

THE USE OF GRAPHIC ORGANIZER STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract

This research is motivated by the weak ability of students' writing skills in learning English. This research was conducted to improve English language skills, especially writing skills using the graphic organizer strategy. This research was conducted on first-semester students at the University of Billfath Lamongan. This research uses Classroom Action Research with a two-cycle design by Kemmis and Mc Taggart model in four stages, namely planning, implementing the action, observing, and reflecting. The results of the preliminary test showed that students' writing skills were still low. The results of the assessment on the practice of writing texts using the assessment rubric show that there are still many students who have not reached the mark according to the criteria. The results of this research prove that the use of the graphic organizer strategy significantly improves students' writing skills from the students' pretest score which has not yet reached the specified minimum completeness criteria (KKM). While the results of the posttest in cycle II already met the indicators of success of the action, namely more than 80% of students had obtained writing practice scores of more than 70 as minimum completeness criteria (KKM).

Keywords: *Graphic Organizer Strategy, Writing Skills, English Language Teaching (ELT)*

INTRODUCTION

Educational activities, especially the teaching and learning process, cannot be separated from writing activities. Students are required to be able to write works, starting from writing paragraphs, essays, and other written products. Writing skills require continuous practice because it is a productive skill. Writing needs to be honed and trained so that students' skills develop (Hyland, 2019). This writing activity involves many aspects. Therefore, students need to be

guided from an early age on how to write well, organize writing, and choose appropriate topics.

Writing skills are skills that must be developed in addition to listening and speaking skills. When people read or listen to a story, they can retell the story in writing (Asrifan et al., 2020; Sadiku, 2015). However, in practice, many people have difficulty getting used to learning to write. The reason is mistakes in terms of teaching that are too rigid giving the impression that writing is difficult, and even someone is reluctant to write because they don't know what they are writing for, feel they don't know how to write, and they also have difficulty in constructing sentences, lack of imagination to think while writing, as well as the experience of learning to write that is less motivating (Gollins & Gentner, 2016).

According to Çavdar and Doe (2012), writing is a skill that can make someone think critically, take initiative, and improve academic intelligence. For this reason, this writing skill is critical to learn, especially for students. Student productivity and language skills will be honed and increased. A writer is considered to have good writing skills if he meets the following categories. First, the writer must be able to determine the problem that will be the topic of his writing. Second, after determining the topic, the writer determines the readers of his writing. Third, the writer must also be able to make a writing framework conforming to the structure of the text to be written. Fourth, the writer can use the right vocabulary, grammar, use of spelling, and punctuation following the provisions. Fifth, the writer can develop the topic he chooses into sentences that form meaningful paragraphs. Sixth, after the writing is finished, the writer must be able to check or carry out the editing process (Graham et al., 2012).

Based on the observation conducted by the researcher, there are several problems found in students learning to write. First, the difficulty in organizing ideas. Many students stated that they were confused about where to start, and what to write next. Based on the writing samples collected during the preliminary research, most of the writings did not show a good level of coherence and cohesion. Second, the difficulty when developing ideas. The ideas raised are not developed properly as the paragraph seems to repeat the same idea. Third, less able to use diction correctly. The choice of words used is often inaccurate, thus affecting the effectiveness of the sentences written.

A deeper investigation showed that the main cause of the students' weak writing ability was traditional strategies. The use of this kind of strategy is certainly very unproductive and does not motivate students. This is what also causes students' attitudes to be negative toward writing. This is very unfortunate considering the ability to write as a popular scientific paper is very important. It is said that way because writing teaches students how to organize ideas in a discourse. If this ability is well mastered by students, it will greatly assist them in writing more complex scientific discourses, such as scientific articles (Bean & Melzer, 2021; Bereiter, 2016).

Meanwhile, based on the results of brief interviews conducted by the researcher with several samples, it was stated that there were several factors caused the low writing ability of students, including (1) most students needed a long time to be able to express their ideas and ideas when writing in the form of words about an object, (2) students have not been able to express ideas with writing traditions in any written form, (3) students are not used to developing language, (4) learning is still teacher-centered, (5) in delivering material the teacher tends to be mono-

nous, (6) students are also less enthusiastic in the learning process, and (7) the teacher does not choose the right media so that learning to write is less noticed by students.

The teacher's role in solving the problems above is to be able to apply effective and efficient teaching strategies, be able to involve students to actively participate, and being able to create a learning atmosphere that supports the achievement of educational goals (Al Halim & Arifin, 2022). This writing skill will not come by itself, but it takes lots and regular practice and practice (Hyland, 2019). In addition, the teacher must also be able to provide direction to students thus they can write well and also be able to create learning media that can help develop students' imagination. It helps students to think and express their ideas well in their writing (Puspitarini & Hanif, 2019; Sa'diyah, 2017).

