

ASSESSING DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPH WRITING ABILITY OF THE EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS OF SMPN 2 DENPASAR THROUGH DICTO-COMP

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ABSTRACT

Writing is a productive skill in which each sentence should be organized to make meaningful writing. The English teacher of SMPN 2 Denpasar commonly used closed-ended test providing two different descriptive paragraphs and the students differentiate it. However, the test was quite simple and easy for the eighth grade students and it tended to assess reading. The present study aimed to figure out the descriptive paragraph writing ability of the eighth grade students of SMPN 2 Denpasar in academic year 2018/2019 through dicto-comp. The research used ex post facto research design with descriptive analysis. The population was the eighth grade students of SMPN 2 Denpasar totaling 333 students. There were 50 samples determined by using simple random sampling technique with lottery system. The obtained data were analyzed by using norm-reference measure of five standard value. The result showed that there were 72.00% of the samples who were successful and 28.00% of the samples under study were still unsuccessful in writing descriptive paragraph assessed by using dicto-comp.

Key words: assessing, descriptive paragraph, dicto-comp.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a productive skill that is important to be comprehended. In learning English, writing takes an important role because it guides students to express their ideas on a piece of paper. According to Harmer (2004:3), writing should be learned because it could not be naturally acquired like speaking, though it needs reinforcement, language development and learning

style. In other words, the students do not only learn the theory of writing but they also develop their skill in writing. Moreover, writing helps the students think critically and share their knowledge in a meaningful and effective way. In addition, it also prepares the students to be ready for their future academic and professional endeavors.

Most students face difficulties in the

beginning of their writing such as finding or organizing ideas into sentences. In fact, writing is easy for some people who have comprehended writing very well but not for others. However, to be expert in writing, the students need to make sure about what they want to write. Langan (2008:13) states that writing is not a natural gift; it is a skill which needs process to be comprehended. In some conditions, the students only copy others' writing from some sources and change it into their own words in which their writing does not come originally from them. However, writing is not as simple as just copying others' writing because it has procedures that should be followed.

As a productive skill, writing requires students to produce a written form of their thoughts through certain procedure. Brown (2001:335) states written products are often the result of thinking, drafting, and revising procedures that require specialized skill. In constructing a written text, the students should take attention in the organization, grammar, sentence structures, and others writing aspects in

order to develop their ideas. Furthermore, constructing written text more emphasizes on the process of arranging and developing ideas rather than the final product of writing for the students. The valuable and useful processes of writing guide the students to realize their mistakes during constructing and organizing their written text. In short explanation, the students are able to have a good progress in writing.

Since the process of writing takes important role in order to construct a good writing, writing assessment cannot be separated from teaching learning process because it determines whether or not the goals of education are achieved. The assessment refers to an area of study that contains theories and practices that guide the evaluation of a writer's performance or potential through a writing task. Assessment affects decisions of teachers about grades and placement. In addition, it also refers to the technologies and practices used to evaluate students' writing. In addition, assessment generates teachers to ask whether or not

they teach suitable material; the students learn what they are supposed to be learned; and the students achieve the goal of each teaching learning process.

Writing assessment is also needed as complement in learning and teaching English. Miller et al. (2009:28) state that assessment is a general term that includes the full range procedures used to gain information about students learning. The information refers to the process of writing in which it helps teachers to decide the quality and quantity of the students' writing performance. In writing, there are some important aspects assessed by the teachers such as: format, punctuation and mechanics, content, organization, and grammar and sentence structure. The aspects that are assessed can be customized based on the test used by the teachers and in order to equalize with the students' level. Furthermore, writing assessment should cover and assess the same aspects of students' ability.

Although teachers should consider the important aspects of assessing writing, today's teachers mostly avoid to do it. On the other hand, most

teachers still focus on using conventional technique to assess their students. The teachers have less attention in students' writing; moreover, they emphasize on the answer of the task rather than the process of writing itself. In addition, the teachers mostly assess their students writing without giving any feedbacks for their students and also themselves. In short explanation, the students are not able to know their mistakes after constructing their writing task. Certainly, the students are not able to improve their skill; thus, they have no motivation in fixing their mistakes.

A condition that also faced by English teachers nowadays is constructing an appropriate test for their students. Most teachers take less attention on the importance of the level of the test with the students' ability. On the other words, they forget to equalize the level of the task with the students' ability in which it may impact the result of the students' writing. In fact, when the students are given a test which is inappropriate to their level, there is probability that the students may

confused and desperate because the test is not understandable. Moreover, the result of inappropriate test which is given by the teachers may give unexpected result. For instance, the high level students will probably get highest score rather than the low level students. Therefore, the teachers should give more attention in the appropriateness of test when they administer the test.

Based on the preliminary observation which was carried out by the researcher at SMPN 2 Denpasar, the English teacher used closed-ended test to assess writing ability of the eighth grade students. The teacher provided two descriptive paragraphs which had different topic. Sometimes, the paragraphs which were provided by the teacher were taken from the internet. Moreover, the students were asked to compare the two descriptive paragraphs based on its generic structure, social function, and language features. In the end of the task, the students were not asked to write a descriptive paragraph. This kind of test was often given by the teacher for the eighth grade students in SMPN 2 Denpasar.

Actually, the test which was administered by English teacher in SMPN 2 Denpasar did not test students' writing ability properly. Moreover, the test was quite simple and easy for the eighth grade students in which they only compared two descriptive paragraphs. This kind of test tended to assess reading than the students writing ability. Furthermore, the test was only assessed through one way correction in which it did not give chance for the students to explore their answer. Therefore, the test was not able to show the students' writing ability since most students had almost similar answers. In the others word, a suitable test should be properly chosen by the teacher to assess the students writing ability.

