

IMPROVING DESCRIPTIVE WRITING ACHIEVEMENT OF THE TENTH GRADERS OF SMA SRIJAYA NEGARA PALEMBANG BY USING CUE CARDS

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Abstract: The objectives of this study were to find out whether or not (1) there was a significant improvement in descriptive writing achievement after the students were taught by using cue cards, and (2) there was a significant difference in descriptive writing achievement between the students who were taught by using cue cards and those who were not. The population of this study comprised 252 tenth graders of SMA Srijaya Negara Palembang. Seventy two students were chosen as the sample by using purposive sampling technique. The method of the study was quasi-experimental method. These students were divided into experimental and control groups, and each group consisted of 36 students. In collecting the data, the writer gave the students two written tests; pretest and posttest. Then, the results of the tests were analyzed by using paired sample t-test and independent sample t-test in SPSS Version 23. The result of paired sample t-test showed that the p-value was lower than the significance level ($0.00 < 0.05$). It means that there was a significant improvement in students' descriptive writing achievement after they were taught by using cue cards. The result of independent sample t-test showed that the p-value was lower than significance level ($0.00 < 0.05$). It means that there was a significant difference in descriptive writing achievement between the students who were taught by using cue cards and those who were not. Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of cue cards can be an effective way to improve students' descriptive writing achievement.

Keywords: *Improvement, Descriptive Text, Cue Cards*

According to Education First-English Proficiency Index (2016), Indonesia was on the 32nd rank out of 72 countries at the moderate proficiency level with 52.94 Education First-English Proficiency Index score. It means, Indonesian students' skill in listening, speaking, reading, and writing must be improved because these four skills are still weak. Therefore, one of the skills that can be improved is writing. According to the school-based curriculum of 2013, the objective of teaching English in senior high school is to develop language and communicative competence in spoken and in written form. It is used to achieve the level of informational literacy and to enable students to compete with other people in this globalization era.

The students seem to have difficulties in writing a good paragraph of descriptive text. A difficulty in writing a descriptive text as concluded by Ambarini (2014) is that the students did not know the basic rule and the concept of writing. They mostly made grammatical and organizational errors in their writings. Interesting media were also rarely used by the teachers in teaching writing. For example, the research conducted by Febriyanti, Inderawati, and Fiftinova (2018) showed that one of the problems that the students have in writing is the teacher. The English teacher does not use any media or strategies in teaching but rather give some exercises with a little explanation in every meeting to the students. Furthermore, the school also did not provide media for the teachers to teach writing. This happens to students in SMA Srijaya Negara Palembang.

Descriptive writing, one of the types of writing, describes objects or things like people, places, events, situations, thoughts, and feelings (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). Description presents sensory information that makes writing come alive. It expresses an experience that the reader can actively participate in by using imagination. A writer shows descriptive writing to the reader through the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, as well as through emotional feelings. Descriptive details enable the reader to visualize elements in the story.

Now, Indonesian education is developing. It provides the teachers with opportunities to use media in teaching their students. In this study, cue cards were used as the media for students to write a descriptive text more easily. Different students learn in different ways. Some students might understand the lesson more if they see the real material as they are visual learners. Cue card was

introduced as one of the teaching media. Cue card that is used to encourage the students to respond is a card with words or pictures on it. It is interesting, simple, and attractive. Kemp and Smellie (1989) state that cue cards will make the instruction more interesting. Therefore, it can help the teacher to break the students' mindset that English is not fun. The students have their own imagination inside the picture when they look at it. Accordingly, when students are asked to describe something or someone in detail, cue cards can help students to produce the description easily. It is proven based on the research finding conducted by Ambarini (2014) who showed that there was an improvement in students' writing ability through the use of cue cards. The clear visualization described in the cue cards helped the students to generate their ideas by themselves. Furthermore, they were more independent in writing anything they have in mind. Moreover, students can analyze their method in organizing their ideas they got from the pictures which are provided as a basis for the writing tasks. In line with this idea, Suharyati (2012) said that cue cards could improve students' ability in writing a descriptive text. Cue cards could promote spontaneity and creativity of the students. The pictures in cue cards could help students explore any information spontaneously when they look at the pictures. Furthermore, another research finding was conducted by Efendi and Meisuri (2013) who showed that cue cards could improve students' achievement in writing a descriptive text. By showing a picture, cue card pictures allow the students to explain a word in a simple and a various way. It also helped the students to produce and organize the ideas easily. Most of the students were enthusiastic during the learning process by using cue cards. Therefore, they gave good responses towards the use of cue cards in writing class.

