

# TEACHING WRITING TO DEAF STUDENTS THROUGH PICTURE SERIES

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## *Abstrak*

*Pendengaran merupakan kekurangan yang dimiliki oleh para peserta didik tunarungu, dan hal ini mempengaruhi perkembangan bahasanya, jika mereka tidak ditangani dengan hati-hati. Kurikulum mata pelajaran bahasa Inggris untuk peserta didik tunarungu mengikuti kurikulum umum, dimana mereka juga harus mempelajari berbagai jenis teks, dan diantaranya adalah teks deskriptif. Sayangnya, sebagian besar siswa mengalami kesulitan menuliskannya, disebabkan oleh kurangnya kosa kata, struktur bahasa yang harus dimengerti, dan ejaan yang harus mereka pahami. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan peserta didik tunarungu dalam menulis teks deskriptif melalui gambar berseri. Penelitian studi kasus ini dilakukan kepada tujuh peserta didik tunarungu di salah satu sekolah luar biasa di kota Bandung. Melalui penerapan teknik gambar berseri dalam penelitian tindakan kelas dengan dua siklus dan enam kegiatan penelitian ini dilakukan untuk melihat peningkatan ketertarikan mereka untuk menulis yang berimbas kepada kemampuan menulis mereka. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peningkatan kemampuan keenam peserta didik dalam menulis teks deskriptif. Peningkatan nilai menulis sudah nampak pada siklus pertama, walaupun ada satu siswa yang masih memiliki nilai 65. Setelah pelaksanaan siklus dua, skor bertambah baik dengan nilai tertinggi menjadi 90, sedangkan nilai terendah adalah 70. Terdapat peningkatan rata-rata hingga 4,71 poin. Dengan adanya peningkatan nilai, maka dapat dikatakan bahwa gambar berseri dapat menumbuhkan kemampuan siswa untuk menulis teks deskriptif.*

**Key words:** Deaf and Hard of Hearing, picture series, classroom action research

## **INTRODUCTION**

Writing as one of the English skills has become one of the most difficult skill to teach to both general school students, and more over to the special need students. It is one of the skills that need to be paid more attention to. The teacher should pay deeply attention to the students' understanding to write down the things in their minds onto the written product. Teaching writing to general school students is considered

difficult and more over teaching it to deaf students.

Due to the disability in their hearing, the language developments of deaf students in all aspects are left behind. The lack of hearing automatically hampers their language development since hearing becomes the first important aspect to support it. There are skills of language development that they should possess, they are: the ability to listen, to speak, to read, and finally to write. All of them are interwoven to each

other to build the language development. The requirement of being able to write is to read; meanwhile the requirement of being able to read is to listen and to speak.

Based on the competency standard for writing, the eighth graders have to be able to write functional text and short essay in form of descriptive and recount texts to interact with the surrounding. Meanwhile, for the basic competency they have to be able to express meaning in simple and short functional text using accurate and acceptable written expressions.

Many researches are often done and focused on the study for general education, which mean the education for general students who do not have any special difficulties/needs. Meanwhile, the researches for special needs education are still limited.

There are three problems why the writer chooses the issue; the *first* is: in Indonesia, the references relate to the special needs, especially the deaf are difficult to find, or seldom available in the library since there are less people who concern on deaf's education.

The second one is: deaf students are hard to communicate since the lack of their hearing hampers their performance in both written and oral performances. Written communication in term of writing cannot be neglected to be taught to deaf students, so it is crucial to teach them writing.

The last is: by considering the difficulty which is needed to be solved, the writer considers that the study which focuses on the use of

picture series to foster deaf students to write descriptive text is really needed.

From the preliminary study, the writer finds out that the students' most difficulty in writing are: 1) to write subject and verb agreement, 2) to write irregular verbs, and 3) to write essay by describing something.

The previous research results which were done in State and relate to deaf students' works reveal that deaf students' language performance or their understanding do not provide accurate description of their language competencies as it is emphasizes by Moores & Martin (2006) and Paul (2009). They depict that deaf students with severe/profound hearing level reflect their lower skills both in reading and writing. The difficulties they face relate to sentence structure, mechanics, spelling, and the use of upper case.

