

QUARTET CARD GAME: CHANGING STUDENTS' GRAMMAR MASTERY IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT

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Abstract:

This paper is a conceptual paper based on our framework of a team research called "Penelitian Dosen Pemula" or PDP 2017. The objective of the study was to find out whether or not the use of quartet card games promoted students' grammar mastery in writing descriptive text. Playing quartet card games is one of many fun activities some people do in their free time. Bringing and adapting this fun free time activity into the classroom and use it as a teaching technique will certainly color the teaching and learning process. The subject of the study use the second semester students of TPHP in SMKN Pringku in the academic year 2016/2017. The sample was 25 students that were chosen by using a population, single technique. This study applied a pre-experimental research method, which was a one group-pretest posttest design. The result showed that teaching grammar mastery in writing descriptive text using quartet card games had a significant effect on students' grammar mastery. In other words, it can be concluded that teaching grammar mastery in writing descriptive text using quartet card game significantly improved students' grammar mastery.

Keywords: quartet card game, grammar mastery, descriptive text

INTRODUCTION

According to Harmer (2006: 12), the grammar of a language is the description of the ways in which words can change their forms and can be combined into sentences in that language. Similarly, Greenbaum and Nelson (2002: 1) state that grammar refers to the set of rules that allow us to combine words in our language into larger units. Based on the previous definitions, it can be concluded that grammar is a set of rules in which words are combined or put together to make correct sentences which are meaningful in order to speak and write properly and effectively.

Teschner and Evans (2007: 5) say that any language's words can be classified to the speech or grammatical category. He further elaborates that, as for English, its words can be categorized as nouns, adjectives, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, determiners, prepositions, conjunctions, and so forth. Shertzer (1996: v) lists down the same points of grammar words. For sentences, the parts are subject and predicate, phrases, and clauses (Shertzer, 1996: 6-7).

Grammar mastery is an ability to be aware of how sentences are produced and to actually produce sentences in language accurately and meaningfully for. Purpura (2005: 86) uses to define mastery, encompass more than just a domain of information in memory or knowledge; it also involves the capacity to use these informational structures in some ways. He further explains that language ability refers to an individual's capacity to utilize mental representations of language knowledge built up through practice or experience in order to convey meaning. He, then, concludes that grammatical ability can specifically defined as the capacity to realize grammatical knowledge accurately and meaningfully in testing or other language-use situations.

Writing is one of the language skills in learning English that a student should master despite its difficulties considering the fact that there are some aspects needed to score in writing. Brown (2000: 335) proposes a good deal of attention on how well a student's final product is in four criteria that include content, organization, vocabulary use, grammatical use, and mechanical considerations (spelling and punctuation). Furthermore, Bell and Burnbay in Nunan (1998: 36) point out that writing is a complex cognitive activity in which the writer is demanded to demonstrate control of a number of variables simultaneously at the sentence level-include control of content, spelling, and letter formation and beyond the sentence structure and integrate information into cohesive and coherent paragraph and text. From those theories, it can be concluded that writing is the complex cognitive activity using graphic symbol in which the writer takes ideas.

A descriptive text, according to Emilia (2011:82), is a text which is used to describe a particular person, place or thing or something in the writers' mind. Similar to Emilia, Gerot and Wignell (1995) say

that a descriptive text is a kind of text which gives the description of a particular person, animal, thing, and else with a purpose to give information. So, a descriptive text can be concluded as a text which gives the description or lists the characteristics of a person, an animal, a place, a thing, and else using words that appeal to the sense of sight, smell, touch, and taste in order to that a reader can better visualize those being described or understand a sensation or an emotion.

