

The Students' Perception on the Use of Picture to Improve Descriptive Paragraph Writing at Christian University of Indonesia

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Abstract

The objectives of this study were to examine the students' perception on the use of picture in writing descriptive paragraph and to investigate whether the students were interested in the use of picture in writing descriptive paragraph. This study was a survey using the qualitative and survey design. It involved 34 students of English Teaching Study Program, Christian University of Indonesia. To achieve the objectives, qualitative and quantitative data concerning the students' perceptions and interest were collected through a questionnaire and interview. The survey was administered to the eight semester students of 2012/2013 academic year. To support this research the data obtained through the open ended questionnaire, interview was conducted toward four students. The quantitative data were analyzed by using Microsoft Excel 2007, while the qualitative data were analyzed descriptively. The result of this study indicated that almost all of the students agreed to use the picture in developing their descriptive paragraph writing. The use of picture in writing also helped them understand the descriptive paragraphs even though they knew there was another media, i.g. realia, which could help them write a descriptive paragraph. Thus it is suggested that the English teachers should use this technique to improve students' descriptive paragraph writing.

Keywords: *perception, picture, writing, descriptive paragraph*

Introduction

Writing is an active written language skill. It is supported by Taselin (2010, p. 104) said writing is an important part of language teaching as it also functions as an essential tool for learning in which students improve their knowledge of the language elements in real use. Additionally, writing also helps children to make sense of the English expressions they use in class when they play games, act out a role play, or listen to a story. When the students were asked to write, some instructions are usually heart, like: tell a story to prove a point, paint a picture with words, summarize an article, compare two subjects, and share what the students know about something, explain why the students agree with or disagree with a statement or an idea.

Writing is also important because it is a skill which develops critical thinking (Cavdar& Doe, 2012). Thus writing is a cognitive process in expressing ideas forming letters of word in a good sentence as Deporter and Heracki (2002) explain that “writing is a whole brain activity using bright brain side (emotion) and left brain side (logic)” (p.179). It means that writing is a whole brain activity to formulate and organize ideas in right words to be communicated in a communicative manner.

Sharples (1999, p.8) also explained that writing is an opportunity; it allows students to express something about themselves, explore and explain ideas. The students need to explore their ideas and compose into a good text. Through writing, they can convey their ideas by organizing them into a good text; consequently shared meanings among language speakers are met. Grow (1999) states that a paragraph can be classified into seven types; narration, definition, comparison, persuasion, exposition, prosedure, and description. According to Langan (2005, p.170), when you describe someone or something, you give your readers a picture in words. You must observe and record specific details that appeal to your readers' sense (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch). More than any other type of essay, a descriptive paper needs sharp, colorful details.

Descriptive writing describes a particular person, place or thing. Descriptive writing appeals to the sense, so it tells how something looks, feels, smells, tastes, and sounds (Oshima, 2007, p.61). It is a piece of writing which visualizes and performs the appearance of thing by describing the details of object. Kathleen and Mcwhorter (1983) remark “descriptive paragraph is a piece of writing that presents ideas by providing details about characteristic of people,

places, things” (p. 133). Further, Kiefer and Kate (1983) state that “descriptive paragraph writing is a sort of writing through which the writer has determined the central focus for the description, details that flesh out the idea can be chosen such as the description of place, event, and others” (p. 51). The detail of descriptive paragraph writing gives some advantages for readers such appealing sense, creating a mental picture, and making feeling. In short, its purpose is to describe and reveal a particular person, place, or thing.

To get the students' ability in writing descriptive text and interest in learning English, teachers should choose a media that is making a connection between objects and language. Picture like drawings, photographs, posters, slides, cartoons, magazines advertisements, diagrams, graphs, tables, charts, and maps can be valuable resource for teaching writing (Raimes, 1983). It can be the basis for not just one task but many, such as sequencing of sentences to the writing of original dialogues, letters, reports, or essays. Moreover, pictures make easier for people to catch ideas or information clearly conveyed within them more than are merely expressed verbally (Munadi, 2008). When the students see the pictures, they are able to write more, interact with the pictures and their friends, to make good relationships among paradoxes and to build new ideas.

Pictures are able to help students overcome their reluctance to write (Kellner, 2009). The picture not only stimulated the students' interest but also attract and increase their attention. Pictures are often used to present situations to help students work with grammar and vocabulary (Harmer, 2004). This means that the use of pictures is encouraging students to express more ideas. This idea goes to Thomas and Kane (2003, p. 14) who state pictures can be effectively used to inform or describe a place, personality, and other. Further, picture as visual aids can help the writer in interpreting the specific characteristics or the details of an object (Doug and John, 1989, p. 12). Finally, Wright (1989,p. 18) states that pictures can be used to motivate the learner and to remind him or her to say.

This theoretical background leads this study to investigate two different questions: (1) What are the students' perceptions on the use of pictures to improve descriptive paragraph writing? And (2) Is there any benefit on the use of pictures to improve students' descriptive paragraph writing?

