

THE EFFECT OF SENTENCE COMBINING PRACTICE IN STUDENTS' WRITING ACHIEVEMENT

Dewi Firdanti, Basturi Hasan, Sudirman

dewifirdanti@gmail.com

Abstract

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh penerapan *Sentence Combining Practice* pada prestasi siswa dalam menulis teks deskriptif. Sampel dari penelitian ini adalah 35 siswa kelas X.4 yang dipilih dengan menggunakan teknik lotere. Instrumen untuk mengumpulkan data adalah tes tertulis. Rumus Pearson Product Moment diaplikasikan untuk memperoleh keandalan tes. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa keandalan pre-test adalah 0,81 dikategorikan sebagai keandalan sangat tinggi, sementara keandalan post-tes adalah 0.70 dikategorikan kehandalan tinggi. Setelah menganalisis data, ditemukan bahwa nilai t observed adalah -9,575 dengan derajat kebebasan (df) = 34 pada tingkat signifikansi (α = 0,05). Ini berarti bahwa t observed lebih tinggi dari t ($9,575 > 2,0301$). Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa *Sentence Combining Practice* memiliki pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap prestasi siswa dalam menulis teks deskriptif.

This study aimed to discover the effect of applying *Sentence Combining Practice* on students' achievement in writing descriptive text. The samples of the research were 35 students of class X.4 which were chosen by using lottery technique. The instrument for collecting the data was a writing test. Pearson Product Moment formula was applied to obtain the reliability of the test. Based on the calculation, it showed that the reliability of the pre-test was 0.81 categorized as very high reliability, meanwhile reliability of the post test was 0.70 categorized as high reliability. After analyzing the data, it was found that the value of t was -9.575 with the degree of freedom (df)=34 at the level of significance (α = 0.05). It meant that t observed was higher than t ($9.575 > 2.0301$). The result of this study showed that *Sentence Combining Practice* had a significant effect on students' achievement in writing descriptive text.

Keyword: *writing, descriptive text, sentence combining practice*

INTRODUCTION

In today's modern society, there are two ways of making communication; they are direct communication and indirect communication. Speaking and listening are known as direct communication, while writing and reading are indirect communication. Writing plays a vital role in this modern life, it is not only a process of linking words into sentences or paragraphs, but it is also a sequence or steps of expressing the ideas, organized thoughts and feeling in the form of words and combined into sentences then into paragraphs which every sentences are closely related one another. Writing is also a process of transforming knowledge to create a new knowledge.

However, among the four language skills taught in schools, writing is the most difficult skill to learn. This is true because it needs specialized skill that includes the ability to express the writer's opinions or thoughts clearly and efficiently. Writing can be achieved only if a learner masters some techniques of writing such as how to obtain the ideas, how to express them in sequence of sentences, how to organize them chronologically and coherently, and how to review and then how to revise the composition until the writing well- built. In Indonesia, writing English is considered as the most important part to learn by the students in school. As stated in Curriculum 2006, School Based Curriculum (KTSP), that students of senior high school are expected to communicate in spoken or written language in simple form. For this reason, it means that students must be able to write any kind of genre.

From the pre observation , it was found that the students get difficulties in writing. As beginners in learning English, they still have problem in constructing well-formed sentences. They generally produce less syntactically complex sentences that contain more grammatical errors (Myklebust, 1973:7). The previous research of writing achievement conducted by Andayani (2010) in SMA Al Kautsar, it was found that the students experienced difficulties in writing, especially in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and organization. Students may also produce sentence that were shorter; had higher percentages of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling error; and were lower in overall quality than those of their average-achieving peers.

Anderson (1982:359) adds that less skilled writers had more missing subjects and verbs in their writing than regularly achieving students, and more often over use the connector *and*. On the other hand, this overcoming problem in sentence construction is an important problem to senior high school student as young writers for several reasons. First, problems with sentence production skills may interfere other processes such as planning, content generation, and revising because attention devoted to lower level skills depletes available cognitive resources that can be applied to higher level processes (Graham, 1997:201). Second, lack of knowledge of effective writing formats at the sentence level hinders a writer's ability to translate his or her thoughts into text (Hayes & Flower, 1986:3), this problem of course directly affect the complexity and the coherence of the communication. The difficulties of constructing well-designed and grammatically correct sentences may make the material that the

students' writing become more difficult for others to read.