An innovative technique is needed to make learning to write more productive and not boring. Related to these problems, the graphic organizer strategy can be used as a solution to overcome the problem of weaknesses in learning to write. A graphic organizer is a tool in the form of visualization that uses visual symbols to describe ideas and concepts to convey something. These graphics can be in the form of lines, circles, arrows, or images that serve to visualize ideas that will be developed or written (Daniels, 2020; Moline, 2013; Pratama et al., 2017).

Graphic organizer is an image, outline, sketch, or image that is displayed to help students get a perception or mental picture quickly of a topic (Praveen & Rajan, 2013). According to (Evmenova et al., 2016) graphic organizers can also visualize material or concepts in a simpler form so that students can understand them quickly. Learning is not just a process of remembering something but learning in receiving and understanding the new knowledge being learned. Knowledge is presented in non-textual language, namely by visualizing an understanding of knowledge that will be easily accepted and processed in human memory. Images which are a form of visual representation will make it easier for students to understand the material well.

Graphic organizers are rooted in schema theory which states that when students learn something new, they must be able to "call" back the information or knowledge they have previously learned for later use (Shoari & Farrokhi, 2014; Wangzom, 2019). Our knowledge in the brain is stored in a hierarchy as a way to organize information. The use of a graphic organizer will make it easier for students to connect knowledge/information that has previously been known with information/concepts that will be included in the writing to be made. If previous knowledge/information has been activated, the scheme will create a framework for the information to be written, so that writing skills can be improved.

It can be concluded that the graphic organizer is a learning medium that coordinates ideas and concepts into a visual form. A graphic organizer is made of lines, arrows, and circles that show the relationship between main ideas. It helps students organize their thoughts, knowledge, and ideas. Graphic Organizer is useful for improving students' ability to write because organizers can explore initial ideas, compare and draw similarities between two or more things, and plan a sequence of processes. Some studies that have been conducted by several researchers reveal that the graphic organizer strategy is an innovative strategy that can improve students' language skills (Cole & Feng, 2015; Maharani, 2018; Moline, 2013; Pratama et al., 2017; Shoari & Farrokhi, 2014). This is what then makes the researcher more interested in applying graphic orga-

nizer strategies to improve students’ writing skills which are still low. The researcher assumes that the application of graphic organizer strategies can improve students’ writing skills as well as foster a positive attitude toward learning to write.

METHODS

Research design

This research uses a Classroom Action Research design with two cycles. This research strategy has an applied focus on gathering information about the weaknesses of classroom teaching practices and thereafter improving the way their educational domains work, their teaching, and their students’ learning (Glanz, 2014). Thus, it can be said that the orientation of this research is to “improve” teaching practices in the classroom through a series that is carried out systematically to improve the quality of student learning outcomes.

This research applies the model put forward by (Latief, 2016) that describes the research model in four stages, namely planning, implementing action, observing, and reflecting). Planning; The planning stage is carried out by preparing an action plan based on problem identification in the initial research before the research was carried out. This action plan includes all the action steps for implementing the graphic organizer strategy to improve students’ writing skills. In detail, at this stage, all the needs of implementing classroom action research are prepared, starting from teaching materials, and lesson plans, to learning media. 2). Action; The implementation of the action is adjusted to the plan that has been made before. 3). Observation; Observation is observing the results or impact of actions taken or imposed on students. The observation stage is the activity of direct observation of the implementation of the actions taken in classroom action. The main objective of the observation is to find out whether there are changes that occur before and after using the graphic organizer strategy. 4). Reflection; At this stage, an assessment of the results or impact of actions from various criteria is carried out. Based on the results of this reflection, the teacher will be able to determine what has been achieved as well as what has not been achieved, and what needs to be improved in the next lesson. The stages can be illustrated below.

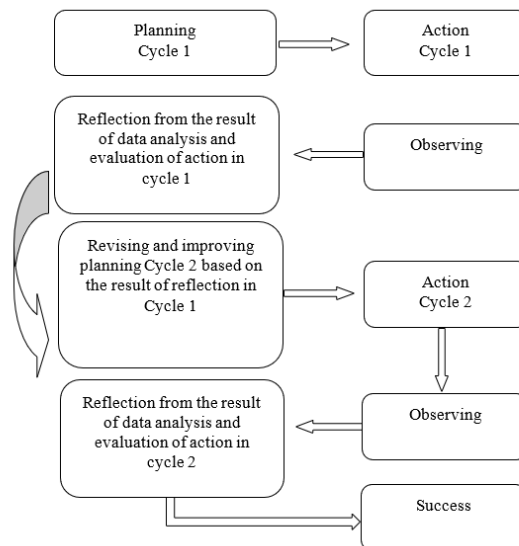


Figure 1. The Stages of Classroom Action Research

Participants

This research was conducted on first-semester students at the University of Billfath Lamongan. The subjects of this research were 34 students, consisting of 22 female students and 12 male students.