The objectives of this study were to find out whether or not there was a significant improvement in descriptive writing achievement after the students were taught by using cue cards, and to find out whether or not there was a significant difference in descriptive writing achievement between the students who were taught by using cue cards and those who were not.

Method

A quasi experimental design was used in this study. The writer used pretest-posttest control group design in order to find out whether or not there was a significant improvement in descriptive writing achievement after the students were taught by using cue cards, and to find out whether or not there was a significant difference in descriptive writing achievement between the students who were taught by using cue cards and those who were not.

There were two groups in this study, one group was called experimental group, and the other one was called control group. The groups took pre-test and post-test, but the experimental group was treated by using cue cards, meanwhile the other one was treated differently by the English teacher.

The writer gave pre-test and post-test for each group. The pre-test was given in order to find out the students' writing skill in writing descriptive text before they were treated differently by using different treatment. The writer taught the experimental group for 16 meetings with the time allocation 45 minutes for each meeting. Then, at the end of the research, the writer gave post-test to each group. The theme and the instruction for the post-test were also the same as in pre-test.

In this study, the writer took the tenth graders of SMA Srijaya Negara Palembang in the academic year 2017/2018 as the population with the total number of the students was 252 students. There were 7 classes of tenth grade students. In this study, the writer used purposive sampling technique in which the same aspects were already recognized such as the English teacher, the total number of students, and the students' average English score. The samples of this research were the classes which were taught by the same English teacher and had the similar English score. There were 72 students of X IPA 1 PLUS and X IPA 2 PLUS in SMA Srijaya Negara Palembang that were chosen as the sample.

In order to have a high degree content validity of the test, the test was checked based on the curriculum and syllabus used in the school and also the writer had done a try out to determine the time in doing the test. Besides, two experts' judgment or raters were also asked in order to know the validity of the test. It can be concluded that the test was appropriate to be tested. The test was conducted in 45 minutes. The students were required to write a descriptive paragraph consists of at least one paragraph.

In this study, inter-rater reliability was used to find out the reliability of the result in students' writing. There were two raters who gave scores for the students' pre-test and post-test. Two lecturers of English Education Study Program of FKIP Sriwijaya University were chosen as the raters. The students' writing was scored by both raters. The results were collected and analyzed by using SPSS 23 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program. Moreover, Pearson Product Moment was used to calculate the reliability of the test. It is considered reliable if the reliability of the test is higher than 0.70, in which the reliable coefficient should be at least 0.70. The result of reliability of this study was 0.930 for pretest experimental group, 0.928 for posttest experimental group, 0.980 for pretest control group, and 0.969 for posttest control group. Because the correlation between two raters were higher than 0.70, so it can be concluded that the data were reliable.

In analyzing the data, paired Sample t-test was used to look at the pre-test or post-test of scores for an experimental group which was taught by using cue cards. Meanwhile, to answer the research question number 2, Independent Sample t-test was applied. It was used to test the average scores of writing obtained by the experimental group and the control group. It was applied in order to get information from each group whether or not they had made some progress during the experimental weeks. To construct the t-test, the writer compared the result between the pre-test and the post-test given to each group.

