

Graphic Organizers for Students' Descriptive and Narrative Writing

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ABSTRACT

Writing is one of skills that must be mastered by learners to face the globalized world that they will be productive and creative. It is classroom research design since the purpose of this study was to investigate the students' writing ability. It was conducted in one of paragraph writing classes in English Education Department of UNESA. There were 16 participants who joined in this class. The instruments were observation check list and rubrics for assessing writing. During the data collection, graphic organizers were used to help students in the process of writing. The findings showed that graphic organizers can improve students' writing ability especially in descriptive and narrative texts. Most of the students reached good score in their writings. In brief, it is recommended for EFL teachers to use attractive graphic organizers as media in the process of teaching English to increase the students' abilities in writing.

Keywords: *Writing, Graphic organizer, Learning media, Narrative composition.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing skill is one of skills that must be acquired and developed by EFL learners. Mastering writing skill can help students to understand parts of language and finally they are able to communicate well in their daily life [1]. It is also supported by Conley pointing out that writing makes students' thoughts and experiences vivid and long lasting and helps them learn things in every subject area [2]. It means writing skill enables learners to communicate their written text effectively and interactively. It is in line with the main objectives of teaching Paragraph Writing stated a course subject in English Department. Moreover, Bello also says that writing has an important role in promoting language acquisition. During the process of learning writing, learners conduct many experimental writing texts related to words, phrases, sentences, and large chunks of writing. In this case, learners study how to communicate their written ideas effectively and reinforce the grammar and vocabulary they have learned in class [3].

In order to create the process of teaching writing more effective and efficient, teachers must provide some ideas and opportunity for learners to be involved in practicing writing class. It is hoped that students have chances to grow their writing skill. The writing process, therefore, becomes productive, purposeful, pleasant and valued. It can also be caused by setting up appropriate

environment to exposed learners' writing work [4]. To make the process of teaching writing in classroom more interactive, a variety of teaching methods should be implemented that could motivate students to be enthusiastic in learning writing [5]. Moreover, it can encourage students to be creative in the process of learning writing since the teacher's role is to guide students in the process of learning writing. It also makes students to be independent learners for they are given freedom to make decision on what kind of text that will be written. In this case, learners must prepare their writing about what they write, how to write and how to publish.

Related to the type of texts, there are two kinds of texts, namely functional and creative text [6]. Creative writing text is writing text in which individuals can express their feelings, opinions, reactions, and ideas to the readers, considered as a distinguished literary style. There are several genres classified as literary style, such as short stories, poems, plays, novels, essays, and description. However, functional writing text is a kind of text that has goal to convey a specific or direct message to a specific audience. Some examples of functional text include formal letters, notes, invitations, advertisements, writing instructions, and reports. There is a point to be known in the relationship between functional and creative writing that is creativity. It is said that creativity has an important aspect in the process of learning writing

[7]. It is noted that creativity has been advocated as one of the six levels of language skills. Among all the elements of language teaching, writing and creativity seem to be closely interrelated [8] since writing is a manifestation of creativity. In the process of writing, learners can show their best way by promoting their creativity in their writing from. Therefore, to engage an effective way of teaching writing is highly needed to stimulate students' creativity and generate ideas.

Based on the curriculum implemented in English Education Department of Universitas Negeri Surabaya, it is stated that one of the course learning outcomes of Paragraph writing is that the learners are able to write creative narrative texts including descriptive text and narrative text integrated in the process of writing, paragraph structure and principles of unity and coherence. It is in line with the writing process that teacher should teach and focus on what real writers do [9] since writing is viewed as a cycle process and it is not considered as a program. It means that there are some steps that must be followed by students when they are joining in writing class. Students must choose topics to decide their problem, learn some skills that can be implemented, and work to develop problem [11]. The procedures that must be engaged in the process of writing are planning or prewriting, drafting, editing writing, and revising writing many times and publishing [10]. Based on the explanation above, it is stated that the writing process emphasizes on what writers learn by doing. They are engaging in daily writing opportunities. In the process of writing process, students will show their activities if they want to be a writer [11]. They must write and read many times before they publish their writing works [9].

