**TEACHING DESCRIPTIVE WRITING**

**TO THE EIGHTH GRADERS THROUGH COPS STRATEGY**

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**Abstract**

The objective of this research is to find out whether or not the use of COPS strategy can improve students’ ability in writing descriptive to the eight grade of SMP Negeri 6 Palu. The researcher applied a quasi experimental research design which was conducted by using pre-test and post-test. The population of this research was the eight grade students of SMP Negeri 6 Palu and the research sample were VIII C as the experimental group, while VIII B as the control group. The data were collected through pre-test and post-test. The result of the test shows that there is an improvement on the students’ mean score after the treatment. The students’ pre-test mean score (56.96) increased to (89.93) the post-test. The researcher found that the t-counted value (7.485) was greater than the t-table value (1.998). It means that the hypothesis was accepted. Based on the result, it is concluded that using COPS strategy is effective to improve the writing skill of the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 6 Palu.

Keywords: COPS Strategy, Descriptive Text.

*Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui apakah penggunaan Strategi COPS dapat meningkatkan kemampuan siswa kelas 8 SMP Negeri 6 Palu dalam menulis teks deskriptif. Peneliti menerapkan desain penelitian quasi eksperimental yang dilakukan dengan menggunakan pre-test dan post-test. Populasi penelitian ini adalah siswa kelas delapan SMP Negeri 6 Palu dan sampel penelitiannya adalah kelas VIII C sebagai kelompok eksperimen, sedangkan VIII B sebagai kelompok kontrol. Data dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan pretest dan posttest. Hasil pre-test dan post-test menunjukan bahwa terjadi peningkatan pada nilai rata-rata siswa setelah menerima treatment. Dimana nilai rata-rata pre-test siswa adalah (56.96) menjadi (89.93) pada post-test.. Peneliti menemukan bahwa nilai tcounted (7,485) lebih besar dari nilai ttabel (1,998). Artinya hipotesis tersebut dapat diterima berdasarkan hasil tersebut, disimpulkan bahwa penggunaan Strategi COPS efektif untuk meningkatkan kemampuan menulis pada siswa kelas VIII SMP Negeri 6 Palu.*

*Kata kunci; Strategy COPS, Teks Deskriptif*

**INTRODUCTION**

Language is a means of communication which is used by human being to express their feelings, ideas, and opinions. They need the language to interact with each other. Nowadays, English becomes the most popular language for communication in the world. Therefore, it is treated as the world language or international language. In other countries, English becomes the first language but in Indonesia, it becomes a foreign language. The English subject is taught to the students from elementary school up to university level. The students who learn English are expected to master four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Moreover, they have to master language components such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. In this study, the researcher focused her study on writing skill.

Writing is putting down ideas into written form. It can also be defined as an expression of feeling in written form. In other words, through writing we can communicate our ideas. Writing is a process of transferring ideas, feelings, and expression on paper. It makes each student more creative. Besides, it will make students to show every idea in their mind. In addition Oshima and Hogue (1991: 3) state that writing is a process, not a “product”. It means that writing can help students to improve their ability in writing.

Writing as a productive skill not only makes the students able to make a writing form but also can help the students to master three language skills. These skills are listening, speaking and reading. The researcher believes that writing itself can help and support the other language skills.

In addition, writing is more difficult than other skills, because it needs more elements in practice. Writing helps the students to understand how to use the several elements in writing. Students need to master writing skill in order to improve their communication skills in life. Besides, writing also provides the students to express the ideas, thoughts, and opinions. Students learn five kinds of writing in their school. There are narrative, descriptive, recount, report and procedure text. In this case the researcher used descriptive text.

Descriptive text is a kind of writing that describes picture of a person or object. The aim is to describe or reveal the person, place or a particular object. It can be concluded that descriptive text is a text which describes what kind of person or object, both its form, its properties, numbers and others.

The generic structures of descriptive are identification and description. Identification is the introduction, in the form of a general description of a topic. Identification serves to introduce the reader about the object or something that we have described before we tell about its properties. Description contains specific characteristics of the objects, places, or people described. This section contains in the second paragraph and so on. The characteristics of descriptive text are using the simple present tense and using the verb attribute, such as Be (am, is, are).