Meanwhile in Indonesia, the deaf students face difficulties in both words and sentence arrangements. Lingga's work (2012) discovered that most of them produce wrong sentences which were written in *Bahasa Indonesia*, especially in exclamation word. The examples of their works written in *bahasa Indonesia* are: a. "*Tanya cuma sms*" instead of "*Saya sms cuma mau tanya*". b. "*Bunga belajar saya*" instead of "*Saya belajar membuat bunga*". c. "*Jumpa ke taman bunga*" instead of '*Berjumpa di taman bunga*'.

However, Paul (2009:331) stated that deaf students' writings in State show significant improvement in terms of quantity, and complexity. Their first sentences will resemble their spoken language. They seemed

to explore the printed language and make progress with their comprehension.

The students understanding of writing descriptive text will be exposed well if they are equipped with the media, in term of picture. Therefore, the use of picture series in learning process helps the students a lot. It is emphasized by Wright (1989:2) who stated that “Pictures are not just an aspect of method, but through their representation of places, object, and people they are essential part of the overall experience.

In line with Wright aforementioned, Raimes (1983, 27-28) also acknowledged that pictures will bring everything from the outside world into the classroom in a vividly concrete way. Furthermore, she also depicted that pairs of pictures or pictures in sequences provide for a variety of guided and free writing exercise. A picture sequences, such a comic strip, provides the subject for writing narrative and for speculating about the story beyond the pictures in the strip.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Classroom Action Research (CAR) was applied to the study, with two cycles and each cycle consists of planning, observing, and reflecting. According to Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1990), there are four basic steps in each action as described below.

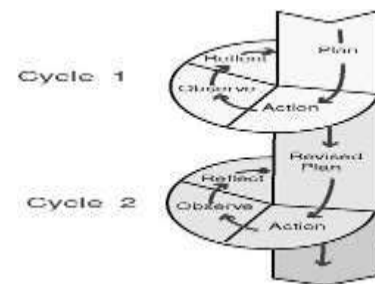


Figure 1. The Research Cycles

## RESEARCH FINDING

To make the students’ scores better, the writer conducted the two cycle classroom actions with six activities in applying the picture series. The activity carried out was helped by the teacher. Since, the focus was the students’ writing skill, in this case their ability to write descriptive text, hence, they were asked to write descriptive texts based on the pictures.

### 1. The Result of the First Cycle

The first cycle which was done on 11<sup>th</sup> September, 2017, 18<sup>th</sup> September 2017, and 25<sup>th</sup> September 2017 consisted of planning, action and observation, and reflection.

#### a. Plan

The preparation to carry out the activity which was done by the teacher consisted of:

- 1) Constructing lesson plans, and teaching materials.
- 2) Designing instruments; include preparing the test, observation notes and questionnaire.
- 3) Preparing the picture series with different topics.
- 4) Constructing writing test to know the students’ improvement.

#### b. Action

The first action was done on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2017, and the teacher explained the task to the students. She prepared the picture ‘Part of the Body’ which was cut into pieces. Starting the class, the teacher

did pre-activity by checking the students' attendance, asking some questions about last subject, and pointing one of them to lead the pray. In the whilst-activity, the teacher explained the descriptive text that the students should write. The students followed the teacher's instruction. They had to re-arrange the scattered pictures became a complete picture. The teacher re-explained what the students should do, and gave example. She then asked them to arrange the picture into the right order by giving them example. Having understood the explanation, the students wrote down the descriptive essay about it.

From the first observation, the writers found out that the seven students were quiet happy doing their tasks, although there were students who kept asking her questions.

The second action was carried out on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2017, with the picture of 'Parts of the Computer'. The teacher explained the task that all students had to do, clearly. They followed their teacher's instruction. #R1, #R2, and #R3 did their job well, especially #R1 who was very good at compiling the pictures. He kept doing the writing, although #R6 kept bothering him by asking some questions. The writers' note from the second observation was: It seemed to us that the picture series used was not interesting for the students, and make them reluctant to write the text.