Before the students write a certain text, they must think about its organization since it is considered as planning in the process of writing. Planning or prewriting is a very essential step for students since they must draw their experiences, observe something that is going on around them, and ask questions. Therefore, in this step, students must be able to make plan and organize their writing that is very essential in writing process [12]. It helps students be able to write in the prewriting step since the prewriting stage is the first step helping students figure out some possible ideas or topics for writing [12]. When students have a topic, they must organize their topic into a written story to make sense to the readers. It is known that organization is structuring information that helps readers to understand the text well [12]. To be able to write pre-writing easily, using graphic organizers is suggested to motivate the students

in generating ideas and improving the organizational structure in students' writing [10].

When prewriting process is done successfully, it could be continued in drafting. In drafting step, students are ready to write their topics or ideas on paper [12]. They can write well if their pre-writing is constructed in a good way. When students finished drafting their ideas in a composition, they are motivated to write. Before the students revise their work, they can ask their friends to read and give comments on their drafting. Based on their friends' comments, they will revise their writing to make their composition more interesting [12]. It is said revising is seeing again on their composition. In revising step, students must check their idea whether it is clear enough to make sure that their organizing is in good order. Next, students must select words that are appropriate and suitable to the topic, make sure that their voice is accurate for readers, and listen for the flow of the words and sentences and change them when the melody breaks down [12]. If all the steps of writing are completed, it is assumed that students will produce and publish their composition

Based on the researcher's teaching experience, particularly in teaching writing, it was found that the great number of students had problems in writing creative narrative composition. First, most of the students had low abilities in generating, organizing, and elaborating ideas for they did not understand how to specify this problem. It means that prewriting stage is the most difficult step for learners since they are not given the opportunity to generate ideas about the given topic, record them and refine them. Therefore, most of them faced a great difficulty in writing comprehensive and logical sentences. Besides, in the process of writing students were asked to write a short composition or a story without giving the adequate support or help apart from the meaning of a few related words [13]. Teacher did not teach students how to decide topic and controlling ideas. Finally, students could not limit what supporting details discussed in their writing form.

In addition, students also got difficulties in executing their creative narrative writing tasks because of their low level abilities to write in target language. Most of them were confused in using correct grammar and lack of vocabulary. One of reasons why that problem appeared was because the teacher did not implement innovative methods that motivate students to write. She still used traditional approaches in teaching writing and preferred to explain what features characterize a good text, emphasizing the importance grammar and spelling.

Finally, students were poor in using mechanical rules in their composition. Most of students were not aware of the use of capital letter, coma, semi colon or full stop in their writing. It indicates that they were not able to construct their writing well.

All the problems above led to students' poor writing skill; furthermore, the teacher used inappropriate writing teaching techniques or strategies, teaching media, and teaching materials. As a result, the process of teaching writing was not interesting for students and developed a monotonous learning environment that the students had difficulty in developing their writing. Moreover, teacher did not use media that could motivate students to learn more about writing. It is known that media also has an important aspect to encourage students when they are not interested to study anymore. Using appropriate media also helps them to understand grammar theory and it makes the process of teaching learning more attractive and effective. Implementing an effective way of teaching can make the students become well trained or well experienced in writing class because the teacher's role is as motivator or facilitator that helps or guides students during the process of writing.

To overcome that problem, an alternative way suggested for teaching writing is graphic organizer since graphic organizers can help students to brainstorm their topic and motivate them to plan before they begin to write. Egan [14] says a graphic organizer is a visual representation of knowledge, a way of structuring information, and of arranging essential aspects of an idea or topic into a pattern using labels. It also provides a visual representation of key details and ideas that help students to organize information/ideas [15]. There are some examples of graphic organizers including flow charts, venn diagrams, network trees, cycle charts, story maps, or story organizers. In order to be easily support creative writing, this study used flow chart and cycle charts since these charts can organize information with the visual support. Graphic organizers can help learners to activate their previous knowledge or obtain their ideas because they are visual aids that guide students to think, learn and remember to organize ideas.

The fact shows that graphic organizers are not only very helpful for teachers but also a vital essential role in many classrooms because they can be implemented for individual, pairs or the whole class. When graphic organizers are presented in a creative way during the process of teaching writing, students prefer to use them independently and it can improve the students' motivation and creativity [15]. Therefore, it can support

the students' learning. Graphic organizers are also understandable media since they are consistent, coherent, and integrated in creative ways [14] that make effective teaching media. It is a good exercise for writing, especially for pre-writing activities. In the use of graphic organizers, students can link visual support, language, content and thinking by incorporating a flow chart in the creative story writing. Thus, teacher must show and provide prototypes and experience the instructional task using graphic organizers before she/he asks students to use them independently [14].

