

IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL OF DESCRIPTIVE TEXT BY GOOGLE DOCS

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Abstract

This research aimed to identify how the use of Google Docs can improve students' writing skill of descriptive text. A collaborative action research is the method used in this research. This research was conducted in two cycles at the second grade students of Politeknik Unggul LP3M Medan from March to June 2021, in which there were 3 meetings for the first cycle and 2 meetings for the second cycle. Each cycle consisted of four steps: planning, implementing, evaluation, and reflection. The research data were collected by field notes and tests. The qualitative data were analyzed through assembling the data, coding, comparing, building interpretations, and reporting the outcomes. The quantitative data were analyzed by comparing the mean scores of the pre-test and the post- tests. The research findings showed that Google Docs could improve students' writing skill of descriptive text. The mean score shows the improvement from pretest to the post-test, from 62.39 into 77.04. The improvement of classroom situation includes: 1) students were always ready to have writing class immediately; 2) students developed the idea fluently without talking with other students; 3) students paid full attention to the lesson; 4) it did not take a long time for the students to write sentence.

Keywords: writing skill, descriptive text, Google Docs,

INTRODUCTION

According to Harris (1993: 10), writing is a process that occurs over a period of time, particularly if the writer takes account the sometimes extended periods of thinking that precede initial draft. In writing, the writer needs a time to do some processes inside. The length of the time is different among writers. Some need a longer time to just think about what to write before making the initial draft. The next definition is given by Byrne (1997: 1). He states that writing is producing a sequence of sentences arranged in a particular order and linked together in certain ways. A sequence of sentences whether it is short or long after being put in order and linked together, they will form a coherent whole. This coherent whole is called a text. A text may consist of one paragraph or more. Langan (2001: 5) points out that a paragraph is a short paper of around 150 to 200 words. It usually consists of an opening point called a topic sentence followed by a series of sentences which support that point. Bell and Burnaby in Nunan (1989: 36) say that writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control of a number of variables simultaneously. At the sentence level these include control of content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, and letter formation. Based on the theories stated above, it can be concluded that writing is a process that occurs over a period of time to produce a sequence of sentences arranged in a particular order and linked together in certain ways that is cohesive

and coherent. In writing, there are some aspects that should be concerned by a writer to write well. They are content, organization, word choice or vocabulary, language use, and mechanics (spelling and punctuation). Writing skill is one of English skills that should be learned by students beside listening, speaking and reading. In writing, students must be able to write sentences by using grammar, spelling, punctuation, and coherent ideas correctly. By learning writing, students will be able to communicate well not only in spoken language but also in written language. Based on the education system in Indonesia, the university students should be able to write some text types such as descriptive, narrative, and recount. They are expected to be able to differentiate the kinds of text taught. They are also expected to be able to arrange certain texts using their own words or create the new ones.

Bell and Burnaby in Nunan (1998:6) say that writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control of a number of variables simultaneously. At the sentence level these include control of content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, and letter formation. Beyond the sentence, the writer must be able to structure and integrate information into cohesive and coherent paragraphs and texts. In writing, there are numbers of aspects that must be considered to make the information inside the paragraphs and text cohesive and coherent. Meanwhile, Enre (1988:13) defines that writing is a process of thinking systematically, so that what is being written can be easily understood. Here are the indicators that the students have low writing skill:

1. The students have difficulties in expressing and developing ideas. The students are able to make topic or idea in their writing, but they do not know how to develop their idea;
2. The students get difficulties in cohesiveness and coherence.;
3. The students often make mistakes in word choice in writing descriptive text. The limited word choice makes students find difficulties in applying the appropriate word to express their idea especially to write descriptive text;
4. Sometimes, the students spell some words incorrectly. Sometimes, they know the words they want to use, but they do not know how to spell the words correctly;
5. The students often write sentence in wrong structure (grammatical errors);
6. The students ignore capitalization and punctuation.

Also, there are some problems found in the class during the learning process such as:

1. Some of the students spend much time to have writing class;
2. Some of students talk with other students in order to discuss what they will write;
3. Some students cannot keep their focus on the lesson. They often talk to their friends before they start writing;
4. Students need a long time in writing sentence. They get difficulties in exploring and developing ideas;
5. The writing class is too noisy. The students like to speak each other because they are not able to do writing exercise.