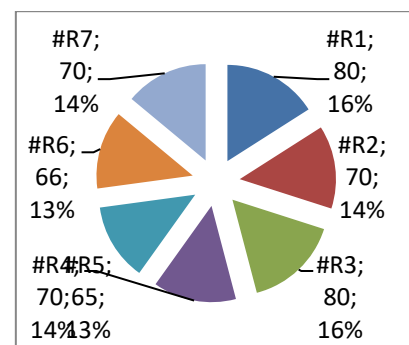
The third action which was done on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2017 and only followed by four of the students, they were #R1, #R2, #R3, and #R5. The class was very quiet due to only eight of us: the teacher, four students, two observers, and the writers. This time the teacher

explained the material very clear using both sign language and spoken one, so that no any single question was asked by the four students.

Like the week before, the students had to describe the picture based on their arrangement and understanding about the picture. The picture used was 'The Presidents of Indonesia'. At the end of the class the teacher corrected the students' works before they left the class. From the third observation of the first cycle, the writers noted that the pictures made the seven students interested in doing the task, although the seven students found difficulty to decide who the first president of Indonesia was.

After completing the three actions, and knowing her students' ability, the teacher gave them test to know whether their writing performance has improved or not. The test was held on 29<sup>th</sup> of September 2017. The teacher only asked the students to take one of the pictures they have studied, and they had to describe it based on their understanding of the picture.

The first cycle result showed that two of the students got score above the standard (#R1/80 and #R3/80), three students got the standard score (#R2/70, #R4/70, and #R7/70) and the rest two of them (#R5 and #R6) respectively got 65, and 66. The result of the first cycle is figured out below.



## Figure 2 The Result of 1st Cycle

The result figures out that there were two of the students got score below the required standard. Two of the students belonged to 'very good' criteria, three of them were in 'good' criteria. The last two of them got the score below the standard which was considered to 'fair' criteria.

### c. Reflection

The teacher did her tasks by the help of two observers who were having their teaching practice in the school. Based on the observation, the teacher had done her work by guiding her students, and explaining the materials/pictures well. Unfortunately, the students still got difficulty to describe the pictures, especially in structure, spelling, even they still had limited vocabularies. There were students copied their friend answers during the lesson, and the teacher did not recognize it. The teacher only stood at the front desk, and ignored the students who sat at the back row. Looking at the students' score, the writers considered that the first cycle of classroom action has not reached the expected result; therefore the second cycle of the classroom action research should be continued.

## 2. The Result of the Second Cycle

Due to the result of the improvement in first cycle which was not reached the required standard, the writers suggested the teacher to continue the second cycle to know the students improvement. It was done in three actions and carried out on 2<sup>th</sup> October 2017, 9<sup>th</sup>

October 2017, and on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2017.

In the second cycle, the seven students were still asked to write the descriptive text by using different picture series. The improvements are made to the following actions:

### a. Plan

In the second cycle, the teacher:

- 1) Designed the lesson plan.
- 2) Chose the more interesting and colorful pictures series which are more interesting for the students to look at to.
- 3) Constructed observation form for the observers, and
- 4) Developed writing test to measure the students' writing improvement.

### b. Action

In the second cycle, the teacher asked the students to seat face to face in pairs. There were six of them which made the pair into three pairs. She asked the students to pay attention, explained the material using both sign and spoken languages, and led them to do the first task using the picture 'Parts of the Bird'. The note that the writers did from the first observation of the second cycle was: since the pictures only consisted of few parts, it made the students easy to describe it. The first action of the second cycle was done on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2017.

The second action of the second cycle was done on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2017, with the picture's title 'Part of the Plant'. Meanwhile, the third action was done on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2017, with the picture title 'Part of the House'. The same activity was done as it was in the first action. The teacher had carried out good job so far. She asked the

students to pay attention to the spelling of each word they wrote. She also encouraged the students' background knowledge by relating it to the writing task. Besides, she also asked the students questions which have relation to their daily lives, and to the things they found easily around them. Having finished the three actions, the teacher reviewed all the activities done by the students to make them remember and understand what they did so far. To know the students' improvement, the teacher gave the students test to know their improvement in writing descriptive. It was held on 23rd October, Different from the first cycle, in the second cycle the teacher provided the students with the picture entitled 'Parts of the Family' to help to write elaborately.