Instruments

In this research, the researcher used two research instruments. The first is the Observation Sheet. The observation sheet is used to see how far the effect of the action has reached the goal. This instrument is used to obtain data related to learning during research. This observation sheet is in the form of a checklist consisting of several items relating to the observation of teacher and student activities during the teaching and learning process. The second is a matter of test. There are two tests given by the researcher in this research, namely the preliminary test and the final test. Preliminary tests are conducted to determine students' initial abilities regarding the material to be taught. Then the final test was carried out to find out the students' abilities after using the graphic organizer strategy. The test questions created by the researcher were in the form of instructions for writing descriptive texts. The assessment of student learning outcomes in each cycle is divided into 5 criteria; 1) paragraph organization, 2) cohesion (grammatical-lexical relationship), 3) structure and mechanics (tenses, spelling, punctuation), 4) vocabulary use, and 5) content. The tests were carried out to obtain data on the results of students' writing skills (Hyland, 2019).

Data analysis

First, the analysis obtained through the student activity observation sheet is used to see the process and development of activities that occur during learning. Data on student activities were analyzed using percentages and then described in the form of descriptions.

Second, data analysis from the results of students' writing skills. This test was conducted to determine students' writing skills after being taught how far students have mastered learning. The benefits obtained by this test are that it can be used to improve the quality of input and can be used to measure the strengths and weaknesses of the previous teaching and learning process. Data on students' writing skills were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results of this test data were obtained from the answer sheets which took place at the end of the learning process. The test data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented in the form of a percentage which is useful for knowing the increase in students' writing skills using the graphic organizer strategy. The researcher used a rating scale to describe students' writing abilities, namely excellent, good, fair, poor, and very poor.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher first carried out the pre-action. The researcher applied a pretest for students to write a text. In addition, the researcher also conducted short interviews with students. This interview is used as reference material to find out the initial motivation of students and also the problems they face.

The results of the pre-test showed that students' writing skills were still low. The results of the assessment on the practice of writing texts using the assessment criteria (paragraph organization, cohesion (grammatical-lexical relationship), structure and mechanics (tenses, spelling,

punctuation), vocabulary use, and 5) content) show that there are still many students who have not reached the mark according to the criteria. These results can be seen from the percentage of data below:

Table 1. The Result of Pretest

Classification	Score	Percentage
Excellent	86-100	0%
Good	71-85	18%
Fair	56-70	32%
Poor	41-55	41%
Very Poor	0-40	9%

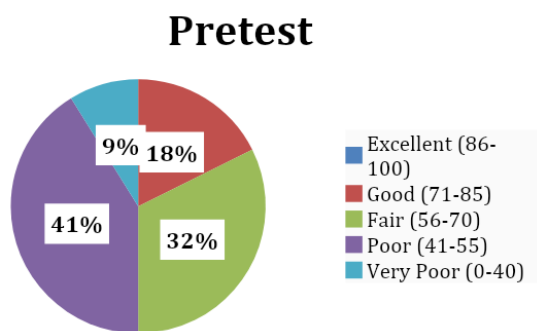


Figure 2. Percentage of Students' Writing Skills

The cycle and action on the assessment obtained from the results of the pretest did not find students' writing skills in excellent percentage, but 18% good, 32% fair, 41% poor, and 9% very poor. Meanwhile, the results of the cycle show improvement in the level of the students' writing skills with 9% excellent, 24% good, 35% fair, 26% poor, and 6% very poor. The details can be seen in the table and figure below.

Table 2. The Result of Cycle I

Classification	Score	Percentage
Excellent	86-100	9%
Good	71-85	24%
Fair	56-70	35%
Poor	41-55	26%
Very Poor	0-40	6%

Cycle I

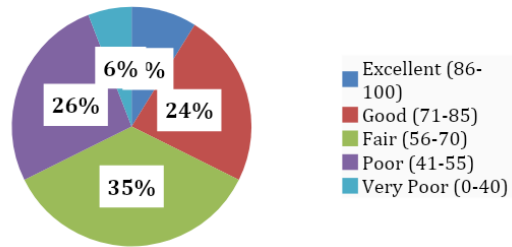


Figure 3. Percentage of students' writing skills

In cycle II, several improvements were made so that learning proceeded according to the optimal scenario and time by forming groups before class began (assigned at the previous meeting). Based on the results of observations and assessments of the implementation of the actions in cycle II, some of the deficiencies in cycle I can be corrected. The learning process can be said to be going well, and the available time allocation can be utilized optimally. The ability to organize and develop ideas based on the results of observations is better than before in cycle I. Students' responses to learning using graphic organizers are also very good. This is evidenced by the existence of a sufficient increase in score. In other words, the competence regarding the ability to write in descriptive text using a graphic organizer has reached the specified minimum completeness criteria (KKM). This is evidenced by the percentage of scores obtained by students. The details can be seen in the table and figure below.