When graphic organizers are implemented well, it can successfully show improvements in students writing abilities. It means that teachers must consider their own preparation and provide enough prototypes before placing the expectation on the students before they apply it in the process of teaching writing. It allows learners to work cooperatively in pairs or groups that they learn how to organize their thoughts and carefully choose words for their writing using graphic organizers. Learners can also learn to comprehend difficult academic standards in writing process [15]. Finally, learners can write creative writing successfully by using graphic organizers.

2. METHOD

It was a classroom research design since it had purposes to investigate students' writing skill. It could be said that this study was to find out "To what aspects graphic organizers can improve students' descriptive and narrative writing". The research setting was held in English Education Department, Universitas Negeri Surabaya and it was conducted in one of the paragraph writing classes. There were 16 participants who joined in this study consisting of 6 male students and 10 female students, in which their age was about 18-19 years old. The instruments were writing test and writing rubrics. Writing test was in the form of essay test in which the students were asked to write creative writing, namely descriptive writing and narrative writing. The next instrument was writing rubric used to assess the students' writing skill that consisted of organization, content, grammar and mechanics. It was developed to allow teachers to assess student writing in the areas of composing writing. This study lasted for eight weeks and there were some steps to collect the data. The first step was to get permission to conduct the research. The next, for two months, the teaching writing process had been implemented by using graphic organizer to motivate and help students how to write creative narrative. During the process of teaching creative writing, two types of

developed graphic organizers were used. The following was an example of graphic organizers used in this study.

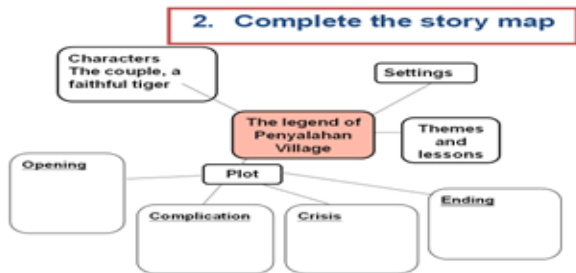


Figure 1 An example of graphic organizer.

Before the students filled graphic organizers, the teacher provided several texts that encouraged students to write paragraphs. When students read descriptive and narrative texts, students tried to classify each parts that was categorized as orientation, problem, resolution and moral value (narrative text) or topic (identification) and descriptions (details). It was a framework strategy that was used to force the students to be independent writers. In this stage, the students found brainstorming and thinking about a topic that had been read. After that, the students tried to draft their writing in the form of graphic organizer. In this case, students were allowed to choose topics, learn writing skills, and work through problems. Students were continuously progressing through the steps of writing their narrative drafts. After the students finished the step of drafting, they continued to the next steps that were editing and publishing. Finally, the students' works were assessed to know the students' writing abilities. Then, all data were analyzed. The data in the form of words were analyzed descriptively, while the data in the form of number were analyzed statistically.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To answer the research question of this study, the researcher used students' writings in descriptive and narrative texts. Moreover, this study showed the results of the students' drafts and final revisions in creative writing of descriptive and narrative texts. The results of the participants' writing samples assessed with a writing rubric, in the areas of drafting, are shown in table 1.

Table 1. The results of the participants' writing samples

Students' drafting	Mean score
Descriptive Text	78
Narrative Text	77

From table 1, it can be said that graphic organizer gave higher effects in the process of drafting (prewriting) when students have written descriptive and narrative text. It was showed that the mean score of prewriting (drafting) was about 77 for narrative text and the students got 78 score for descriptive text. The use of graphic organizers helped students plan and organize writing a story. Most of students focused on topic throughout their compositions, and they showed some elaboration in their writing. All participants showed some growth in their ability to compose a story. It is line with Baxendell that says graphic organizers create students more creative since they can express their ideas consistent, coherent, and integrated [15]. Moreover, Egan also supports that graphic organizers is an effective method to help students to explore in their prewriting activities [14]. Learners tried to make flow chart in their creative story writing. It is important way for students to draw upon experiences, observe what's going on around them, and ask questions so that prewriting stage helps students figure out the possibilities for writing. It also encourages students to be independent learners since they have had experience to finish their writing easily.