Nonetheless, based on the preliminary observation, which has been done at school, the researcher found that there were some problems faced by the students in writing. One of them was the students lacking knowledge on mechanics of writing such as the use of capitalization, punctuation, and the last is spelling.

To make the activity becomes interesting for the students, the researcher applied COPS strategy, which was found by Schumaker, Nolan.,Deshler, in 1985 with their book entitles: Learning strategies curriculum: The error monitoring strategy. COPS is an effective strategy to help students in correcting their writing more better. COPS stands for Capitalization, Overall/Organization, Punctuation, and Spelling. Capitalizationis a rule how to make a capital letter.The use of capital letter in writing English sentences is also an important element. Capital letter is used at the beginning of sentence and the first letter for the name of people, the days of week, the months of the year and their abbreviation, nationalities and language. If the sentences are not capitalized correctly, we will find the ambiguous meaning and misunderstanding.

Punctuation is important element in writing correct sentence. Punctuation is needed to express the meaning of a sentence. Punctuation also functions as signals in writing language which help the students to clarify the correct meaning of the sentence.

Spelling is forming of word from letters according to accepted usage; a sequence of letters composing a word; a statement of rules or conventions on how words are to be writing. Spelling is also important in writing. To write well, the writer should be able to master how to write words well. It is because if the students make error in spelling the words, it confuses readers in grasping meaning in a particular text.

COPS is a mnemonic strategy that cues students through an editing process to improve written work for mechanical errors and clarity. This mnemonic strategy should be posted in the room and taught to the students through a teaching, demonstrate and practice model (Lienemann.,R : 2006).

Nanci and Barbara (2009:146) state that COPS strategy helps students identify four basic error types. It represents the following steps: **C** means Capitalization, **O** means Overall appearance/Organization, **P** means Punctuation, and **S** means Spelling.

In short, four mechanic components in writing have strong power to produce a good writing. In teaching writing descriptive text in grade VIII of Junior High School, the researcher follows some steps below:

First, the researcher attracts students’ attention by showing the model of descriptive text. Researcher presents story in the form of text with several mistakes. Then, the students read the story clearly. The researcher gives several mistakes in the text form in order to ask students to revise them. Evaluation is done through discussion.

Then, after presenting the text and asking several question through discussion, the researcher asks students to pay attention on mechanic component of writing and gives more explain about it. They must pay attention to the researcher that explaining about COPS (Capitalization, Overall appearance/Organization, Punctuation, and Spelling), and then do their work with change incorrect text to the correct text.

Capitalization means that each sentence starts with a capital letters, proper nouns start with capital letters (names for people, places, months, and days of the week). Organization means that the story has a title and a line. Then, it uses the right forms. Punctuation means that each sentence ends with the correct punctuation mark, use commas in a list or series, and uses quotation mark if it is necessary in a sentence. The last is Spelling. In this point the students need to do their best to spell words correctly with helped by dictionary (Telambanua, Y.P:2013).

To help students to understand the text well, the researcher invites some students to come in the front of the class to give correction of the text. Then, researcher and students evaluate and revise the text together through discussion. After the student finished their writing, they collecting their writing and then the researcher changed students’ writing to different writer for checking the correct answer. By doing this strategy, students can identify their mistakes and how to revise them into the correct forms. They revise their writings then collect them as an assignment. This activity helps students to gain more confidence in creating their writing especially in a descriptive text because they know the steps and remember the guidance in their mind.

Before ending researcher explains the lesson once again to avoid students’ confusion and misunderstanding. After that, the researcher and students conclude the lesson. It focuses on mechanic component. The last, the researcher gave homework that will be collected in the next meeting.

**METHOD OF RESEARCH**

In conducting this research, the researcher applied a quasi experimental research design to prove that COPS strategy can improve writing skill of students. The sample of this research consists two classes, (experimental and control class). Experimental class is the group that receives the treatment, while control class does not get any treatment. Both groups were taught by the researcher using different strategies. The experimental group was given pre-test, but in this class the researcher applied the treatment before giving post-test. The control group was given pre-test and post-test without treatment from the researcher. The design of this research is proposed by Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, and Razavieth (2010:316) as follows.