Certainly, it can be concluded that the problems above indicate that:

1. Students need more interesting media to support their writing class;
2. Students need more interesting material from many source, it is not only from monotonous text books. Because the monotone material gives less challenge to the students to explore their knowledge and capability;

3. The teachers need to manage an interesting writing class. He has to make interesting media and teaching technique;
4. The students rarely practice writing in their daily activity;
5. The material given needs to be changed by an attractive material.

To solve the problems above, the researcher tried to use Google Docs as a media to solve students' writing problem. Google Docs is a free, Web-based word processor, spreadsheet, presentation, form, and data storage service offered by Google. It allows users to create and edit documents online while collaborating in real-time with other users.

Based on the background of the study above the researcher formulated the research problems as the followings:

1. Can Google Docs improve the writing skill of the second grade students at Politeknik Unggul LP3M in 2020/2021?
2. How does the Google Docs affect to the students' writing skill?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

I. WRITING

According to Harris (1993: 10), writing is a process that occurs over a period of time, particularly if the writer takes account the sometimes extended periods of thinking that precede initial draft. In writing, the writer needs a time to do some processes inside. The length of the time is different among writers. Some need a longer time to just think about what to write before making the initial draft. The next definition is given by Byrne (1997: 1). He states that writing is producing a sequence of sentences arranged in a particular order and linked together in certain ways. A sequence of sentences whether it is short or long after being put in order and linked together, they will form a coherent whole. This coherent whole is called a text. A text may consist of one paragraph or more. Langan (2001: 5) points out that a paragraph is a short paper of around 150 to 200 words. It usually consists of an opening point called a topic sentence followed by a series of sentences which support that point. Bell and Burnaby in Nunan (1989: 36) say that writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control of a number of variables simultaneously. At the sentence level these include control of content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, and letter formation.

Based on the theories stated above, it can be concluded that writing skill is a process that occurs over a period of time to produce a sequence of sentences arranged in a particular order and linked together in certain ways that is cohesive and coherent. In writing, there are some aspects that should be concerned by a writer to write well. They are content, organization, word choice or vocabulary, language use, and mechanics (spelling and punctuation).

II. DESCRIPTIVE TEXT

Descriptive text is writing about characteristic features of a particular thing. According to Oshima and Hogue (1997:50), descriptive writing appeals to the senses, so it tells how something looks, feels, smells, tastes, and/ or sounds. In addition, a good description is like a "word picture"; the reader can imagine the object, place, or person in his or her mind. A writer of a good description is like an artist who paints a picture that can be "seen" clearly in the mind of the reader. The generic structure of a descriptive text is as follows:

1. Identification: an introduction to the subject of the description;
2. Description of features: describe the characteristic features of the subject.

While the language features of a descriptive text are follows:

1. Use of particular nouns;
2. Use of detailed noun groups to provide information about the subject;
3. Use of a variety of types of adjectives;
4. Use of relating verbs to provide information about the subject;
5. Use of thinking and feeling verbs to express the writer's personal view about the subject or to give an insight into the subject's thoughts and feelings;
6. Use of action verbs to describe the subject's behavior;
7. Use of adverbials to provide more information about this behavior;
8. Use of similes, metaphors and other types of figurative languages, in particular for literal descriptions.

III. GOOGLE DOCS

According to Kennedy, Mighell, & Kennedy in Claire Couillard (2011:1) Google docs is an application that allows users to create documents, spreadsheets and PowerPoint and share them with other online users. The superiority of Google Docs is that it keeps a record of revised document. While, Daire Ó Broin and Damien Raftery (2011:3) state that Google Docs is part of a wider offering of online applications from Google. It includes an online word-processor, a spreadsheet application, and a presentation application, as well as the very useful ability to easily create simple online forms, the results of which are automatically stored in a Google spreadsheet. According to Bradley in Claire Couillard (2011:2), the most current version of Google Docs allows a user to share a document with up to 200 people, and as many as 50 users can work on it at the same time. Bradley states, "If two users are editing the same document at the same time, a box at the top of the screen will list the current collaborators"

From several definitions above Google docs is an easy-use online word processor, spreadsheet and presentation editor made by Google that enables teacher and students to create, store and share instantly and securely, and collaborate online in real time. By using Google Docs they can create new documents from scratch or upload existing documents, spreadsheets and presentations.

