ASSESSING DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPH WRITING ABILITY OF THE EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS OF SMPN 2 SUKAWATI THROUGH GUIDED QUESTION AND ANSWER IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2018/2019

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ABSTRACT

The researchers was interested in undertaking the study which dealt with assessing descriptive paragraph writing ability of the eighth grade students of SMPN 2 Sukawati through guided question and answer in academic year 2018/2019. It was aimed at figuring out the achievement of the eighth grade students' descriptive paragraph writing ability at SMPN 2 Sukawati in academic year 2018/2019 which was assessed through guided question and answer. The study was designed in the form of ex-post facto research. There were 50 eighth grade students of SMPN 2 Sukawati in academic year 2018/2019 who were chosen by using random sampling technique with lottery system as the research samples. The data were collected by administering guided question and answer test as the research instrument. The obtained data had been analyzed by using norm reference measure of five standard values. The results of the data analysis showed that (1) 1 or 2% of 50 samples got excellent achievement of descriptive paragraph writing ability, (2) 18 or 36% of 50 samples got good achievement, (3) 15 or 30% of samples got sufficient achievement, (4) 9 or 18% of samples got insufficient achievement, (5) 7 or 14% got poor achievement. It could be concluded that there were 68% of the samples were successful and there were 32% of the samples were unsuccessful in writing descriptive paragraph which was assessed by guided question and answer.

Keywords: *assessing, descriptive paragraph writing ability and guided question and answer.*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a process of arranging and organizing someone's thought. It is a productive skill because it purposes to communicate the language, share ideas, information, persuade and convince people in written form. Writers have to know more about rules and components in writing so that the writers can make a good writing that appropriate with the rules. Writers need hard thinking to

produce ideas, putting ideas into words, then putting words into sentences, and putting sentences into paragraphs within writing process to create a good writing.

Writers need to experience writing process to yield a great writing product. According to Oshima and Hogue (2007:15), writing is never a one-step action; it is an ongoing creative act. The process of writing has roughly four steps. That contains choosing a topic,

organizing, writing a rough draft, and polishing. The first step, writers choose a topic and collect ideas to explain the topic. The second step, writers need to organize the ideas into a simple outline. The third step, writers write a rough draft by using the outline that already made as guidance. The last step, writers need to polish what they have written. Polishing is most successful if it is done in two steps: editing it and then making revisions.

Amongst various writing product, paragraph is the important basic for young English learners. There are many kinds of paragraph that is learnt by the students, one of which is descriptive paragraph. Descriptive paragraph can be defined as the paragraph which expresses or describes place, thing and person in detail, so the readers can easily imagine the description. Langan (2008:92) states that when describing something or someone, writers give the readers a picture in words. It means that the description of the object can make the readers are able to imagine the object from the words. In short, it is like painting with the words. Meanwhile, the main purpose is to create an image in readers' minds. Zemach and Rumisek (2005:25) argue that a descriptive paragraph explains how someone or something looks or feels. It means that the students can describe someone or something by seeing it. Furthermore, in writing descriptive paragraph, the students must be able to describe something by using many vocabularies and ideas then arrange the sentences into a good paragraph so that the reader can catch the idea of the paragraph.

In SMPN 2 Sukawati, in fact, the researchers found that the teacher monotonously asked the students to make a descriptive paragraph without clear instruction. It could not stimulate the students ideas in writing and the students were strongly confused of what they have to write first. Moreover, the difficulties of the students in writing a paragraph originally came from the weakness of the students to produce ideas which used to start the paragraph. Accordingly, the students tend to be bored and less interested when writing implemented. As a matter of fact, to decrease the problem, there are several things that the teacher can do. The teacher must maintain the confidence and motivation of the students during teaching and learning process. Moreover, teacher must give more vocabularies to enhance the students' vocabulary storage. When the students master more vocabulary, it will be easier for them to develop their ideas.

Actually, writing has a tight relation with assessment. Assessing writing is central to the process of effective teaching and learning of writing (Jones, 2002). When done in a robust manner, writing assessment can support teaching, both conceptually and practically. According to Brown (2004:218), assessment of writing is not a simple task; it means that the teacher must know well how to assess it. When the teacher assesses the students' writing ability, he or she needs providing clear objective or criterion towards students. In other words, the teacher should explain clearly about the criterion that the teacher uses to assess the students' work before teaching and learning process. Thus, the

students will definitely comprehend what they should do to create satisfying writing product. Moreover, the process of assessing can take from teaching learning process; the assessment of the students can be the test, homework, students' activities in the classroom, students' attitude and so on. The assessment is taken from teaching learning process in the classroom. It means that the students will get score from their participation in the classroom when discussing and answering the question.