Table 3. The result of cycle II

Classification	Score	Percentage
Excellent	86-100	32%
Good	71-85	50%
Fair	56-70	18%
Poor	41-55	0%
Very Poor	0-40	0%

Cycle II

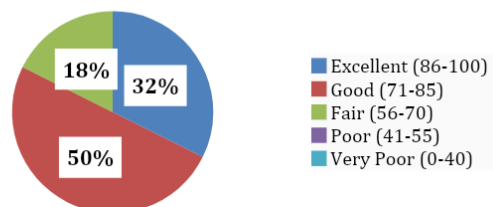


Figure 4. Percentage of students' writing skills

The results of writing skills in cycle II found that the percentage of students' writing skills in excellent percentage was 32%, the good percentage with 50%, and the fair percentage with 18%. Meanwhile, in poor and very poor assessments, no percentage was found at all. The re-

sults of this research prove that the use of the graphic organizer strategy significantly improves students' writing skills and also has a positive impact on student's attitudes toward learning to write. These results indicate that the use of the graphic organizer strategy can effectively support learning to write descriptive text.

The implementation of a graphic organizer strategy in learning to write shows an increase in learning outcomes in each cycle. Based on the results of observation and reflection, the implementation of the actions in cycle I was not maximized. Many deficiencies were found in the implementation of learning, such as the application of inappropriate learning scenarios, and less than optimal use of time. In addition, based on the results of the student test analysis, there are still many shortcomings, such as a lack of developing ideas, and many errors in spelling.

Based on the data obtained from the learning outcomes of the cycle I, it can be concluded that the student's writing ability in descriptive text using a graphic organizer strategy has not yet reached the specified minimum completeness criteria (KKM). This is evidenced by the percentage of scores obtained by students that are dominated by the "sufficient" criterion.

The researcher then planned to return to cycle II. From the results of reflection on cycle II, it was concluded that the learning carried out in cycle II was good. Cycle I problems such as a lack of developing ideas and many errors in spelling have also been fixed. Learning cycle II was more enjoyable than cycle I. The results of cycle II already met the indicators of success of the action, namely more than 80% of students had obtained writing practice scores of more than 70. The above results were also supported by interview results which showed that students felt happy participating in learning to write using the Graphic Organizer strategy. Students feel that learning using the Graphic Organizer strategy through the Venn Diagram simplifies the process of writing the text, creates enthusiasm in learning, does not give difficulties, motivates writing, gives a positive impression, and makes learning interesting and fun. Students also consider that the Graphic Organizer strategy through the Venn Diagram is suitable and needs to be implemented in schools.

The results of this research indicated that the Graphic Organizer strategy through Venn Diagram can improve the quality of students' writing skills. It is because, with this strategy, students will write through a process of planning, drafting, and evaluating during the writing process. The planning process is a basic skill of students in writing. By planning using Venn diagrams, the results of their writing will also be well organized because students also determine the purpose of writing and can allocate writing time appropriately. Next is the drafting process, in this process students can arrange their writing according to the plan described in the Venn diagrams to be able to organize the grammar of their writing that becomes better. The last is evaluation, in this process, students can evaluate their writing as a whole, and thus students get perfect writing results. This strategy can also control the cognitive activities of students that make their learning objectives are achieved. Thus, students can use this strategy to find out the writing process, both in planning, drafting, and evaluating the results of their writing. Explicitly, with these abilities, students can design what they will write, direct themselves so that their writing is of high quality, and evaluate the results of their writing.

A teacher must provide the best means for students to learn to write well. Academic writing is

an academic ability to consolidate students' understanding and becomes the heart of professionals in higher education. Thus, students must always get used to writing to produce coherent and cohesive writing in a foreign language.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings in this research, it can be concluded that graphic organizer strategies can be used to improve students' writing descriptive text skills. The use of a graphic organizer can also build student's confidence and student's motivation during the learning process. Graphic organizers are a very effective and efficient teaching and learning tool. Furthermore, if the graphic organizer strategy is used as a medium for learning writing skills, students will be interested in learning. With this strategy, students will be trained to learn to write by imagining it in written form based on the graphics they like. Thus, the use of this strategy will be able to foster students' interest in learning and can express ideas and creativity in writing.

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