Furthermore, the English teacher should motivate and guide the students to be able to write their own descriptive paragraph. Therefore, the researcher used dicto-comp as appropriate test to assess writing ability of the eighth grade students of SMPN 2 Denpasar. Dicto-comp is a test that guide students to be able to write a descriptive paragraph by giving some keywords. Teacher read the

descriptive paragraph three times in the normal speed and students should listened carefully while collecting the information without taking any notes. After reading the descriptive paragraph three times, the students were given a chance to reconstruct the descriptive paragraph by using their own words related to the keywords given.

In the present study, dicto-comp was administered as a test to assess students writing ability of the eighth grade students of SMPN 2 Denpasar. The test is neither simple nor difficult for the eighth grade students because while the students were constructing a descriptive paragraph, they were still guided by their teacher who read the paragraph and the keywords provided. By giving the keywords, the students did not face difficulties in constructing their ideas into a descriptive paragraph since they had clues to help them. Moreover, the test also clearly shows the students' ability in writing since each student have different answer. Hence, dicto-comp is a suitable test to assess descriptive paragraph writing ability of the eighth grade students of SMPN 2

Denpasar.

In accordance with the explanation that has been stated in the background of the study, the researcher was interested to know whether or not the students of the eighth grade students of SMPN 2 Denpasar had a good mastery in writing descriptive paragraph. The present study was intended to assess the students' writing ability in order to know their writing achievement in writing descriptive paragraph. As a result, the researcher decided to conduct the research entitled, "Assessing Descriptive Paragraph Writing Ability of the Eighth Grade Students of SMPN 2 Denpasar in Academic Year 2018/2019 through Dicto-comp".

RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher used ex post facto research design in the present study since the assessment of descriptive paragraph writing ability became the prior variable to be undertaken in this research. As a result, the researcher investigated that the eighth grade students of SMPN 2 Denpasar in academic year 2018/2019 had already

learnt descriptive paragraph through dissimilar techniques in teaching learning process in which they were certainly in the same level of paragraph writing ability.

The population of the present study was the eighth grade students of SMPN 2 Denpasar that were divided into 10 classes and the total numbers of the students were 333 students. The researcher determined 50 students as the samples. They were chosen as the samples by using simple random sampling technique with lottery system.

The research instrument that was used for the present study to assess the achievement of the descriptive paragraph writing ability was in the form of dicto-comp. Firstly, the researcher prepared a descriptive paragraph about person with 6 keywords as clues for the samples. Furthermore, the samples had to rewrite the paragraph after the researcher finished reading the descriptive paragraph three times by using their own words. They were not allowed to take any note while listening the descriptive paragraph. In addition, the samples' paragraphs should relate to

the 6 keywords. Moreover, the samples' descriptive paragraph should consist of clear generic structure, such as an identification, descriptions and a conclusion. The students should write 6-12 sentences and they only have 30 minutes to finish it.

According to Brown (2004:21), there are two important characteristics that every measuring instrument should possess, that are validity and reliability. In order to have valid test, the research instrument was considered to have a good face, construct and content validity to be applied. Certainly, the face validity was able to be seen from the clear instruction and criteria of the test and it also had standardized typing format. Moreover, in term of construct validity, the test had followed the principal of the test construction greatly. Indeed descriptive paragraph had been taught to the students; therefore, the test had fulfilled the criteria of content validity. On the other hand, a good test should be also reliable which means that the test should indicate consistent and dependable aspect. In addition, to strengthen the validity and reliability of

the test, the researcher had consulted to both of her thesis advisors and they claimed that the test was valid and reliable to collect the data of the present study.

The data that were obtained in assessing descriptive paragraph writing were scored by using Oshima and Hogue's scoring rubric (2007:196) which had been adapted in order to match with the level of the sample.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

The result of the data analysis by means of norm-reference measure of five standard values in which it delivered the converted scores that respectively indicated excellent achievement (A) of descriptive paragraph writing ability was ≥ 86.77 ; good achievement (B), $\geq 79.88 < 86.77$; sufficient achievement (C), $\geq 73.00 < 79.88$; insufficient achievement (D), $\geq 66.11 < 73.00$; and poor achievement (E), < 66.11 . Those converted scores were used as reference to categorize the samples' level achievement in writing descriptive

paragraph in the present ex-post facto research.

The researcher determined the data that showed the level of the samples' achievement A or excellent achievement was achieved by 5 samples; B or good achievement, 12 samples; C or sufficient achievement, 19 samples; D or insufficient achievement, 11 samples; and E or poor achievement, 3 samples. Furthermore, getting the percentage of the samples' achievement was considered as important because the researcher could conclude the degree of writing test result. The percentages of the findings were obtained by counting up the total of each achievement and dividing it by the total number of samples and multiplying by 100%.

Discussion

The result of the data analysis by using norm-reference measure of five standard values showed that there were 10.00% of the samples achieved excellent achievement in writing descriptive paragraph; 24.00% of the samples, good achievement; 38.00% of the samples, sufficient achievement;

22.00% of the samples, insufficient achievement; and 6.00% of the samples, poor achievement.

CONCLUSION

According to the result of the data analysis, if sufficient achievement (C) was considered as the minimum passing grade, there were 72.00% samples under study who were successful and the other 28.00% of the samples were unsuccessful in writing descriptive paragraph which was assessed by administering dicto-comp. It could be generally concluded that the eighth grade students of SMPN 2 Denpasar in academic year 2018/2019 were able to compose a descriptive paragraph well. Moreover, the implementation of ex post facto research design could be affected by the research variable which affected validity and reliability of the findings; therefore, the researcher should be carefully generalized the findings of the study.

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