

IMPROVING STUDENT WRITING SKILL THROUGH CROSSWORD PUZZLES APPLICATION AT SEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS OF MTs NEGERI 1KOTA SERANG

Astry Wulandari

University of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa
astrywulandari321@gmail.com

Nurhaeda Gailea

University of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa

Devi Hellistya

University of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa

ABSTRACT

EFL writing is considered as a complex skill which still becomes a problem among students in Junior High School, Islamic State of Junior High School is not the exception. The major problem comes up that students have no interesting in writing. It is caused the students' score in writing is low and under criterion of minimum completeness (KBM). However writing is important to learn as a part of EFL. EFL writing will be an interesting subject when students learn through an attractive tool. So, to attract students it needs a new atmosphere in writing. The action that is used to solve it is through crossword puzzle. This is an application that can help students more interesting in writing. Combining technology in education is very unique process where students at present day love technology as a part of their life. This action research particularly analyzed the improvement of students writing through crossword puzzle application. This research comprises two cycles, where in the cycle 1 is different from cycle 2, both in the process and result. The result of the research shows that 76.31% students passed the criterion of minimum completeness for the whole process and there is an improvement 12.6% from pretest to posttest. It can be concluded that this crossword puzzle can improve students' writing skill and their critical thinking, so it can empower them to solve the problem. Beside, crossword puzzle is also can be used for other subjects at school.

Keywords: writing, crossword puzzle, technology

INTRODUCTION

A large society expect students to become a good writer after taking composition class, and the most obligation is coming from the teacher to make students professional in writing

(Nunan, 2015, p. 67). Most people had bad experience in writing it includes some students, some of them like and others dislike or fear it and usually avoid it (Elbow, 2000, p. 6). Expressing an idea coherently and accurately in writing is a major achievement which even native speaker hardly can do. That is why writing becomes a crucial thing because it can help students to develop their critical thinking skills and help them to understand and to communicate complicated ideas (Allyn, 2011, p. 1).

The fact that happens in real situation at MTs Negeri 1 Kota Serang is the students have low scores and cannot pass the criterion of minimum completeness (KBM), this is because of for some students writing is long time activity so it needs deep thinking and high concentration. The problem usually comes up from their ability in arranging the sentences. Besides, students are too lazy to bring a dictionary. So, they have a difficult to choose an appropriate words and it is because they are lack of vocabulary. However it is influence the content of the paragraph and grammar too. On the other hand based on the observation result the score of students is low. Thus, it needs a method to improve students' writing skill.

To solve the problem that happens in MTs Negeri 1 Kota serang related to writing skill, the researcher try to adjust a new media. The media is used has a purpose to improve students' writing skill. It is using crossword puzzle application. The using of this media can create a new experience for students. It gives a new atmosphere to the students when they entered to classroom, they should feel that they have entered it and also know that a classroom is a place for learning, especially English classroom and it becomes their particular (Cooze, 2006, p. 2).

Problem Identification

Based on the background that has written above, the researcher can identify the problem as follow:

- a. What is the process of improving students' writing skill through crossword puzzles as a teaching media?
- b. What is the reason of students having no interesting in writing?
- c. What is the alternative way to teach writing without using gadget or electronic learning?
- d. How to teach writing through technology application?
- e. How to improve students' critical thinking through technology?

- f. How to improve students' score in order to pass criterion of minimum completeness (KBM)?

Limitation of the Research

To make it deeper, the researcher has limited the problem to the students' writing skill improvement in processing the teaching learning through crossword puzzles application, creating student critical thinking through crossword puzzles application.

Formulation of the Problem

Based on the identification problem and the limitation issue, the problem discussed can be formulated as follows:

- a. What is the description of the teaching learning process through cross word puzzles application and as a teaching media to improve students' writing ability?
- b. Why is technology application can create students critical thinking and achieve the purpose of academic in a short time also can attract students to learn English?

Objective of the Research

The research objective has been broad as following below:

1. The teaching learning process through crossword puzzles application as a teaching media can improve students' writing ability.
2. Technology application can create students critical thinking and achieve the purpose of academic in a short time also can attract students to learn English.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing is to depict the graphic symbols representing a language an individual understand so that others can read such the graphic symbol (Lado as cited in Tarigan, 2000, p. 21). There are four process of writing: planning, drafting, and editing, final draft (Harmer, 2004, p. 5). Writing is a process of discovery that involves a series of steps, without practice, people can think that writing is difficult (Langan, 2005, p. 12). Through writing, communication will be more effective and more interesting. As Harmer (2004, p. 3) states that a modern version of written (or 'texted') communication, however received by a mobile phone. There are some stages of the writing as followed; planning, drafting, editing and final draft (Harmer, 2004, p. 5).

