. The test results were taken from the students' writing scores. There were 67% of all students in seventh-A class who got 70 points or higher. In addition, most students in this class were not actively involved in the teaching learning process of writing. The students' participation was 68%. It could be concluded that the students' participation did not achieve the standard expectation of school regulation that was 75%.

From the problems above, there was one alternative solution by conducting a classroom action research. The alternative solution in this research was error correction feedback.

Dealing with the students' errors, correction is considered important to the improvement of the students' writing. Cathcart and Olsen (1976) as quoted in Brown (2000:237) found that the students in the classroom generally want and expect errors to be corrected. The correction is aimed at making them aware of which forms are incorrect and to give them the necessary practice to change their writing into the correct one.

Hornby (2000:487) states that feedback is defined as an advice, criticism, or information about how good or useful something. According to Keh (1990:294), feedback is fundamental element of a process approach to writing which can be defined as input from a reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to the writer for revision. Dulay (1982:34) also adds that feedback generally refers to the listener's or reader's response given to the learners' speech or writing.

In this research, the type of feedback given was written feedback in the form of explicit error correction feedback focusing on the errors of the students' writing covering errors in grammar, vocabulary, mechanic, organization, and content. In facing students' error in writing, the teacher corrected their errors by pointing out the errors and offering the correct forms (Gray, 2004).

There were some procedures of giving feedback on the students' writing; first, asking the students to write a descriptive text based on the topic given by the teacher, second, correcting the students' errors based on five aspects of writing, third, writing feedback on the students' errors, fourth, asking the students to rewrite the descriptive text based on the correction from the teacher, and fifth, asking the students to submit the text to the teacher.

Considering the problem of the students in learning English writing skill, the findings of previous researchers were important to be used as the reference. The first research was conducted by Natalia (2008). She found that Linguistic Error Correction Could Improve the Second Grade Students' Writing Paragraph Achievement at SMP 7 Jember in the 2007/2008 Academic Year. Another research was done by Setyaningsih (2012). She found that facilitative error correction feedback could improve the eleventh

grade students' writing skill of MA Nurul Huda Medini Gajah Demak in 2011/2012 academic year. Naidu (2007) also found that The Use of Written Feedback and Conferencing could improve the students' writing.

Based on the literature review above, the objective of this research was to know how the use of error correction feedback can improve the seventh-A grade students' descriptive text writing achievement and students' participation in the teaching and learning process of writing at MTs Zahrotul Islam Dringu Probolinggo.

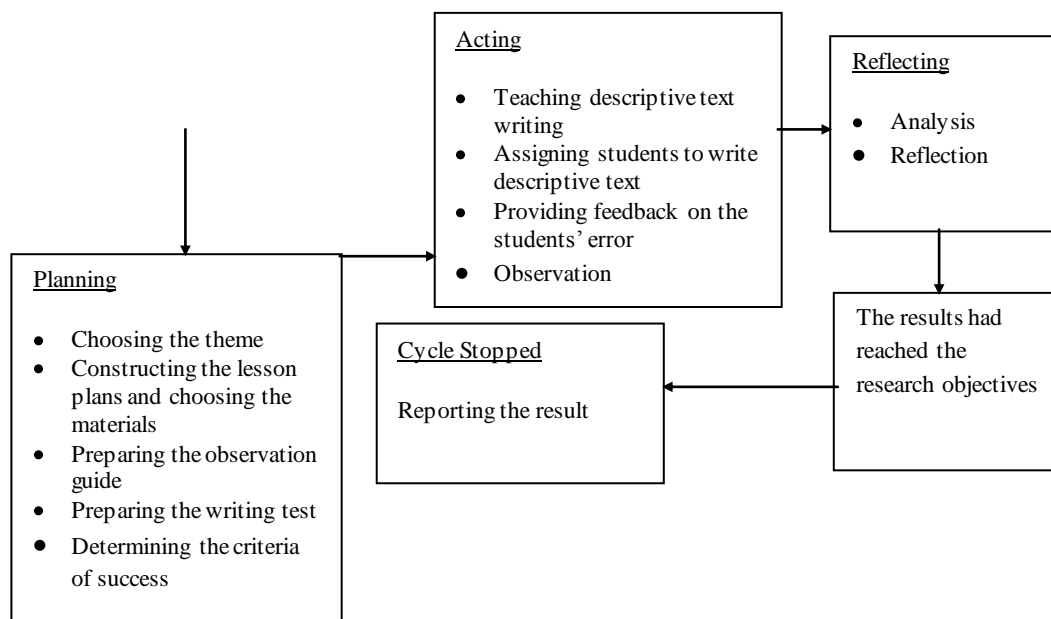
RESEARCH DESIGN

This research was intended to improve the seventh-A grade students' descriptive text writing achievement at MTs Zahrotul Islam Dringu Probolinggo by using error correction feedback. Therefore, classroom action research was conducted. According to McMillan (1992:44), classroom action research is a type of applied research with the purpose of solving a specific classroom problem or making decision at a single local site. It means that the classroom action research is intended to improve the quality of the teaching learning process.