The aspects of the grammar used in writing descriptive texts were *to be (is, am, are)*, *adjectives*, *has and have*, *plural and singular verbs (-s, -es, -ies)*, and *pronoun referents and possessive adjectives* (Purpura, 2005:120-121). Based on the previous explanations, the term of grammar mastery in writing descriptive texts is an ability to produce sentences in the form of purposeful and meaningful connected texts, not just single sentences, which cover the use of *to be (is, am, are)*, *has and have*, *plural and singular verbs (-s, -es, -ies)*, *adjectives*, and *pronoun referents and possessive adjectives* accurately and meaningfully in order to better communicate with the readers.

The data taken from the questionnaire in the preliminary research reveals that the students still encountered difficulties in grammar especially in writing descriptive texts. The fact that the students lacked in grammar mastery was also supported by the findings of the pre-test which showed that the class' average score of grammar mastery in writing the descriptive text was only 57 in which the students' individual score ranged from 30 as the lowest score and 90 as the highest one. It means that less than half the number of students achieved the passing grade set for English subject, which is 70. The data from the questionnaire and the interview strengthened these findings: 38% were unaware of problem number 1 (the use of *to be – is, am, are*), 51% of them were inattentive of problem number 2 (the use of *has and have*), 68% of them were thoughtless of problem number 3 (the use of *plural and singular verbs*), and 54% of them paid no heed in problem number 4 (the use of *adjectives*), 85% of them also noted that they had no idea on the use of time markers. Therefore, to overcome these problems, researcher used quartet card games as a teaching technique to improve their grammar mastery in writing skill especially in descriptive text.

Rokhmat (as cited in Syahputra, 2012) states that a quartet card game is like rummy, another card game which consists of a set of cards which contains quartets (a set of four similar cards bearing the same theme or subject). Kamil, Suharno, and Karsono (2013) mention that a quartet card game is a kind of card game containing a number of pictorial cards which its highlighted or bold topic on top represents the theme of the quartet card and some other information about the picture written between the theme and the picture.

The consideration of applying quartet card games as a technique to change the students' grammar mastery in writing descriptive text was that the students would experience a different way in the practice of grammar in a fun way. According to Weirus (as cited in Tuan and Doan, 2010: 71), it is clear that in the easy, relaxed atmosphere which is created by using games, students remember things faster and better. Besides, card games are simple to make, easy to carry around, and take little room to store. Playing quartet card games is one of many fun activities some people do in their free time. Bringing and adapting this fun free time activity into the classroom and making it as a teaching technique will certainly color the teaching and learning process. Without any doubts, it will attract the students' attention and make the students more interested in learning. The fun will lessen their boredom and hence it will increase their motivation to join the teaching and learning process. Moreover, by asking the students to participate in making the quartet card will help them maintain a longer retention in grammar mastery especially in writing descriptive text that they will do.

METHOD

A pre-experimental research method that focused on one group pretest-posttest design was applied in this study. Creswell (2005: 160) states that "This design includes a pre-test measure followed by a treatment and a post test for a single group". From that statement, there was no control group in this study. It could be argued that the exposure of the treatment to the students could be maximized since there was only one group. In addition, having only one group of participant was supported by the existence of the first year students in SMKN Pringkuku. The only group of students who got involved as the sample of the study was exposed to the quartet card game through 4 meetings, including pre-test and posttest. Each meeting covered a 45-minute teaching learning activity.

In this study, the researcher used population-single technique. The researcher has only one class, which is the of the first year TKJ students in the academic year of 2016/2017. Therefore, the population in this study was also the sample. The assessment of the students' grammar mastery used analytic rating scales which provide separate ratings from each aspect of grammar mastery to be measured (Purpura,

2005:120-121). The aspects of the grammar used in writing descriptive texts are *to be (is, am, are), adjectives, has and have, plural and singular verbs (-s, -es, -ies), and pronoun referents and possessive adjectives*. The indicator of students' success in grammar mastery especially in writing descriptive text was when their scores reached the passing grade set for English in the first year students of SMKN Pringkuku which was 70. Normality and homogeneity testing are the prerequisite test which applied before using sample t-test to analyze the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The scoring rubric is adapted from the example of an analytic rating scale Purpura presents which covers five levels for each grammatical aspect. Then, the researcher sets the scoring criteria of students' grammar mastery for each grammatical aspect in writing descriptive texts presented in table 1.