In this study, the researchers decided to use guided question and answer to assess the writing ability of the eighth grade students of SMPN 2 Sukawati because this test could stimulate the students' ideas in writing descriptive paragraph. In addition, the answer of the questions would be used as the guidance for students to construct a good descriptive paragraph. It made the students easier to develop and arrange their ideas into a paragraph form. Therefore, in this present study, the instrument that was used by the researchers was guided question and answer. There were ten questions provided by the researchers and the students had to answer the questions then the answers had been used in constructing a descriptive paragraph. The researchers also used scoring rubric to score the students' writing ability in descriptive paragraph.

Hence, based on the aforementioned explanation, the researchers were interested in assessing descriptive paragraph writing ability of the eighth grade students of SMPN 2

Sukawati through guided question and answer in academic year 2018/2019.

RESEARCH METHOD

Since the study was aimed at assessing the students' writing ability, the type of research design that was conducted was *ex post facto* research. According to Ary et al. (2010:332), the designation *ex post facto*, from Latin for "after the fact," indicates that *ex post facto* research is conducted after variation in the variable of interest has already been determined in the natural course of events. The present study was carried out at the eighth grade students of SMPN 2 Sukawati in academic year 2018/2019. There were ten classes in which the total numbers of the students were 340 students who were regarded as the population of this study.

The samples of the study were 50 samples altogether. They were regarded as representative enough in assessing descriptive paragraph writing ability through guided question and answer by random sampling technique with lottery system. According to Cohen et al. (2007:110), in random sampling, each member of the population under study has an equal chance for being selected as the samples and the probability of each member of the population for being selected is unaffected by the selection of other members of the population. In other words, random sampling method suggested that all populations have the same independent probability to be chosen and included as the samples of the study.

Additionally, the instrument of this study was in the form of guided question and answer test. In guided

question and answer the test, the researchers prepared ten questions that must be answered by the students in which the topic was about person especially best friend. Then the answer of the questions would guide the students to construct a good descriptive paragraph. The test provided clear instruction which was the students have to write a descriptive paragraph that consisted of 6-12 sentences and the generic structures (identification, description and conclusion). To score the students' descriptive paragraph writing ability, the researchers used a scoring rubric that proposed by Oshima and Hogue (2007:196).

It has been well known that validity and reliability are two necessary considerations of a good research instrument. As the research instrument, the test should be valid and reliable. In making a valid instrument, the researchers highlighted three types of validity: face validity, content validity, and construct validity. The face validity was maintained based on the physical appearance or the typing format which should give an impression of being right or good. The content validity was maintained by designing the test which suited the teaching materials. The construct validity was maintained by constructing the test in the form of guided question and answer test which involved format of the paragraph, punctuation and mechanic, organization, and grammar and sentence structure. The last but not the least, the researchers applied scoring rubric in scoring the students' writing product in the attempt to create a reliable test.

After making a valid and reliable test, it was administered to the samples to gather the research data. In writing descriptive paragraph by guided question and answer test, the students were given time allotment of 40 minutes. The obtained data were analyzed by using norm-reference measure of five standard values which respectively showed excellent, good, sufficient, insufficient and poor achievement in writing a descriptive paragraph.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

The data in this study were collected in the forms of raw scores showing the achievement of descriptive paragraph writing ability which was assessed through guided question and answer. After getting the raw scores (x) of the students' writing ability in descriptive paragraph then the researchers continued to find out the mean scores (M). Mean score (M) was obtained by counting up the raw scores (x) then dividing by the number of samples (N). Furthermore, the formula that was used for getting the result of the mean scores as follows:

$$M = \frac{\sum x}{N} = \frac{3616}{50} = 72.32$$

After finding out the mean scores (M) of this study then it continued to find the result of standard deviation (SD). The standard deviation was another way of showing the spread of scores. The computation of the standard deviation (SD) was done as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} SD &= \sqrt{\frac{\sum D^2}{N}} \\ &= \sqrt{\frac{1743.88}{50}} \end{aligned}$$

$$= \sqrt{34.8776}$$

$$= 5.91$$

From the calculation of the mean score and standard deviation of the scores, it showed the achievement of descriptive paragraph writing ability of the samples. Moreover, the result of the

mean score was 72.32 and the standard deviation was 5.91. Afterwards, finding out the computed standard scores by using norm-reference to ensure the five standard values that showed excellent, good, sufficient, insufficient, and poor achievement of descriptive paragraph writing ability. They could be computed as follows:

1. A/Excellent Achievement $= \geq M + 1.5 \text{ SD}$
 $= \geq 72.32 + 1.5 (5.91)$
 $= \geq 72.32 + 8.86$
 $= \geq 81.18$
 So A or excellent achievement was ≥ 81.18
2. B/Good Achievement $= M + 0.5 \text{ SD}$
 $= 72.32 + 0.5 (5.91)$
 $= 72.32 + 2.95$
 $= 75.27$
 So B or good achievement was in a range of $\geq 75.27 < 81.18$
3. C/Sufficient Achievement $= M - 0.5 \text{ SD}$
 $= 72.32 - 0.5 (5.91)$
 $= 72.32 - 2.95$
 $= 69.37$
 So C or sufficient achievement was in a range of $\geq 69.37 < 75.27$
4. D/Insufficient Achievement $= M - 1.5 \text{ SD}$
 $= 72.32 - 1.5 (5.91)$
 $= 72.32 - 8.86$
 $= 63.46$
 So D or insufficient achievement was in a range of $\geq 63.46 < 69.37$
5. E/Poor Achievement $= < M - 1.5 \text{ SD}$
 $= < 72.32 - 1.5 (5.91)$
 $= < 72.32 - 8.86$
 $= < 63.46$
 So E or poor achievement was < 63.46

Based on the data analysis, it was found that 1 sample achieved excellent achievement (A), 18 samples achieved good achievement (B), 15 samples achieved sufficient achievement (C), 9 samples achieved insufficient achievement (D), 7 samples achieved poor achievement (E). Next, the researcher calculated the computation of the converted scores of this study in the form of percentages. The percentages of

the findings were obtained by counting up the total of each converted score. Then it was divided by the total number of the samples and times by 100%. The percentages of the findings were obtained by counting up the total of each converted scores and then divided by the total numbers of the samples then it was timed 100% to get the percentage for each converted score. The results can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. The Summary of the Findings

No.	Converted Score	Achievement	Total Sample	Percentage
1	≥ 81.18	A (Excellent)	1	2%

2	$\geq 75.27 < 81.18$	B (Good)	18	36%
3	$\geq 69.37 < 75.27$	C (Sufficient)	15	30%
4	$\geq 63.46 < 69.37$	D (Insufficient)	9	18%
5	< 63.46	E (Poor)	7	14%
Total			50	100%

Based on the table, it can be clearly pointed out that: (1) 1 or 2% of 50 samples got excellent achievement of descriptive paragraph writing ability, (2) 18 or 36% of 50 samples got good achievement, (3) 15 or 30% of 50 samples got sufficient achievement, (4) 9 or 18% of 50 samples got insufficient achievement, and (5) 7 or 14% of 50 samples got poor achievement.

Discussion

This present study used an ex-post facto as the research design. The researchers used guided question and answer test to assess the achievement of descriptive paragraph writing ability of the eighth grade students of SMPN 2 Sukawati in academic year 2018/2019. The students had to write a descriptive paragraph that consisted of 6-12 sentences in 40 minutes. Moreover, the students must construct a descriptive paragraph which the topic was about best friend and they also had to fulfill five criteria that have been stated in the instruction of the test. The descriptive paragraphs of the students; in addition, were scored by using scoring rubric of writing paragraph which involved five criteria: format, punctuation and mechanics, content, organization, grammar and sentence structure.

The data of this study were analyzed by using norm-reference measure of five standard values showing excellent, good, sufficient, insufficient

and poor achievement. Then the results of the data analysis showed that 2% of the samples achieved excellent achievement; 36% of the samples achieved good achievement; 30% of the samples achieved sufficient achievement; 18% of the samples achieved insufficient achievement; 14% of the samples achieved poor achievement of descriptive paragraph writing ability. If sufficient achievement was used as the minimum achievement, there are 68% of the samples were successful and 32% of the samples were unsuccessful in writing descriptive paragraph which was assessed through guided question and answer.

Based on the data analysis, most of the samples could write the descriptive paragraph using correct format. Moreover, most of the samples' paragraphs contained a title which was written on the top center of the paragraph. They also indented the first line of their paragraph so that their writing had been appropriate with the instruction. Moreover, their writings were tidy and clear so that those were comfortable and easy to read. However, a few samples of this study did not put a title in their paragraph. They also wrote the title in capital letters and added quotation mark in their paragraph. In addition, they did not give margins on both side but they just gave margins on one side where they started to write. They also did not indent their first

sentence when they started to write a paragraph. Besides, the paragraph that they made was mostly untidy because there were some streaks.