This research was done collaboratively with the English teacher who taught the seventh grade students of MTs Zahrotul Islam Dringu Probolinggo. The collaboration focused on identifying and defining the research problem, planning the action, carrying out the action of the research, class observation, and doing evaluation and reflection. According to Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) as quoted in Johannes (2005:60), the actions of this research are conducted by using the cycle model which consists of four stages of activities. They are: (1) planning the action, (2) implementing the action, (3) observing and evaluating, and (4) analyzing the data and reflecting the action (Elliot, 1991:70). This research was set and carried out in one cycle. If the students' scores in cycle one did not fulfill the standard score requirement of this study, that was 70, the actions were continued to cycle two. The design of this classroom action research is illustrated in the following diagram.

Preliminary Study

- Interviewing the English teacher
- Problem identification
- Determining action to solve the problem



Picture 1. The Design of the Classroom Action Research (*Adapted from Lewin, in Elliot, 1991: 70*)

Based on the research design above, the detail activities of the research used the following procedures. First, the researcher undertook the preliminary study to identify the problems faced by the seventh grade students and the teacher in the process of teaching and learning writing skill. Second, the researcher determined the problem which was to be solved by doing a classroom action research. Third, the researcher Planned the action (constructing the lesson plans and choosing materials for cycle one) and constructed a writing test. Fourth, the English teacher implemented the actions in cycle one done. Fifth, the researcher observed the classroom to record the students' active performance. The research respondents administered the writing test after implementing the actions in cycle one. Sixth, the English teacher and researcher analyzed the result of the writing achievement test and observation. Seventh, the English teacher and researcher evaluated and reflected the results of the observation and writing test in cycle one. The actions were continued to cycle two if the results in cycle one did not reach the target. If the actions in cycle one reached the target, the next cycle was stopped.

In this research, purposive method was used to determine the research area (Paton, 1990:169) and MTs Zahrotul Islam Dringu Probolinggo was chosen as the area

to conduct the research. The subjects of the research were the seventh-A grade students of MTs Zahrotul Islam Dringu Probolinggo in the 2012/2013 academic year.

In this research, the primary data were collected from the writing test and the supporting data were collected from the observation. Writing test is used to measure the students' writing achievement. There are four types of test namely proficiency test, achievement test, diagnostic test and placement test (Hughes, 2003:11). In this research, achievement test was used because it was needed to measure the seventh grade student's writing achievement after they were taught writing descriptive text. Achievement test is directly related to language course (Hughes, 2003:13)). The purpose is to establish how successful individual or group students are, or the courses themselves have been achieving the teaching objectives.

There are two forms of test: subjective test and objective test (Heaton, 1988:25). In subjective test, students must think of what to write and express their ideas, while, in objective test, they have to weigh up carefully all the alternatives and select the best one. Therefore, based on Heaton's statement, subjective test was used in this research because the students were asked to make an essay in the form of descriptive text.

A good test must fulfill two requirements. They are validity and reliability (Hughes, 2003:26). A valid test should measure accurately what is supposed to measure while reliability refers to the test results consistency (Heaton, 1984:159; Hughes, 1996:29). The validity of the test can be classified into content validity, criterion related validity, construct validity, and face validity. In this research, the content validity was used because the materials for teaching and learning activities were based on the KTSP 2006 for Junior High School and MTs (Permendiknas No.22 tahun 2006).

Dealing with the reliability of the test, this research applied inter-rater reliability. The researcher involved the English teacher in scoring the test by giving the copy of students' writing test.

Concerning with the scoring system, analytical scoring method was used in this research. The analytical scoring method is a method of the scoring which requires a separate score of a number of aspects of a task (Hughes, 1989:100). There are five aspects that are scored analytically: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanic.

The observation was needed to know about the students' participation in the writing activities during the teaching process. A checklist was used to observe the students' participation during the teaching learning process. The indicators of students' participation could be seen from the following occurrences. First, the students paid attention to the lesson. Second, the students asked questions related to the descriptive text. Third, the students answered the questions related to the descriptive text. Fourth, the students participated in doing the writing exercises given individually. The students were categorized active if at least three indicators were fulfilled.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of observation in the first meeting, there were 19 out of 25 students (76%) who were actively involved in the teaching and learning process. There were 23 students who paid attention to the lesson, 15 students who asked questions related to the descriptive text, 6 students who answered the questions related to the descriptive text, and 25 students participated in doing the writing exercises given individually. In the second meeting, there were 21 out of 25 students (84%) who were actively involved in the teaching and learning process. There were 24 students who paid attention to the lesson, 14 students who asked questions related to the descriptive text, 10 students who answered the questions related to the descriptive text, and 25 students participated in doing the writing exercises given individually. So, the average result of the students' activeness was 80%. It means that the target requirement of process evaluation, that is, at least 75% of the students actively participated in teaching learning process of descriptive text was fulfilled.