Furthermore, the results of prewriting in descriptive text was a bit higher (78) than in narrative text (77) since the generic structure of descriptive text was easier than narrative text. It means that the generic structure of narrative text is more complicated. There are some steps that must be followed by students in the process of prewriting in narrative text. Finally, it can be said that graphic organizers can motivate students to write and improve students' motivation and creativity [15].

After all participants wrote their drafts of descriptive and narrative texts, they continued to write their final compositions as shown in table 2.

Table 2. The results of students' final composition

Final writing	Mean score
Descriptive Text	79,6
Narrative Text	78,8

Based on the results in table 2 above, the mean score of descriptive text (79.6) was still higher than narrative text (78.8). There are some factors that influence students to write descriptive text well. The writing rubric (5 scales) of descriptive text consists of identification, description, content, grammar and mechanics. The results of students' writings showed that most of the participants got 4 (good) in the aspects of identification since most of the students can identify a place (Al – Akbar Mosque, my campus, my home) or a person (my idol, my favorite teacher, my best friend). To state the identification is not quite difficult for them. Moreover, the use of graphic organizer in the process of prewriting is helpful enough for students. It is line with Khwaileh' opinion saying that pre-writing stage using graphic organizers help and support students to generate ideas about the given topic that would be written in the form of identification. After that, the point of description would be filled by supporting sentences that clarify identification [13]. It helps students to write English in their target language.

Talking about grammar and mechanic, most of the participants could check their grammar and mechanic by implementing peer assessment. The students exchanged their works that they could check their friends' writings and gave feedback. Based on the results of peer feedback, it is known that there were only few mistakes made by students in grammar since most of sentences in descriptive text are written in present tense. Related to mechanics, most of the students were not really aware of the use of punctuation (comas, full stops, capital letters, small letters, colons or semi colons). In these parts, most of the students' works had few mistakes. It is in line with Culham stating that teachers should spend time to help students to figure out what they want to say [12]. It means that participants read their friends' composition and gave some comments toward their grammar and mechanic.

However, most of the participants got 3 (average) in the aspects of description and contents. Most of them considered that it was quite difficult for the participants to develop their ideas in the form of supporting sentences so that their score was about 3. Sometimes, their drafting in mind mapping was not suitable with their final composition. It was caused by the students' loss of concentration.

Compared to descriptive text, the students' narrative composition was not quite good. Their average score was 78.8. Most of the students said that they got difficulty when they wrote narrative text, especially in

the aspects of problems, resolution, and content. There were some reasons why the students got difficulty to write about problems, resolution and contents aspect. Most of the learners did not know what they had to write in their composition so that their compositions were not coherent. It contradicted Khwaileh's opinion that graphic organizer would help students to generate ideas in their composition [13]. Moreover, using graphic organizers in creating narrative composition was quite difficult for students since there were many components or aspects that had to be completed. It was different from descriptive text that was easier.

However, most students said that they did not find difficulty in writing narrative composition, especially in aspect of deciding characters, setting of place and time, grammar and mechanics. To assess the students' narrative composition, peer assessment was also implemented that students could give some feedbacks and revised their writings based on their friends' comments. After that, the final drafts were submitted to be reviewed by the teacher. In this activity, the teacher's role is to be a facilitator that helps students to revise their compositions. It is in line with Culham that says teacher should spend time to help students to figure out what they want to write [12].

Over all, it can be said that graphic organizers could help students to write their composition in the process of pre-writing process. Graphic organizers which are presented creatively could motivate students to write composition since it could help them to find ideas. Moreover, it is also effective for students when they are having writing processes of simple compositions, instead of the complex ones.

4. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that graphic organizer can improve students' composition especially in descriptive and narrative texts. The students writing score was good since the mean score were 79.9 for descriptive text and 78.8 for narrative text. Moreover, graphic organizers could help students to write composition and encourage students to write and develop their ideas in the form of written text. Accordingly, it is recommended that EFL teachers should use various graphic organizers as media to attract students to learning English, especially in writing.

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