In relation to the problem above, a study conducted by Azizah (2012) showed that SMA students found crucial difficulties in their writing especially in terms of organization, vocabulary, and grammar. To moderate such problems above, teacher as a facilitator should find solution to help students in their effort to be able to write a constructive writing. Changing the way of teaching done by teacher is the solution. But the teacher may be able to figure out how to solve the problem because there are so many options available to be applied. Sentence combining practice is good to be chosen to solve such problems faced by the students.

Sentence combining can prompt students to use syntactical options in their writing by providing them practice in consciously controlling and manipulating syntax (Saddler, 2005:43). The application of this technique can be started by practicing students to combine words into phrases, and phrases into kernel sentences. After the students are able to combine words into phrases and phrases became kernel sentences, teacher can move to the next level in which the students are practicing to combine some kernel sentences. Teacher can give them two sets of kernel sentence then asks them to combine it at least in two different ways. Once students understand the concept of kernel sentence, it is beneficial for them to write their own sets of kernel sentence. Teacher models how to make compound subjects, predicates, adjective modifiers, and conjunctions. Then teacher practices them to combine the compound sentences into a paragraph. By

doing this process of decombining and recombining sentences, they will learn how complex sentence carries many ideas and makes sentences become more varied, interesting and sound better to read.

Many studies involving sentence combining research show that sentence combining practice is effective to increase the quality of students' writing. A recent study conducted by Saddler and Graham (2005) assessed the effect of sentence combining procedure involving peer-assisted practice show that the experimental students who receives the teaching treatment by using sentence combining practice has positive improvement in writing. From the results shown above, it can be concluded that sentence combining technique is one of alternative and effective way to be applied to increase the students' writing achievement in SMA Al Kautsar Bandar Lampung.

In reference to the explanation above, this study aimed to investigate the effect of sentence combining practice in students' writing achievement by using descriptive text.

METHOD

This research used quantitative method. The quantitative method was used to gather quantitative data and information dealing with numbers and anything that was measurable. Therefore, quantitative research involves analysis of numerical data, statistics, tables, and graphs to present results of research.

In this research, the researcher conducted the research by using one class and applied quasi experimental design that was one group pretest posttest design. The sample of this research was sample was the tenth grade students of SMA Al-Kautsar Bandar Lampung. Class X.4 became the experiment group, consisted of 35 students. In this study, writing test was used as the data instrument. The design of the test was in essay form. The students were instructed to write a descriptive text based on the topic given by the researcher.

There were three procedures of conducting research:

1. Pre – Test was given to the experimental group before the treatment.
2. Treatment: conducted by applying the Sentence Combining Technique in experimental group for three meetings, spending 2 x 45 minutes for each meeting.
3. Post – Test was given to experimental group after the treatment completed.

Three aspects of writing that were evaluated by the researcher were vocabulary, grammar, and organization. The result of the test was in form of score or interval data. After getting the result, the researcher analyzed two data (1) The effect of sentence combining practice on students' writing achievement at the first grade of SMA Al Kautsar Bandar Lampung (2) The improvement of each aspect of writing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This research was conducted in class X.4 and the number of students in class X.4 was 35 students. In this research, the observer held five meetings to get data. The first meeting was to get the result of pretest. Next, the researcher held three

treatments of sentence combining practice. The last meeting of the research was to get the result of post test. Thus, the data were obtained by comparing the result score in pre-test and post-test. From the data of the experimental group the lowest score in the pre – test was 45 and the highest was 77. Meanwhile, the lowest score in the post – test was 53 and the highest was 83.

From the data mentioned obtained, there was an effect of applying Sentence Combining Technique on students' achievement in descriptive writing. The increasing of the scores showed that the students had better achievement in writing a descriptive text after applying the treatment.

The following table shows the increase of students' score on each aspect

Table 1 The Increase of students' score

Aspect	Pre-test	Post-test	Increase	Percentages
Organization	11.24	13.60	2.36	11.8 %
Vocabulary	11.78	14.07	2.29	11.4 %
Grammar	12.71	14.94	2.23	11.1%

From the table above, it can be seen that the scores of three aspects from the pre-test to post-test increased. The increase, ranging from the highest to the lowest, based on the table above, are as follows:

Organization

The mean score in pre-test was 11.24 and the mean score in post-test was 13.60. The increase of this aspect was 2.36 (11.8%). It meant that there was increase of students' writing achievement in term of organization.