**Table 1**. Research Design

|  |
| --- |
| Groups Pretest Independent Variable posttest |
| Experimental group (C) Y1 X Y2  Control group (B) Y1 - Y2 |

Population refers to the whole objects of the research . Cresswell (2008: 151) states, “A population is a group of individuals who have same characteristic”. The population of this research is the eighth grade students; consisting of 9 classes. Each class consists of 31 up to 33 students. The total number of the students is 291. In this research, the researcher employed purposive sampling technique in selecting the sample because the class is homogeneous. The samples are two groups taken from the population. The students of class VIII B are the control group while the students in class VIII C are the experimental group.

This research consists of two variables. They are independent variable and dependent variable. Ary *et al* (2010:37) explain, “ A variable is a construct or a characteristic that can take on different values or scores”. Independent variable of this research was COPS Strategy while the dependent variable was Teaching descriptive writing to the eighth grade students.

In collecting the data, the researcher used test as instrument of the research. The test consists of pre-test and post-test which were given to both experimental group and control group. The pre-test was given before treatment. The pre-test aims to know the students’ writing skill in descriptive paragraph before giving treatment. The post-test is administered after giving the treatment. The purpose of this test was to know the students ability in writing descriptive text, before and after the treatment.

The pre-test and post-test given to the students’ were written test. In scoring each item of writing descriptive text, the researcher used the scoring procedures adapted from Weigle (2002) in the table 2 below :

**Table 2.** TheScoring Rubric of Writing

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Organization | 20-18  17-14  13-10  9-7 | Excellent to very good  Good to average  Fair to poor  Very poor | * Fluent expression, ideas clearly stated/supported, succinct, well-organized, logical sequencing, cohesive. * Somewhat choppy, loosely organized but main ideas stand out, limited support, logical but incomplete sequencing. * Non-fluent, ideas confused or disconnected, lacks logical sequencing and development. * Does not communicate, no organization, or not enough to evaluate. |
| Mechanics | 5  4  3  2 | Excellent to very good  Good to average  Fair to poor  Very poor | * Demonstrate mastery of conventions,-few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing. * Occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing but meaning not obscured. * Frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing.-poor handwriting,- meaning confused or obscured. * No mastery of conventions, dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, -handwriting illegible, -or not enough to evaluate |

Adapted from Weigle 2002

**FINDINGS**

The researcher used test as the instrument of the research in collecting the data. This means that data collected in this research was in form of numeric data. There were two kinds of tests in this research. They were pre-test and post-test. The researcher administered the pretest in order to know the students’ ability before conducting the treatment and the post-test at the end of treatment in order to know how effective COPS Strategy is in improving students’ ability in writing descriptive text. After giving both tests, the researcher made comparison from both tests. The results of the test are illustrated as follows:

**Table 3.** Experimental Group’s Score on Pre-test and Post-test

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No | Initials | Maximum | Standard Score | |
| Score | Pretest | Posttest |
| 1 | AFT | 25 | 64 | 92 |
| 2 | APA | 25 | 64 | 92 |
| 3 | ASA | 25 | 64 | 76 |
| 4 | ARO | 25 | 44 | 92 |
| 5 | AES | 25 | 64 | 92 |
| 6 | ARA | 25 | 64 | 92 |
| 7 | ARD | 25 | 44 | 68 |
| 8 | AAP | 25 | 44 | 92 |
| 9 | DFM | 25 | 48 | 92 |
| 10 | DBA | 25 | 64 | 100 |
| 11 | DAT | 25 | 64 | 92 |
| 12 | DPH | 25 | 48 | 92 |
| 13 | DPP | 25 | 64 | 92 |
| 14 | FMA | 25 | 64 | 92 |
| 15 | IRM | 25 | 48 | 92 |
| 16 | IRS | 25 | 44 | 92 |
| 17 | IKD | 25 | 44 | 92 |
| 18 | MPA | 25 | 48 | 84 |
| 19 | MDR | 25 | 48 | 92 |
| 20 | MUL | 25 | 48 | 96 |
| 21 | NML | 25 | 48 | 88 |
| 22 | NRM | 25 | 64 | 100 |
| 23 | NAA | 25 | 44 | 92 |
| 24 | NFA | 25 | 24 | 100 |
| 25 | NHA | 25 | 64 | 92 |
| 26 | PBS | 25 | 44 | 84 |
| 27 | PNB | 25 | 44 | 92 |
| 28 | RSA | 25 | 64 | 92 |
| 29 | SPL | 25 | 96 | 100 |
| 30 | SFA | 25 | 48 | 88 |
| 31 | SSY | 25 | 96 | 100 |
| 32 | SDV | 25 | 36 | 36 |
| 33 | TRA | 25 | 52 | 100 |
| Total Score | | | 1880 | 2968 |