Results and Discussion

Table 4.1 shows that the result of pretest in experimental group was that there were no students (0%) in excellent category, three students (8.33%) in good category, thirteen students (36.11%) in average category, twelve students (33.33%) in poor category, and eight students (22.22%) in failed category. Meanwhile, in the posttest of the experimental group, there were nine students (25%) in excellent category, twenty one students (58.33%) in good category, five students (13.89%) in average category, one student (2.78%) in poor category, and none of students (0%) in failed category. Furthermore, the mean score significantly enhanced from 50.44 to 78.61. It can be summed up that there was an improvement after the students were treated by using cue cards.

Table 1. The score distribution in the Experimental Group and Control Group

Score Interval Category		Experimental Group				Control Group			
		Pretest		Posttest		Pretest		Posttest	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
86-100	Excellent	0	0	9	25	0	0	0	0
71-85	Good	3	8.33	21	58.33	0	0	0	0
56-70	Average	13	36.11	5	13.89	5	13.89	9	25
41-55	Poor	12	33.33	1	2.78	15	41.67	17	47.22
0-40	Failed	8	22.22	0	0	16	44.44	10	27.78
Total		36	100	36	100	36	100	36	100

In contrast, the result of pre-test in control group shows that there were no students (0%) in excellent and good category, five students (13.89%) in average category, fifteen students (41.67%) in poor category, and sixteen (44.44%) students in failed category. Meanwhile, in the posttest, there were no students (0%) in control group in excellent category and good category, nine students (25%) in average category, fifteen students (41.67%) in poor category, and sixteen students (44.44%) in failed category. There was also an improvement in the mean score of control group. The mean score was from 44.22 to 46.44.

Normality Test

Table 2. The Result of Normality Test

Group	Pre-test				Post-test			
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Sig.	Kolmogorov -Smirnov Z	Mean	Std. Dev.	Sig.	Kolmogorov -Smirnov Z
Exp. Group	50.44	12.39	.057	.144	78.61	9.07	.051	.146
Cont.	44.22	10.50	.200	.101	46.44	11.38	.084	.137

Group							
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From the table above, the significance (2-tailed) of pretest and posttest in experimental group were 0.057 and 0.051, meanwhile the significance (2-tailed) of pretest and posttest in control group were 0.200 and 0.084. Since all of the significance values were more than 0.05. It could be concluded that the data were normally distributed.

Homogeneity Test

Table 3. The Result of Homogeneity Test

Group	Levene's Statistics	Sig.
Pretest and Protest in Experimental Group	2.064	.155
Pretest and Protest in Control Group	.241	.625
Pretest in Experimental & Control Group	.772	.383
Posttest in Experimental & Control Group	1.107	.296

The data were homogeneous if the significance >0.05 . The result of homogeneity showed that the significance of pretest and posttest in experimental group was (.155 >0.05), the result of the significance of pretest and posttest in control group was (.625 >0.05), the result of the significance of pretest in experimental and control group was (.383 >0.05), and the result of the significance of posttest in experimental and control group was (.296 >0.05). Since the data were higher than 0.05. It can be concluded that the both experimental and control group were homogenous.

Paired Sample t-Test

Paired sample t-test was used to know whether or not there was a significant improvement in descriptive writing achievement after the students were taught by using cue cards. Table 4.4 shows the result of paired sample t-test.

Table 4. Result of Paired Sample t-Test in Experimental and Control Groups

Group	Test	Mean	Mean Diff.	t	DF	Sig. (2-tailed)
Experimental	Pretest	50.44	-28.17	-14.737	35	.000
	Posttest	78.61				
Control	Pretest	44.22	-2.22	-1.860	35	.071
	Posttest	46.44				

Based on the paired samples statistics of the experimental group, the mean score of posttest (78.61) was higher than the mean score of pretest (50.44) with sig. level (.000) which was less than 0.05. It means that the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. It can be stated that there was a significant improvement in students' writing achievement before and after they were taught by using cue cards. Meanwhile, in control group, the mean score of posttest (46.44) was higher than the mean score of pretest (44.22) with sig. level was (.071) which was more than 0.05. It means that there was no significant difference in the mean score of pretest and posttest of control group. Although the results of both groups increased, but the result of experimental group more increased than the result in control group.