From the second and third observations in second cycle, the writers' notes would be: when the students were guided clearly, they would be able to write the text easily. For them, to write short text would be easy to do than to write longer one. Additionally, the task that has relationship with their lives would be very easy to be described than the abstract one, and vocabularies they have also influence their products. The encouragement given by the teacher make the students like to ask questions they do not understand.

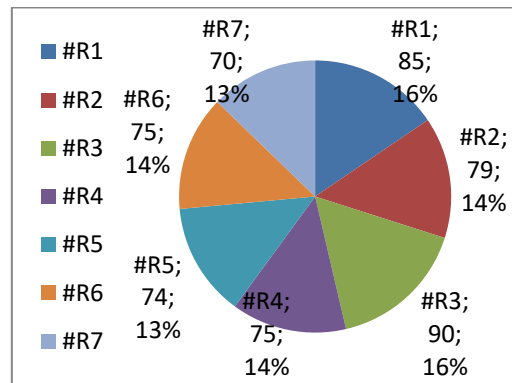


Figure 3. The Result of 2nd Cycle

Figure 3 above shows that there are increasing score from the students' writing, and it indicates that there are improvements on their ability to write descriptive text. The improvement could be elaborated that #R3 belong to 'excellent' criteria, #R1 belong to 'very good' criteria, #R2, #R4, #R5, #R6, #R7 belong to 'good' criteria.

### c. Reflection

The classroom action research which was done in two cycles with six actions has fostered the students writing ability to write descriptive text. This could be noticed from the improvement of the students' scores in writing. In the first cycle, there were two students who still found difficulty to write. However, after the teacher helped, directed, explained the task, and encouraged the students to write the text clearly by using the picture series finally they could write better. Their enthusiasm and interest increased. The six students' scores are above the required standard score, and one of them is 70. The average score of the first cycle was 72 while the mean in the second cycle increases to 78. Since the seven students' score have reached the target score, the cycle process should

be ended, and in fact the pictures series could foster the students' to write descriptive text.

### 3. The Data from the Questionnaire

The students' opinion concern to the teaching process was also found out by using the questionnaires given to them. The questionnaires consisted of questions related to the picture series and were given to the students after the test. The two observers helped the writer explain the questions to the students, since the 10 questions should be translated into finger spelling and sign language. Tabel 1 below shows the explanation of the ten questions.

Table 1 Questionnaire Result

Indicators & Questions		Percentage (%)	
		Yes	No
A	The Content of Picture Series		
	1. The learning material is interesting & encouraging.	100	0
	2. The topic learnt is interesting.	71	29
	3. The content and the topic learned relate to students' life.	100	0
B	Material delivery		
	4. Learning English through picture series is easy.	100	0
	5. Descriptive text is easy to learn by using picture series.	43	57
	6. The use of picture series helps students to understand the	100	0

	material taught.		
	7. Picture series can help students writing descriptive text.	53	47
	8. Teacher explanation is very clear.	100	0
	9. Teacher's guidance is important for the students	100	0
C	The difficulty in writing through picture series		0
	10. I face difficulty in writing sentences.	100	0
	11. Long descriptive text is hard to write.	100	0
	12. Short descriptive text is preferable.	100	0
	13. Structure is hard to learn.	100	0

The essential things that the writer can draw from the table above are: question number 1: All seven deaf students (100%) actually agree that the learning material is interesting, and encouraging. Question number 2: Five students (71%) said that the topic learnt is interesting, two students (29%) said no to the statement. Question 3 is about whether the content and the topic learned relate to students' life, all seven students (100%) said yes. From question 1 until 3, it could be noted that the learning material and the topic are interesting and can encourage all seven students, since they relate to the students' life.

Question 4 asked about whether learning English through picture series is easy, and all students (100%) said yes. Question 5 refers to

the question if descriptive text is easy to learn by using picture series, three students (43%) said yes, and four students (57%) said no. Question 6 relates to whether the use of picture series helps students to understand the material taught, and all students (100%) said yes. Question 7 mentions about if picture series can help students writing descriptive text, and four students (53%) said yes, and the rest three students (47%) said no. Question 8 asked whether teacher's explanation is very clear, and all the students (100%) said yes. Question 9 referred to the important of teacher's guidance for the students, all students (100%) said yes. From question 4 until 9, the answers from seven students are varied. Three of the questioned got answer 100%, while seven of the question got varied answers.