The table above pointed out that the students’ highest score of the experimental group students on the pre-test was 96 and the lowest once was 24. When these scores were compared to minimum mastery standard of 75, there were two students of experimental group who passed the pre-test. Almost all students got low score on the components being scored (organization and mechanic of writing). Meanwhile, The highest score of the experimental group on the post-test was 100 and the lowest one was 36. Thus, total students categorized ‘pass’ was 31 students, while the remaining two students were categorized ‘fail’.

**Table 4.** Control Group’s Score on Pre-test and Post-test

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No | Initials | Maximum | Standard Score | |
| Score | Pretest | Posttest |
| 1 | AST | 25 | 60 | 68 |
| 2 | AMU | 25 | 60 | 72 |
| 3 | ANR | 25 | 60 | 68 |
| 4 | ASN | 25 | 60 | 76 |
| 5 | ADR | 25 | 60 | 72 |
| 6 | ASA | 25 | 48 | 64 |
| 7 | AML | 25 | 68 | 64 |
| 8 | BAW | 25 | 48 | 68 |
| 9 | CLG | 25 | 48 | 64 |
| 10 | CEL | 25 | 60 | 68 |
| 11 | CBZ | 25 | 60 | 76 |
| 12 | DPU | 25 | 60 | 64 |
| 13 | FNS | 25 | 60 | 72 |
| 14 | FSL | 25 | 60 | 68 |
| 15 | FAR | 25 | 48 | 64 |
| 16 | FHA | 25 | 52 | 72 |
| 17 | FRA | 25 | 48 | 68 |
| 18 | IPE | 25 | 48 | 80 |
| 19 | MFA | 25 | 60 | 64 |
| 20 | MGA | 25 | 60 | 72 |
| 21 | MHA | 25 | 60 | 72 |
| 22 | MIQ | 25 | 60 | 68 |
| 23 | NCA | 25 | 60 | 72 |
| 24 | NND | 25 | 60 | 72 |
| 25 | NAT | 25 | 60 | 68 |
| 26 | NIK | 25 | 60 | 68 |
| 27 | PAN | 25 | 60 | 68 |
| 28 | PSJ | 25 | 48 | 68 |
| 29 | PAM | 25 | 60 | 76 |
| 30 | SMA | 25 | 52 | 68 |
| 31 | TSW | 25 | 64 | 72 |
| 32 | WCI | 25 | 60 | 64 |
| 33 | MRI | 25 | 60 | 68 |
| Total Score | | | 1892 | 2288 |

The table above indicated that the highest score of the control group on the pre-test was 68 and the lowest score was 48. The result showed that there were not students of control group passed on the pre-test.. While the students highest score of the control group on the post-test was 80 and the lowest score was 64. It also showed that four students got passing score, while others failed.

After obtaining the data of both experimental group and control group in pre-test and post-test, the researcher continue to counted the mean deviation and score deviation .The experimental group’s deviation on the pre-test and post-test; the highest deviation (d) score is 48 and the lowest deviation is 4. The highest square deviation (d2) is 2.304 and the lowest square deviation is 16. Meanwhile, the highest deviation of control group is 32. The square deviation is 1024. After getting the deviation and square deviation of control and experimental group, the research calculated the mean deviation of both the group by using the formula. Thus, the mean deviation of the experimental group is 32.96,while the mean deviation of the control group is 12. After finding out the mean deviation score of the experimental and control group, the researcher computed the standard deviation of both groups. The standard deviation of experimental group is 6817 and crontrol group is 1376.

After having the standard deviation of experimental group and control group, the researcher calculated the standard error of differences of both groups by using the formula purposed by Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen and Razavieth (2010:108-109). The computation shows that the standard error of differences of both groups is 2.8. Based on the value, the researcher counted the t-value to test the hypothesis. The value of t-counted  = 7.485 is obtained. Since degree of freedom of 64 (n1+ n2-2= 22 + 22 – 2 ) (Nx + Ny – 2 = 33 + 33 – 2) was not available on the t-table, the researcher counted the degree of freedom using interpolation formula and she got the value of t-table = 1.998.