Methodology

This research is a survey method conducted in Faculty of Education and Teacher Training of Christian University of Indonesia. The participants of the research were the eighth semester's students studying descriptive paragraph writing.

The instruments of this study are questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire consisted of 25 items contained the positive Likert-Scaled statement using. The interview was about the students' perception on the use of picture to improve their descriptive paragraph writing. The quantitative data were analyzed in terms of means and percentage by using Microsoft Excel 2007 and SPSS. To analyze the qualitative data, a content analysis method was used. In the analysis process, the interviewees' responses for each question were transcribed. After that, the researcher analyzed the themes related to the objectives of the study. To guarantee the validity of the qualitative data obtained in this study, methodological and theoretical triangulations were employed. First, methodological triangulation refers to the use of more than one methods for gathering data collected through the questionnaire and the interview. Second, theoretical triangulation refers to the use of more than one theoretical scheme in the interpretation of research finding.

Results and Discussion

This research is to describe the students' perceptions on the use of picture to improve descriptive paragraph writing. The data presented is classified into two groups; demographic data and perception. The first classification presents the data of class and gender. The description or presentation of these types of data is important to see if there is any correlation between their demographic and perceptions. The second classification presents the students' perception on the use of picture to improve descriptive paragraph writing.

Table 1

Demographic Data

C l a s s	M a l e		F e m a l e		T o t a l	
	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)
A	6	(33)	1	2 (67)	1	8 (100)
B	5	(31)	11	(69)	16	(100)

In this study, the researcher chose students of eighth semester of English Teaching Study Program in Christian University of Indonesia who were divided into two classes, 18 students represent class A and 16 students represent class B. There were 6 males and 12 females in class A, and 5 males and 11 females in class B.

The students' perceptions on the use of picture to improve descriptive paragraph writing

The following data described some perceptions of students who have learned descriptive paragraph writing. The answers of the questionnaire were varied from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Moreover, the researcher also described the answers of students from the interview to ensure the data of the questionnaire.

Table 2
Interest in Learning Descriptive Paragraph by Using Picture

No.	S t a t e m e n t s	S		A		N		D		S		D	
		F	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)
1	I like writing using picture because it can increase my interest to tell an object in a paragraph	3	(10)	20	(67)	4	(13)	1	(3)	2	(7)		
2	I like writing descriptive paragraph using picture because I can use a whole brain activity	3	(10)	23	(77)	1	(3)	1	(3)	2	(7)		
3	I like to write a paragraph about a subject in one topic if I see a picture	2	(7)	23	(77)	1	(3)	2	(7)	2	(7)		
4	I like to see a picture when I write a description about person, place or thing	5	(17)	21	(70)	3	(10)	0	(0)	1	(3)		
5	I like to write a paragraph by using a picture because it tells how something looks, feels, smells, tastes, sounds	5	(17)	17	(57)	4	(13)	3	(10)	1	(3)		

From the data of the students' interest perception in Table 2, it can be said that the students were interested enough in learning descriptive paragraph by using picture, and it was one of their favourite activities. Despite the fact that many students did not like writing but when they were seeing a picture they could write a descriptive paragraph. They also were motivated to learn the other skill in learning English. Moreover, the data above was supported with the data of interview strengthening their views of using picture in learning decriptive paragraph writing.

Interviewee A: *“Yes, of course. I like writing a paragraph by using a picture. I think learning writing a paragrah by using picture stimuates me to find some idea”*

Interviewee C: *“Yes, I like writing. I think it is a good way to motivate me to write a paragraph by seeing a picture.”*

Table 3
The Students' Perception of the Usefulness of Picture

No.	S t a t e m e n t s	S		A		N		D		S		D	
		f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)
1	I can write descriptive paragraph by using picture	1	(3)	18	(60)	7	(23)	4	(13)	0	(0)		
2	I can improve my attention when I write descriptive paragraph by looking at the picture	1	(3)	20	(67)	4	(13)	4	(13)	1	(3)		
3	Learning writing using picture can help me work with grammar and vocabulary	1	(3)	16	(53)	5	(17)	8	(27)	0	(0)		
4	Using picture in writing descriptive paragraph stimulates me to express more ideas	3	(10)	22	(77)	2	(7)	3	(10)	0	(0)		

As shown in Table 3 the picture was useful to improve students' writing skill, especially to improve their writing descriptive paragraph. The students said picture was useful in learning writing descriptive paragraph. By using picture they had more chances to write. Also, almost all responses of the students reflected that picture can improve their descriptive paragraph writing. The data obtained through interviews strengthened their view that picture is useful in learning writing descriptive paragraph.