Cross word puzzles is usually in the form of rectangle grid with the black n white shaded squares. The goal of this game is to fill the white square which is led by clues. The definition of cross word puzzles for students is words that are filled into a pattern of numbered squares in answer to clues so that students read across and down (Hacker, 2011, p. 15). On the other hand the definition of cross word puzzles is a game in which words have to be fitted across and downwards into spaces with number in a square diagram (Hornby, 1976, p. 351).

As Goh and Hopper (2007) stated using crossword puzzle taps unique motivation and challenges students to use lateral thinking skill as cited in (Jaramillo, Losada, & Fekula, 2012, p. 215). This teaching media gives a good influence in learning writing and can help students easier to improve their ability in writing.

Related to the crossword puzzles, technology can help to create it, a puzzle element can provide a hook, and ICT makes such puzzles practical to construct (Rank, Warren, & Milum, 2011, p. 5). However, teaching English is also more interesting if it is using a technology as a supported tool. Technology is a common things in now day, everybody use it in every single life. According to Henderson, Klemes, & Eshet (2000, p. 107) ICT has become a part of teaching learning process and has had a considerable impact on the characteristic and the function of education as the use of technology promotes thinking skills and strategies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objective of the research

The research objective has been broad as following below:

1. The teaching learning process through crossword puzzles application as a teaching media can improve students' writing ability.
2. Technology application can create students critical thinking and achieve the purpose of academic in a short time also can attract students to learn English.

Site and Schedule

This research site is at MTs Negeri 1 Kota Serang which is located in Jl. Bhayangkara No.84. The schedule approximately took one and half months. The schedule will start on 30th of April and finish on 14th of May.

Participant of the research

The participants of this research are about 38 students of class VII.E at MTs Negeri 1 Kota Serang academic year 2017/2018.

Method of the Research

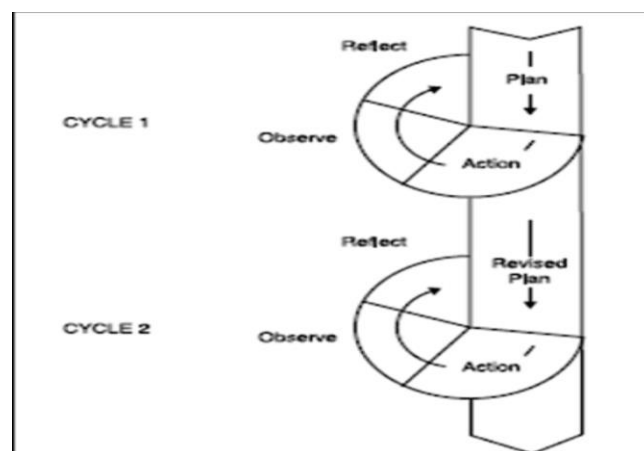
The design of the research is Classroom Action Research (CAR) that is focused on the students' skills in writing. As Mettetal (2001) stated that classroom action research is was a method to find out the suitable treatment worked best in classroom to improve teaching learning activity.

Research Design

In this situation, this action research is design to know the use of crossword puzzle in improving students writing ability to students of seventh grade of MTs Negeri 1 Kota Serang. The researcher uses the model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart that it is called 'self-reflective spiral' (Kemmis, Robin, & Nixon, 2014, p. 18).

Figure 1

The model of Action Research by Kemmis and McTaggart



Research Instrument

The data collection procedures is done through some steps including setting the boundaries for the study, collecting information through observation, interviews, documents and

audio visual material. The collecting data procedures in qualitative methods involve four basic types .

Data Collection

In this research, the researcher uses a qualitative method to get the data collection. The data analysis qualitative is used to measure data from observation and interview, while the quantitative data is used to measure the result of the test. All data gathers to know the students' writing skill. The researcher uses analytical scoring rubric adapted from Bacha's model in Jacob *et al.*

Research Procedure

The research procedure is started with the observation. The purpose of the observation is to find out the problem that happens with the students. Then, the researcher tries to find out some supporting theory to make the research more acceptable. The research question is important to guide the research as a point of the research, besides to solve the problem, it needs a methodology as a tool to find out the way.

The other way, to select or identifying the problem the researcher takes an interview to the students. The interview that the researcher takes consist of two parts, they are pre interview and post interview. The pre interview will be taken before treatment and the post interview is after getting treatment.