Vocabulary

The increase also happened on other aspects of writing that was vocabulary. It can be seen from the table that the mean of score in pre-test was 11.78 and the mean score in post-test was 14.07. Thus, the increase was 2.29 (11.4%).

Grammar

The employment of grammatical forms and syntactic patterns had also increased. There was increase on each mean of test on grammar. The mean score in pre-test was 12.71 and in the post-test was 14.94. The increase of grammar aspect was 2.23 (11.1%).

From the explanation above, it could be inferred that teaching using sentence combining practice can increase the student' writing achievement in three aspects of writing. The highest increase was on the aspect of organization. The second increase was on the aspect of vocabulary and the third increase was on grammar.

Inter-rater reliability was used to calculate the reliability of the test. The writer used Pearson Product moment formula Sugiyono (2006:28) as follows:

$$r = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d^2}{N(N^2 - 1)}$$

where :

r : coefficient of rank correlation

d : difference of rank correlation

N : number of students

From the calculation, the reliability of pre test was 0.81 (very high). Meanwhile, the reliability of post test was 0.70 (high).

The formula of t – test and the distribution table were applied in order to discover whether the hypothesis was accepted or rejected. H_1 is rejected if $t\text{-value} > t\text{-table}$ with the level of significance at <0.05 . From the computation the result was $9.575 > 2.0301$ and $0.00 < 0.05$. Therefore, for the hypothesis, H_1 was rejected and H_0 of the research hypothesis was accepted. It meant that there was a significant increase of students' writing achievement after being given treatment using sentence combining practice as the teaching technique.

DISCUSSION

In this case, this research explains the phenomenon of how sentence combining practice can increase students' writing achievement particularly in terms of organization, grammar and vocabulary. The highest increase in this research was on the aspect of organization. Organization refers to the logical organization of the content (coherence). The term coherence contains sentences that are logically arranged and flow smoothly. Smooth flow refers to how well one idea or sentences leads to another. Smooth flow can be achieve through sentence combining and through the use of certain expression, called transition, which provide the links between ideas. In fact, The students were able to conduct their writing in logical sequencing by putting in connecting words such as: then, and, besides, however. Their writing was relevant to generic stucture as well.

The second aspect that increased was vocabulary. During the learning process, some students were confused in finding and translating the appropriate vocabulary with the context of their writing. The students applied word per word translation.

The students were guided and suggested about how to use and choose dictionary. Therefore, the students used this experience in giving feedback of their friends. It can be said that feedback that involved correction produced better result writing. This can be proved that the students were capable to use correct vocabulary in relation to the topic.

The last aspect that increased was grammar. Logically, it is assumed that the improvement did not occur solely because the implementation of sentence combining practice during the teaching process, yet it mostly happened due to the regular explanation of language feature delivered by the teacher. This study was still guiding and reminding the students to pay more attention in the structure of their sentence when they tried to develop their paragraph.

Referring specifically to the classification above, it was proved that the process of sentence combining practice could benefit the students and assist them to do their text writing. It can be seen from the finding that have been discussed. Evidently, the application of Sentence Combining Technique in teaching writing in the classroom enabled students to write their paragraph systematically and effectively.

CONCLUSIONS

Sentence Combining Practice can be applied as one of the techniques to increase the students' descriptive text writing achievement. Sentence combining practice is appropriate in developing students' descriptive text writing achievement on

aspects of organization, vocabulary, and grammar; especially on aspect of organization.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, P. L. 1982. A preliminary study of syntax in the written expression of learning disabled children. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 15, 359–362.
- Graham, S., & Harris, K. 1997. Improving learning disabled students' skills at composing essays: Self-instructional strategy training. *Exceptional Children*, 56, 201–214.
- Hayes, J. R., & Flower, L. S. 1986. Identifying the organization of writing processes. In L. Gregg & E. R. Steinberg (Eds.), *Cognitive processes in writing* (pp. 3-30). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Myklebust, H. R. 1973. *Development and disorders of written language, Vol. 2: Studies of normal and exceptional children*. New York: Grune & Stratton.
- Saddler, B., & Graham, S. 2005. The effects of peer-assisted sentence combining instruction on the writing of more and less skilled young writers. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 97(1), 43–54.
- Sugiyono. 2006. *Statistika untuk Penelitian*. Bandung: Alfabeta.