Daire Ó Broin and Damien Raftery (2011) describe the procedure how to use Google Docs in teaching language as follows:

- Introducing Google Docs to the students
- Creating Gmail account
- Creating a document
- Sharing the document.
- Viewing revision history

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research was the classroom action research which was conducted at Politeknik Unggul LP3M Medan on the second grade students particularly for AK/AP 2 CP Negeri 3 The researcher used classroom action research to find out whether Google Docs can

improve students' writing skill in writing descriptive text. Classroom Action Research consists of five fundamental steps. Those steps are planning, implementing, observing, reflecting and revising. In this research, the qualitative data were collected using some techniques, namely: observation and questionnaire. The quantitative data of the research were collected by tests: pretest and post test. After collecting the data, the researchers analyzed the data based on Burns (1999: 156-160) who proposes 5 steps in analyzing qualitative data; assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building the data, reporting the outcomes.

DISCUSSION

After using Google Docs to improve the students' writing skill in writing descriptive test, the researcher found some findings that are explained in details as the followings:

1. The implementation of Google Docs as teaching media had improved students' writing skill in writing descriptive text. Also, the use of Google Docs improved five aspects of writing such as; content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. In the Post- Test, the students got higher achievement
2. Based on the students' scores from all tests, the content aspect had improved. It was shown by the ability students in developing the idea. Their idea was relevant with the title. The students' writing was understandable, showed knowledge of subject. The students were able explore the idea easily. There was good elaboration in their writing. By using Google Docs, students were able to develop the idea easily. They could discuss the topic being developed with other students in online way.
3. The improvement of students' writing skill in organization aspect. In this aspect, the students' writing showed the idea clearly stated, supported each paragraph and logical sequencing. Most of students were able to develop the idea using appropriate generic structure of descriptive text. Google Docs helped students to make their writing well organized. In Google Docs, the researcher gave three boxes consisting title, identification, and description. Students had to fill the boxes with cohesive and coherent sentences. So the three boxes given became a good descriptive text. The researcher also gave jumbled text to the students. This activities helped students to be able to rearrange the jumbled text become coherent descriptive text.
4. The improvement of students' writing skill in vocabulary aspect. In this aspect, students were able to use appropriate word in their sentence. The meaning was clear. They mastered more vocabularies. They made fewer mistakes in spelling. By using spell checker in Google Docs, students' spelling got better before they had used spell checker.
5. The improvement of students' writing skill in language use aspect. In this aspect, most of students were able to write sentence grammatically correct. They did not ignore the tense anymore. By using Google Docs, the researcher could explain about grammar easily. The researcher showed the example of simple present tense to the students by using Google Docs. Google Docs has grammar checker to help students in solving grammar problem.
6. The improvement of students' writing skill in mechanics aspect. After the researcher had done the first cycle, the researcher still found many mistakes in students' mechanics. In the cycle 2 the researcher tried to give more attention in their mechanics aspect. Actually, students had known how to use punctuation and capitalization correctly. The problem was only in their awareness in using punctuation and capitalization. They often forgot

punctuation and capitalization in their writing. To solve this problem, he reminded the students about the punctuation and the capitalization frequently to the students.

In addition, the use of Google Docs improves classroom climate such as:

1. The students becomes more active and enthusiasm during the lesson
2. The students paid more attention of the teacher's explanation.
3. The use of Google Docs is effective to apply in online class particularly during the pandemic COVID- 19

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that:

1. Google Docs can improve the students' writing skill in writing descriptive text effectively. By using Google Docs, the students could easily generate the idea and develop their writing. They also improved their sentence structure, organized the text structure properly, chose appropriate vocabularies and used the correct capitalization and punctuation.
2. After using Google Docs, the students become more attentive, attractive and enthusiastic in writing.

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