Criteria the Success Action

The criteria of the success action can be seen when the students' writing score could achieve the target of minimum learning criteria 75 or above. However, it is called successful if 75% of students have score individual in writing skill achieve at least the same as or above 75.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Description of Data and Analysis

In getting the data there were some steps that the researcher was done, one of the step was doing the pretest. Therefore, the mean score of pretest was 69.37 and there were only eight students who passed the criterion of minimum completeness. The students' percentage that has

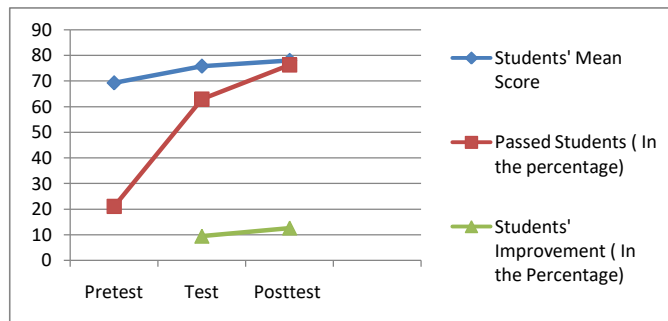
passed the KBM 75 was 21.05%. However, there were 30 students who did not passed the KBM. From the data above the highest score was 92 and the lowest score was 48.

The result of the test in cycle 1 showed the students' changes in process of writing. The result of the students' test in cycle 1 showed the mean was 75.89. The highest score was 92 and the lowest score was 64. And there were an improvement score before and after getting treatment as much as 9.39%. However, the result of the test in cycle 1, there were 24 students who passed the criterion of minimum completeness. It was also showed that the percentage of students calculated of the posttest in a wholes class was 63%.

In cycle 2 the mean score of students' writing skill was 78.11. There were an improvement score between cycle 1 and cycle 2 for about 2.92 %. The highest score was 96 and the lowest score was 68. And the percentage of the improvement before and after getting treatment was about 12.6%. Besides, there were 29 students who passed the criterion of minimum completeness in the cycle 2. It was also showed that the percentage of students calculated of the posttest in a wholes class was 76.31%.

It could be assumed that the implementation of action research by using crossword puzzle application to improve students' writing skill at MTs Negeri 1 Kota Serang was appropriate and could be adjust to any classes based on planning that had been discussed by the researcher previously. From the result above, and based on the calculation, there was the diagram of students' mean score from pretest to posttest2. The students' percentage of pretest to posttest and the students' improvement from pretest to posttest could be seen as following below.

Figure 2
The score of students' writing Skill from Pretest to Posttest



Beside, the researcher also calculated the result of each writing components. Based on the writing assessment, there were five writing component, they are; organization, vocabulary, content, language use and mechanic. .

The first writing component was organization. There was an improvement in organization component from pretest to posttest. The result showed that the organization improvement from pretest to test was 6.52% and the result from posttest to test was 5.44%. The total improvement from pretest to posttest was 12.31%.

The second writing component was vocabulary. The result showed that the improvement of writing vocabulary component was 8.82% from pretest to test, and 1.35% from posttest to test and for the whole test was 10.29% from pretest and posttest.

The third component was content. The result showed that the writing content has been improved. The percentage of pretest to test was improved around 9.23% and from test to posttest was 11.97%. The total improvement from pretest to posttest was 22.30%.

The next component was language use. There was an improvement from pretest to test 6.71%, but there was no improvement from test to posttest. The result of that was decreased. The totally improvement from pretest to posttest was 1.49%.

The last component was mechanic. The result showed that there was an improvement for mechanic component. The result of pretest to test was 16.52%, and 0.709% for the improvement from test to posttest. The last result was 17.35% for the improvement from pretest to posttest the table of the percentage could be seen as the following below.