The rest of the questions, they are questions 10 till 14 that asked students if they face difficulty in writing sentences, especially the long one, all of them (100%) said yes. It means that writing for them, either to write long or short sentence is hard for them. Additionally, all of them (100%) prefer to write descriptive text, although they still find structure is hard to learn.

## **DISCUSSION**

The study has the aim of finding out whether pictures series could foster the students' ability to write descriptive text. The result from the first cycle did not reach the required score, because there were four students who got the score below 70. The description of the students' scores is as follows: #R1

(80), #R2 (70), #R3 (80), #R4 (70), #R5 (65), #R6 (66), and #R7 (70). The scores are then put into three categories respectively, they are: #R1, and R3 (80%) belonged to 'very good' criteria, #R2, #R4, and #R7 (14%) belonged to 'good' criteria, and two of them #R5, and #R6 (13%) belonged to 'fair' criteria.

The reasons they got lower score were caused by some factors such as: got confuse while writing the text, had less attention from the teacher; especially the students who sat at the back row. The most reasons are five of them were not good at structure, and had limited vocabulary. The last reason is the different level of hearing could also affect the students' performance.

Their weaknesses of structure were confessed by the seven students (100%) noted from the questionnaire. From the observation notes, it was found that actually, the teacher did explain the material probably too fast, and only understood by them who sat in front row. She should have walked to every corner of the students' desk to guide them to do their tasks. Instead of asking the teacher, #R6 only asked #R1 and #R3 who sat front desk without understanding the answer. When the students did not pay attention to her, she did not remind them, even punish them, and it made them ignore the rule. Due to the condition in the first cycle that they were students who had not reached the standard score, the classroom action research had to be continued to the second cycle.

The result from the second cycle shows that all seven deaf students have increased their scores as follows: #R1/85 (16%), #R2/79



(14%), #R3/90 (16%), #R4/75 (14%), #R5/74 (13%), #R6/75 (14%), and #R7/70 (13%).

The percentages in the bracket are individual's improvement from their first cycle scores. From the observation notes, it was found that the teacher changed the students' sitting arrangement to make them sit face to face to be able to discuss with the pair. She also paid more attention by giving the students intent guidance one by one. The interaction and the atmosphere between the teacher and the seven students in the second cycle were livelier, especially with the existence of colorful picture series.

The data from the questionnaire support the students' improvements that picture series foster and help them to write descriptive text to be better. It is accordance with Wright (1989:2) who said that picture could become not only an aspect of method but rather than an essential experience where people can represent their mind. Furthermore, it also supported by Raimes (1983:27-28) who emphasizes that that pictures will bring everything from the outside world into the classroom in a vividly concrete way. It is clear that it helps students a lot in writing descriptive text. So the deaf students, actually, could be able to write the descriptive text better since deafness, per se, has no effect on the acquisition of literacy skills. A deaf child has the same intellectual capacity as a hearing child (Moores (2006:45)).

All in all, the students' ability to write descriptive text has improved, and it is seen from the percentage in the first cycle which

was 72 becomes 78; they are more than the school required standard, therefore the second cycle has to be ended.

## CONCLUSION

The classroom action research which was done in two cycle shows that the students' improvement scores in writing was grouped into three; they are: 'very good' with two students (#R1 & #R3), 'good' with three students, and 'fair' criteria with two students (#R2 & #R4), and 'fair' criteria with three students (#R4, #R5 & #R6). Knowing that the score is still under the required standard, the action was needed to be continued to second one. After conducting the second cycle, there is improvement on the score. The improvement is showed as follows: #R1/85 belongs to 'very good' criteria, #R2/79, #R4/75, #R5/74, #R6/75, and #R7/70 belong to 'good' criteria, and the last #R3/90 belongs to 'excellent' criteria. Hence, the second cycle result proves that picture series improve students' ability to write descriptive text.

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