Interviewee C: *“Of course. I think learning writing paragraph by using picture can improve my attention when I am writing descriptive paragraph.”*

Interviewee B: *“Yes, because learning writing using picture can help me to correct my grammar and improve my vocabulary.”*

Table 4
The Students' Perception of the Simplicity of Picture

No.	S t a t e m e n t s	S		A		N		D		S		D	
		f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)
1	Writing descriptive paragraph is easy when it uses picture	4	(13)	16	(53)	7	(23)	3	(10)	0	(0)		
2	In addition to write a descriptive paragraph, I also can write more when I see the picture	2	(7)	22	(73)	5	(17)	1	(3)	0	(0)		
3	Picture is an efficient tool to improve my descriptive paragraph	4	(13)	17	(57)	4	(13)	4	(13)	1	(3)		
4	I can improve my writing descriptive paragraph through picture	3	(10)	19	(63)	3	(10)	5	(17)	0	(0)		
5	My writing descriptive paragraph will be more effective if I am using the picture	4	(13)	16	(53)	5	(17)	4	(13)	1	(3)		

The Table 4 indicates that the students felt easy to learn writing descriptive paragraph using picture. The picture is a medium helping them explore their ideas into words. In the other words, picture could build up their creativity. The students had various responses toward the easiness of picture seen from the result of interview.

Interviewee C: *“Yes, because I can easily write a descriptive paragraph using a picture.”*

Interviewee D: *“Yes, because it can improve my writing skill and I agree if picture is the best media in writing descriptive paragraph.”*

Table 5
The Students' Perception of the Picture and Writing

No.	S t a t e m e n t s	S		A		N		D		S		D	
		f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)	F	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)
1	I can get motivation while I am writing a paragraph using picture	2	(7)	19	(63)	6	(20)	3	(10)	0	(0)		
2	I can imagine more things when I write an article using picture	5	(17)	19	(63)	3	(10)	3	(10)	0	(0)		
3	I can describe a thing accurately when I want to write a paragraph using picture	4	(13)	18	(60)	3	(10)	4	(13)	1	(3)		
4	Picture is helpful to me while I practice to write a paragraph	4	(13)	17	(57)	4	(13)	4	(13)	1	(3)		
5	Picture is helpful to me while I write a conversation, discussion and storytelling	2	(7)	21	(70)	3	(10)	3	(10)	1	(3)		
6	I can acquire the meaning by seeing things in the picture without teacher's explanation when I write a story	3	(10)	21	(70)	2	(7)	2	(7)	2	(7)		

As shown in Table 5 students enjoyed learning writing descriptive paragraph using picture. Picture was one tool to develop their descriptive paragraph, especially writing skills. Moreover, most of students also said picture was the best tool to improve their writing skill. The interview result confirmed such finding.

Interviewee A: *“Yes, absolutely picture can improve my creativity when I am writing a paragraph.”*

Interviewee C: *“Yes, because picture can give me the best information eventhough I've never seen the place, thing or person in the picture.”*

Table 6
The Students' Perception of the Picture and Descriptive Paragraph

No.	S t a t e m e n t s	S		A		N		D		S		D	
		f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)	f	(%)
1	I can learn and write a descriptive paragraph using the interesting picture	5	(17)	17	(57)	3	(10)	4	(13)	1	(3)		
2	Learning writing descriptive paragraph through picture is fun	3	(10)	23	(77)	2	(7)	2	(7)	0	(0)		
3	I can easily write a descriptive paragraph using the picture that prepared by the teacher	2	(7)	18	(60)	4	(13)	4	(13)	2	(7)		
4	Learning writing descriptive paragraph through picture is effective	2	(7)	20	(67)	5	(17)	3	(10)	0	(0)		
5	I can write about something that I have never seen before through a picture	3	(10)	19	(60)	3	(10)	5	(17)	0	(0)		

Table 6 indicates that the students enjoyed learning writing descriptive paragraph using picture. Students said that learning writing descriptive paragraph using picture was fun. They could easily write a descriptive paragraph using the picture prepared by the teacher. Moreover, most of students also said that they could write about something that they had never seen before by looking at a picture. So, from the all responses of the students we can see that picture was an efficient media helping them in learning writing even to improve descriptive paragraph. Moreover, the research finding was supported by the interview result.

Interviewee B: *“Yes, because learning descriptive paragraph by using picture is fun.”*

Interviewee D: *“Yes, because when I see the pictures make me more understand to write a descriptive.”*

Conclusion

Picture is a really essential in teaching English. More than a half of the students confessed that picture was interesting medium of learning. Therefore, picture can be applied as a media in teaching and learning process. Most of the students agreed that picture was a useful media to learn and improve their writing especially in descriptive paragraph writing. Teaching descriptive paragraph by using picture can attract the students' interest and motivation.

Suggestion

Picture is also suitable media that could be combined with other teaching techniques. However, teacher should be selective to choose the picture. The students should be active and motivated to learn descriptive paragraph because it is not only interesting to learn by using picture but also useful. Hopefully, this study can be used as additional references for further researches to improve and create other techniques which will give contribution in teaching and learning writing especially descriptive paragraph.

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