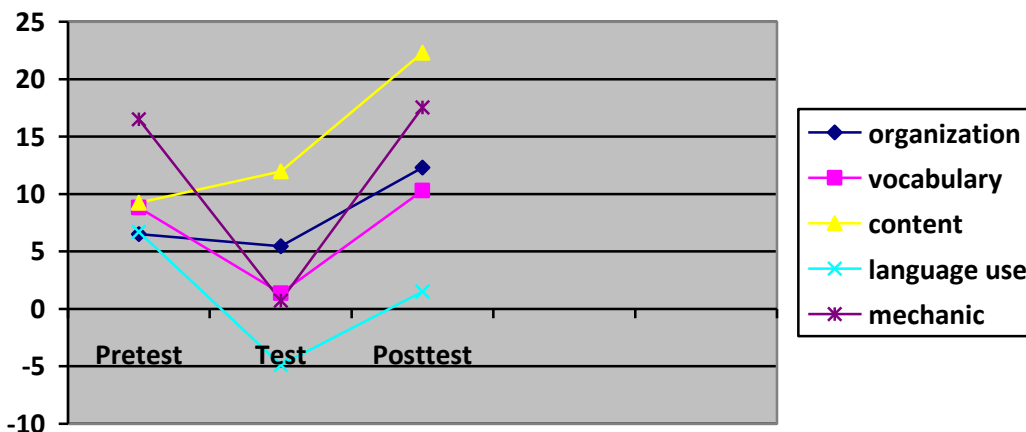
Table 1
The result of writing component

No	Writing component	Percentage
1	Organization	12.31%
2	Vocabulary	10.29%
3	Content	22.30%
4	Language use	1.49%
5	Mechanic	17.35%

As the result above the first component that got the biggest percentage was content then continue to mechanic, organization, vocabulary and the last is language use. For the researcher, it

had been successful to adjust crossword puzzle in improving students' writing skill. The diagram of the improvement could be seen at the figure below.

Figure 3
The Result of Writing Component (in percentage)



The Research Instrument finding

In taking the research, the researcher did an activity that consist of observation and analysis, to know students' attitude and emotional response in taking writing and decided the future activity to solve the problem during the activity was handling. To complete this research, the researcher took 4 meetings total and 1 meeting for pretest. The researcher took writing as the main students' problem because of the result of some their test showed that students had difficulties to express or draft.

In the observation and analysis the researcher gave the pretest to know how far the students' skill in writing. The pretest was done at the end of April. During the pretest students looked confused and hesitate to write, they even did not bring the dictionary, eventually the class was quite noisy and restless. In pretest the researcher asked students to describe things that consist of 4 pictures and the time they spent was 75 minutes, the rest of time was used by the researcher to explain what they should do.

During the research, there were two interviews that the researcher did to the students. The interview consisted of pre interview that was done before getting treatment and interview after getting treatment. In the first interview the researcher tried to identify their problem in English

especially in writing. There were some questions that the researcher gave to the students and they could answer it well.

In this occasion the researcher wanted to know the students' problem when they took writing. It showed that students had lack of motivation and lack of words to express their writing; however, there was an expectation when the researcher had a media to make them more interesting in writing. The result of the interview showed that the students still had the same problems, they did not have motivation and little afraid to write. On the other hand they tend to be lazy to bring a dictionary. The students expected that there was a new atmosphere to have motivation in writing.

During the second interview the researcher showed their charming expression and their motivation when they talked about the learning process. They had more powerful and confident when they talked that crossword puzzle could improve their writing ability. The students also said that bring dictionary helped them to find out the strange or unfamiliar words.

Discussion

The research declared that crossword puzzles application succeeded in improving students' writing skill for seventh grade at MTs Negeri 1 Kota serang. It had shown in every cycle that there was an improvement in students' writing skill. Starting in pretest it could be seen that the students had low score and under criterion of minimum completeness. Crossword puzzles could tap unique motivation and challenges to the students to use lateral thinking skill (Goh and Hopper, 2007).

In other occasion the use of crossword puzzle could improve spelling of the EFL students as it happened in Amiri's research (2017). Due to the need to spell words properly to complete the puzzle, and it increased attention in studying also it could be used as a study tool (Childers, 1996, p. 234). The result also showed that the component of content writing became the highest score in using crossword puzzle. There were some benefit of mananging contents at the writing component, such as greater consistency and accuracy, reduced translaltion cost, and traceability (Rockley & Manning, 2008, p 24).

Somehow, the use of crossword puzzle also could use as a vocabulary learning that designed specially for English Language Learners (ELLs), the result showed that students felt more positive and made subtabtial progress when working collaboratively (Merkel, 2016).

More than 75% students problem in writing skill could be solved by crossword puzzles. Crossword puzzle were useful aids to learning for first year biology students (Franklin & Lewis, 2003). Solving crossword puzzles involves many skills usefeul for students including: spelling, reasoning, making inferences, evaluating choices, and drawing conclusion. All the statement had been described in reseach that has done by (Whisenand & Dunphy, 2010).

Besides, crossword puzzle also can help students improve vocabulary knowledge, meanwhile incease their learning motivation (Wiwat, 2013). Among many games, crossword puzzles seem to be more attractive than others. The use of crossword puzzles games provided a unique sense of motivation and challenged the students because it required both lateral and longitudinal thinking to solve the puzzle (Goh & Hooper, 2007).