Feedback on the students' works was given in each meeting after the students had submitted the works. The students' works were aimed at knowing the students' improvement in writing. In the first meeting, the students were asked to write a descriptive text about "Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono." In the second meeting, they were asked to write a descriptive text about "someone you like most in your school." They were given some guided questions for each exercise in order to make them easy in writing the descriptive text.

Here are some examples of errors on students' works in the first meeting and the feedback.

1. Present tense errors
 - He have two children (He has two children)
2. Vocabulary
 - He is life in Istana Negara (He lives in Istana Negara)
3. Punctuation
 - He comes from pacitan city he speaks Indonesian language (He comes from pacitan city. He speaks Indonesian language)
4. Capitalization
 - susilo bambang yudhoyono is the president of Indonesia (Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is the president of Indonesia)
5. Spelling
 - His riligion Islam (His religion is Islam)

Here are some examples of errors on students' works in the second meeting and the feedback.

1. Present tense errors
 - She live in dringu (She lives in Dringu)
2. Spelling
 - Wen she teach, she is patient (When she teaches, she is patient)

In this research, the writing test of cycle 1 was followed by 25 students. From the result of writing test, it could be reported that the students had achieved the standard mean score required by the school that was 70. The mean score of the students could improve from 67.6 in previous writing test to 73.44. The writing test of cycle 1 was followed by 25 students. From the test, it was found that the students who got score ≥ 70 were 20 students or 80% and the students who got score under 70 were 5 students or 20%. It showed that the writing achievement test of the cycle 1 had fulfilled the minimum score requirement that was 70% of all students reached 70 points or higher.

Based on the results of observation in the first meeting, there were 19 out of 25 students (76%) who were actively involved in the teaching and learning process. There were 23 students who paid attention to the lesson, 15 students who asked questions related to the descriptive text, 6 students who answered the questions related to the descriptive text, and 25 students participated in doing the writing exercises given individually. In the second meeting, there were 21 out of 25 students (84%) who were

actively involved in the teaching and learning process. There were 24 students who paid attention to the lesson, 14 students who asked questions related to the descriptive text, 10 students who answered the questions related to the descriptive text, and 25 students participated in doing the writing exercises given individually. So, the average result of the students' activeness was 80%. It means that the target requirement of process evaluation, that is, at least 75% of the students actively participated in teaching learning process of descriptive text was fulfilled.

From the writing test, it was shown that the results of the students' writing achievement test had improved from the previous score of the students' writing test to the cycle 1. It could be shown from their previous mean score of writing test that improved from 67.6 in the previous writing to 73.44 in cycle 1. In the writing achievement test cycle 1, the students who got score ≥ 70 were 20 students or 80% and the students who got score under 70 were 5 students or 20%. It showed that the writing achievement test of the cycle 1 had fulfilled the minimum score requirement that was 70%. It proved that they had achieved and reached the target of mean score. Therefore, the second cycle was not conducted.

The success of this research supported the previous research done by Dian Natalia (2008). She found that Linguistic Error Correction Could Improve the Second Grade Students' Writing Paragraph Achievement at SMP 7 Jember in the 2007/2008 Academic Year. Another research was done by Setyaningsih (2012). She found that facilitative error correction feedback could improve the eleventh grade students' writing skill of MA Nurul Huda Medini Gajah Demak in 2011/2012 academic year. Naidu (2007) also found that The Use of Written Feedback and Conferencing could improve the students' writing.

Based on the findings above, it can be concluded that: first, the use of error correction feedback can improve the seventh-A grade students' descriptive text writing achievement at MTs Zahrotul Islam Dringu Probolinggo in the 2012/ 2013. Second, the use of error correction feedback can improve the seventh-A grade students' participation in the teaching and learning process of writing at MTs Zahrotul Islam Dringu Probolinggo in the 2012/2013 academic year.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results of writing test after the actions were given in one cycle, it could be concluded that the use of error correction feedback could improve the seventh-A grade students' descriptive text writing achievement at MTs Zahrotul Islam Dringu Probolinggo in the 2012/2013 academic year. The improvement could be seen from the mean score of the students' writing test which increased from 67,6% in the students' previous writing to 73.44% in Cycle I. Therefore, the target criteria, 75% of the students who got the score ≥ 70 , were fulfilled. Besides, the result of the observation increased from 68%, before this research was conducted, to 76% in the first meeting and 84% in the second meeting of the cycle 1 from the total students who were actively participated in the teaching writing process. Therefore, the target criteria, at least 75% of the students actively participated in teaching learning process of descriptive text, were fulfilled.

Meanwhile, referring to the above conclusion, the research results are expected to provide some feedback to the following people. First, Based on the result, it is suggested that the English teachers use grammatical error correction feedback as an alternative way in teaching writing to improve the students' descriptive text writing achievement, to increase the quality of teaching writing and to make the process of teaching writing run more interesting. Second, by using error correction feedback, the students are expected to practice writing a lot by paying attention to the errors they make, especially errors in five aspects of writing. Third, the result of this research is hoped to give information and reference to future researchers who have the same problems with the teaching of writing, for example: the use of error correction feedback to improve students' writing achievement by using different genre and level of students.

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