Referring to the t-table value above, the researcher tested the hypothesis of the research by comparing the values of tcounted and ttable. Based on that result, the researcher concluded that hypothesis of this research is accepted because the value of tcounted is higher than the value of ttable.. It means that COPS Strategy has possitive effect on writing achievement of eighth grade students.

**DISCUSSION**

Based on the result of the test given, there are some points that needed to be discussed about the finding of the research. The researcher conducted the research at SMP Negeri 6 Palu, the researcher used two classes that recommended by the teacher at SMP Negeri 6 Palu because they still have problem in learning English. Class VIII C is experimental group while class VIII B is control group. Quasi experimental was the research design that used. The pre-test was given to both experimental and control group to measure the ability of the students in writing.

Based on the result after giving pre-test, the researcher found that there were some mistakes which made by the students in writing descriptive text. Most of the students had a problem in writing mechanics, such us the use of capitalization and punctuation right. They did not understand how to use the correct capitalization in the text. For example, to write the name of person or place they did not use the capital alphabet in the first word. Then, they have not familiar with the types of punctuation and how to use it. The students just familiar with the punctuation of full stop, comma and interogative. For exclamation mark and colon they rarely use. But the problem was they dont understand how to use it all.

After giving the pre-test, the researcher gave treatment to the students in experimental group. During the treatment, the researcher applied COPS strategy in teaching writing descriptive conducted for six meetings, the researcher focused on teaching mechanics and organization of the text. in six meeting, the researcher made some step in teaching like pre activities, while activities and post activities.

First, pre activities. In this activity the researcher greets the students in English, like good morning. Then, the researcher check student’s attendance list and ask them to pray before they are began to study. After that, the researcher asked some question related to the topic.

Second, in while activities the researcher was explained about mechanics and organization of writing text. Then, gave chance to the students to ask some question before the researcher gave them the task related to the topic at the day. In every meeting, the researcher was explained about mechanics and the organization of writing start from the capitalization, structure of the text, punctuation and the last about spelling. The students always have attention to the researcher explained in every meeting. If the students not yet understand about the researcher explained they were always ask to the researcher to repeat the explaining. After the students get the point of the topic, the researcher gave them the question before move to the task. The task in every meeting helped the researcher to know the students improvement.

Third, in this time the researcher always ask the students about theirs understanding of the topic that have been curried out. Then the researcher and the students conclude the material before ask to pray.

After giving the treatment, the researcher gave posttest to both groups. The aim of the posttest was to find out the improvement of the students’ writing skill after the treatment. After using COPS strategy, the researcher found that there is significant difference between posttest of the experimental group and control group. The mean score of the posttest of the experimental group is 89.93 while the mean score of the control group is 69.33. The result shows that applying COPS strategy can improve students’ writing skill of the eight grade students of SMP Negeri 6 Palu especially in descriptive text.

Regarding to the findings, the researcher compared his research with the related studies written by Telaumbanau (2013), Sinurat (2012) and Mulyadi (2012). The title of the first researchers was Using the COPS Strategy in Teaching Writing A Narrative Text. The second one wasUsing PENS and COPS Strategy in Teaching Writing Procedure Text. The third wasWriting Descriptive Text by Combining FLOWER Strategy and COPS Strategy at Junior High School. For two research before they had combining with another strategies and the first one just consist on COPS strategy. Based on the three related studies the reseacher may conclude that COPS strategy was not only has impact on improving the students’ ability in writing descriptive text but also in narrative and recount text.

By looking at the findings, the researcher concluded that the findings have explicitly shown that the mean score of post-test in experimental and control group was significantly different. The mean score of the post-test in control group was 69.33 while the mean score of post-test in experimental group was 89.93. this has shown that the treatment actually worked in the process of teaching and learning. In the other words, it has been proved that there has progress of students’ score in experimental group after getting the treatment.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis of data the result of the research can be concluded that the application of COPS strategy is effective in improving the students’ writing skill. They are more enjoyable in learning writing and comprehend the mechanics of writing more easily. The result of the data shows that the t-counted () is higher than the t-table (1.998). By looking at the result of the t-counted and the t-table, it can be concluded that there is a significant improvement of the students’ achievement. This shows that the COPS strategy can improve writing skill of the eight grade students of SMP Negeri 6 Palu.

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