To see the improvement of each writing aspect in the experimental and control groups, paired sample t-test was also used. It was important to know not only the improvement of the students writing achievement in general but also the improvement of each aspect of writing. The result of the test could be seen in the following table:

Table 5. The Result of Paired Sample t-Test of Writing Aspects of the Experimental Group

Aspect	Mean		DF	t	Sig. Value
	Pretest	Posttest			
Content	5.86	8.64		-8.641	.000

Organization	5.53	7.36	35	-6.540	.000
Vocabulary	5.61	7.55		-8.635	.000
Grammar	4.30	8.72		-14.267	.000
Mechanics	4.11	7.03		-14.828	.000

The result of paired sample t-test showed that the significant values of all aspects were below 0.05. It means that there were significant improvements in all aspects of writing achievement after the treatment in the experimental group.

Table 6. The Result of Paired Sample *t*-Test of Writing Aspects of the Control Group

Aspect	Mean		DF	t	Sig. Value
	Pretest	Posttest			
Content	4.44	5.28	35	-3.561	.001
Organization	5.03	4.78		1.357	.183
Vocabulary	4.41	4.55		-.695	.492
Grammar	3.86	3.97		-.644	.524
Mechanics	4.36	4.64		-1.303	.201

The result paired sample t-test showed that the significance of organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics were higher than 0.05, but the significance of content was below 0.05. It means that there was no significant improvement in organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics, but there was a significant improvement in content of writing achievement in control group.

Independent Sample *t*-Test

Independent sample t-test was applied to find out the significant difference in descriptive writing achievement between the students who were taught by using cue cards and those who were not. To find out the difference of posttest both in the experimental group and control group, the writer did the independent sample t-test in SPSS 23. The result of independent sample t-test was shown in the following table:

Table 7. The Result of Independent Sample *t*-Test

Group	N	Mean	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Difference	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Experimental	36	78.61	32.17	2.43	13.259	.000
Control	36	46.44				

The result of independent sample t-test showed that the mean score of experimental group was higher than in control group ($78.61 > 46.44$), the mean difference was 32.17, the standard error difference was 2.43, t-obtained was 13.259, and p -value was .000. Since p -value was lower than significant level (0.05), the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. It means that there was a significant difference in descriptive writing achievement between the students who were taught by using cue cards and those who were not.

Independent sample t-test was also used to see the improvement of each writing aspect in the experimental and control groups. It was important to know not only the improvement of the students writing achievement in general but also the improvement of each aspect of writing. The result of the test could be seen in the following table:

Table 8. The Result of Independent Sample *t*-Test of Writing Achievement

Aspect	Mean (Post-test score)		N	t	Sig. Value
	Experimental	Control			
Content	8.64	5.28	36	8.321	.000
Organization	7.36	4.78		8.356	.000
Vocabulary	7.55	4.55		10.903	.000
Grammar	8.72	3.97		15.009	.000
Mechanics	7.03	4.64		8.525	.000

The result of independent sample t-test showed that the significant values of all aspects were below 0.05. It means that there were significant improvement in all aspects of writing achievement between the experimental and control group.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and statistical analyses, two conclusions were drawn. First, the use of cue cards can improve descriptive writing achievement of the tenth graders of SMA Srijaya Negara Palembang. Most of the students in experimental group got higher score in their writing after they were treated by using cue cards. It can be seen from the result of their posttest. Second, the result of this study showed that there was a significant difference in descriptive writing achievement of the tenth graders of SMA Srijaya Negara Palembang who were taught by using cue cards and those who were not. It can be seen from the mean score of the posttest in the experimental group which was higher than the mean score of posttest in the control group.

In the experimental group, there was an improvement in students' descriptive writing achievement after they were treated by using cue cards. Moreover, the result of the control group was also increased. Because the result of the control group was also increased, so further research is needed to prove that cue cards are effective for improving the students' writing.