It can be concluded that crossowrd puzzle can be used for all subject based on the needed. The benefit of crossowrd puzzle in improving students' writing skill can be entertaining and less intimidation because in doing crossword puzzle students can work collaboratively. This kinds of activities allow studedents to work either in groups or alone, to be competitive or not, to be creative, and to have fun learning (Davis, Shepherd, & Zwiefelhofer, 2009, p. 8) On the other case using crossword puzzles can improve reading comprehension, the students' achievement has been increased after the students did the crossword puzzles (Munjayanah, 2016).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

Based on the result of the data analysis and the interpretation of the previous chapter, it can be concluded that the use of crossword puzzle application could improve the students' writing skill at seventh grade of MTs Negeri 1 Kota Serang. The process of improving conducted two cycles, and the result of each cycle could be seen the increasing of the students' score such as mean, students passed and students' improvement from before and after getting treatment. The instrument of the research used observation, interview and document. The data analysis of the test was also done at the end of each cycle.

Crossword puzzle could be applied not only for English subject but for others subject. Students more interesting and had a high motivation in writing after using this teaching media. The students' response was also good and it gave a new atmosphere for them. In cycle 1 to cycle

2 there was an improvement which is so significance in using crossword puzzle. The students' achievement in pretest showed that the students who did not pass the criterion of minimum completeness was under 30% and it changed after getting treatment in cycle 1 and cycle 2. In chapter four all the students' calculated had been shown. The students' writing skill score had achieved the target of the criterion of minimum completeness as much as 76. 31%.

Suggestion

Based on the result of the research, the researcher would like to give some suggestions related to the research. In teaching writing, teachers should give and present an interesting teaching media or in variety to avoid students' bored. Teacher should give more changes to students and always remind them to bring a dictionary. Teacher also should active and more aware when students found difficulties. In teaching learning process teacher should be involved in order to closer with the students. Managing the time well is a part of teacher due to avoid the unfinished learning process. Students should be allowed to bring a gadget sometime to support teaching learning process. During teaching learning process it is better if teacher always combine technology and conventional method.

REFERENCES

- Allyn, P. (2011, July 18). *Top 5 Reasons Writing is Important for Kids on NBC's Education Nation*. Retrieved from <http://pamallyn.com/2011/107/pam-allyns-top-5-reasons-writing-is-important-for-kids-on-nbcs-education-nation/>).
- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by Principles: an Interractive Approach to Language Pedagogy (2nd Edition)*. New York: Pearson Education Company.
- Callister, P. D. (2010). Time to Blossom: An Inquiry into Bloom's Taxonomy as a Hierarchy and Means for Teaching Legal Research Skill. *Law Library Journal Vol.102:2* , 35-52.
- Cooze, A. (2006). *100 Ideas for Teaching English*. New York: Continuum.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Design Third Edition*. United States of America: SAGE.
- Elbow, P. (2000). *Everyone Can Write*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Goh, T., & Hooper, V. (2007). To TxT or Not to TxT: That's the Puzzle. *The journal of Information Technology Education* , 441-453.
- Habibi, N. (2017). The Use of Flash Card in Improving Vocabulary Mastery of Students with disability. *Journal of Disability Studies* , 197-216.
- Hacker. (2011, May). In *Merriam-Webster.com*. Retrieved March Monday, 2018, from <https://www.merriam-wbster.com/dictionary/>
- Harmer, J. (2004). *How to Teach Writing*. England: Longman.

- Henderson, L., Klemes, J., & Eshet, Y. (2000). Just Playing a Game? Educational simulation software and cognitive outcomes . *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 22 (1) , 105-129.
- Jacob, H. L. (1981). *English Composition Program*. Rowley: Newbury House Publisher, Inc.
- Jaramillo, C. m., Losada, B. M., & Fekula, M. J. (2012). Designing and Solving Crossword Puzzle: Examining Efficacy in A Classroom Exercise. *Development in Bussines Simulation and Experiential Learning*, Vol. 39 , 213-222.
- Kemmis, S., Robin, M., & Nixon, R. (2014). *The Action Research Planner*. London: Springer.
- Langan, J. (2005). *Collage writing Skills with Readings -6th* . New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Mettetal, G. (2001). The What, Why and How of Classroom Action Research. *Journal of the scholarship of Teaching and Learning* , 6-13.
- Nunan, D. (2015). *Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*. London: Routledge.
- Nunan, D., & Lamb, C. (1996). *The Self Directed Teacher:Managing the learner Pocess*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Rank, T., Warren, C., & Milum, T. (2011). *Teaching English Using ICT*. New York: Continuum.
- Reed, J. (2010). *Teaching Technique*. Rockledge.
- Tarigan, H. G. (2000). *Menulis Sebagai Suatu Keterampilan Berbahasa*. Bandung: Angkasa.