In term of punctuation and mechanics, most of the samples could write descriptive paragraph with correct use of punctuation and mechanics. In addition, they wrote descriptive paragraphs which were ended by period at the end of every sentence. In other words, their writing could be read easily as they put period in correct order. They started the new sentences with capital letters and used capital letters in correct order in their paragraph. Most of the samples also used commas and other punctuations of their paragraph in correct place. It showed that they understood in using punctuation in writing. In contrast, a few samples of this study wrote a sentence without being ended by a period and using comma incorrectly. A lot of capital letters that the samples used were not correct. They did not put capital letters after period. So, it showed that they did not understand when to use capital letters correctly. Besides, they also wrote incorrect spellings of the words in the sentences; it made their sentences could not be understood clearly.

In addition, most of the contents of the samples' paragraph were good. They could make a descriptive paragraph that fitted the assignment which consisted of 6-12 sentences. The questions could guide the samples' ideas to construct a descriptive paragraph that had been provided. In this study, the samples have done their paragraph as what the instructions required them to do. Thus, they created a descriptive paragraph that

was unified. It meant that the samples described only one topic and each of the sentences directly related to the topic. They also could write descriptive paragraph by using coherent ideas in which they made descriptions begin from general to specific one. Meanwhile, there were a few samples who did not write a coherent paragraph in which there was no transition signal in each sentence; therefore, each sentence was not related to each other. It meant that they did not vary their sentences that can show their writing style. The sentences; moreover, should flow smoothly and naturally within the paragraph in each sentence so that the readers were easy to understand the paragraph.

Based on the result of the descriptive paragraph, most of the samples of this study were able to organize the descriptive paragraph well which consisted of the generic structures: identification, description and conclusion. The generic structures of the descriptive paragraph were structured well by most of the samples. They could write a good descriptive paragraph that begun with a clear identification about the object that was described. It contained the general to specific information of the topic. Besides, the descriptions of their paragraph were suitable with detail and suitable description about the object so that the readers can easily visualize it. The descriptive was also appropriate with the questions which were given. Furthermore, most of the samples could write an appropriate concluding sentence or personal opinion at the end of the descriptions. In writing a conclusion, some of the samples made 1-2 sentences; moreover, it made the readers interested

to read their descriptions. Nevertheless, a few samples wrote a description without selecting which one should be described first. They also did not give details information about the topic so the readers were difficult to visualize it. Moreover, it made their descriptions were not good. Besides, they did not write an appropriate conclusion in the end of the descriptions as their general opinion of the object.

In term of grammar and sentence structure, a few samples could write descriptive paragraph with a good grammar. They wrote a paragraph in correct grammatical sentences. However, most of the samples had problems in putting "to be (is, am, are)" and verbs. There were samples who put "to be" and verbs together and it would make the reader did not understand clearly about the meaning of the sentence in their descriptive paragraph. They were also confused about pronoun such as possessive pronoun; for example, they made a mistake when they chose between "he and his". Besides, they often forgot to put suffix -s or -es of the singular subject. They also could not arrange the words into a good sentence. Moreover, they still translated each word of Indonesian language into English so that their paragraph was ungrammatical and hardly understood.

In conclusion, the result of this study showed that 68% of the samples were successful and 32% of the samples were unsuccessful in doing the test which was assessed through guided question and answer. Moreover, it showed that guided question and answer test was an appropriate and effective test to be used to assess students' descriptive

paragraph writing ability. This test could give some advantages for the students in which the students' ideas were stimulated through some questions so that they could create a good descriptive paragraph that fulfilled the complete generic structure (identification, description and conclusion).

CONCLUSION

This study which entitled assessing descriptive paragraph writing ability of the eighth grade students of SMPN 2 Sukawati through guided question and answer in academic year 2018/2019 used ex-post facto as research design. The researchers figured out the writing ability of the samples by using guided question and answer test, and were scored by using scoring rubric of descriptive paragraph from Oshima and Hogue (2007:196). Moreover, the guided question and answer test had been constructed based on the criteria of a good test.

The data computation used norm reference measure of five standard values which were excellent, good, sufficient, insufficient, and poor. Furthermore, the result of the data showed that 1 of the 50 samples in this study got excellent achievement, 18 samples got good achievement, 15 samples got sufficient achievement, 9 samples got insufficient achievement and 7 samples got poor achievement of descriptive paragraph writing ability which was assessed through guided question and answer. Additionally, it was revealed that there were 68% of the samples under study who were successful in writing descriptive paragraph, but there were 32% of the samples who were

unsuccessful in writing descriptive paragraph which was assessed through guided question and answer.

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