Table 1. Scoring Criteria of Students' Grammar Mastery for Each Grammatical Aspect

Level	Scores	Criteria
5	20	Excellent
4	16	Good
3	12	Fair
2	8	Weak
1	4	Poor

Then, to analyze and compare the result of the students' grammar mastery in writing descriptive texts before and after the action or the result of the pre-test and post-test, the researcher used descriptive statistics. The indicator that the students are considered successful in changing or improving their grammar mastery in writing descriptive text is when the average score of the aspects of the grammar is sixteen (good).

Before analyzing the result of the pre-test and the post-test scores, the researcher checked the normality of both the pre-test and the post-test by using Liliefors testing. The formula used to determine the normality is:

$$z_i = \frac{X - \bar{X}}{s} \text{ Where } s = \sqrt{\frac{\sum(X - \bar{X})^2}{n-1}} \text{ or } \sqrt{\frac{\sum X^2 - \frac{(\sum X)^2}{n}}{n-1}} \text{ or } \sqrt{\frac{\sum x^2}{n-1}}$$

The normality test is to check whether the data are in normal distribution or not. If L_o (L obtained) is lower than L_t (L table) at the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$ on Liliefors, the sample is in normal distribution. The researcher found out that the L_o of the pre-test was 0.131 and 0.299 for the post test, which is $L_t = 0.404$ at the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$. Therefore, it can be concluded that all of the values of L_o are lower than L_t . It means that both of pre-test and post test data were in normal distribution.

After getting the normality test, the researcher analyzed the score distribution of pre-test and post-test using the Bartlett formula to find out whether the data are homogeneous or not. The algebraic formula used to determine the homogeneity is:

$$\chi^2 = (ln10) \{B - \sum (n_i - 1) \log s_i^2\}$$

The researcher found out that the value of chi-square observation was 0.675 while the table value of the chi-square at the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$ was 3.841. Because χ_o^2 is lower than χ_t^2 , it can be concluded that the data is homogeneous. The result of the sample t-test analysis conducted for the pre-test and the post-test is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Result of Sample T-test

	Mean	Mean Difference	Significant Value
Pre-test	57	5.98	0.05
Post-test	73		

As shown in Table 2 the mean score of the students' pre-test was 57, while the mean score of the post-test was 73. The mean difference between pre-test and post-test was 5.98 with the significant value was 0.05. Because the mean difference is higher than significant value ($5.98 \geq 0.05$), it means that there were students' improvement before and after conducting the quartet card game as teaching technique in this research.

Based on the result in the pre-test, it showed that the students' grammar mastery in writing descriptive text was still poor and far from being expected. Thus, the fact in the findings of the pre-test showed that the class' average score of grammar mastery in writing the descriptive text was only 57, in which the students' individual score ranged from 30 as the lowest score and 90 as the highest one. It means that less than half the number of students who achieved the passing grade set for English subject which is 70. The students admitted that the activities in teaching grammar and writing were monotonous before conducted through quartet card games. After the researcher taught the students using quartet card games as a teaching technique, all of the students' post-test score increased. The result of sample t-test also showed that there was significant difference between the result of pre-test and post-test. This indicates that teaching grammar by using quartet card game as a teaching technique is effective for increasing their grammar mastery.

In addition to the interpretation, the researcher made based on the result of the pre-test and post-test, the researcher also made some interpretations based on what the researcher encountered during the study. First, the researcher found that the students were very interested to learn because of the implementation of quartet card games. As explained previously, the students have low achievement in grammar mastery especially in writing descriptive text. Based on the researcher experience in teaching, before conducting this research, the students' achievement of grammar mastery in writing descriptive text was still far from being expected. This happened because the teaching technique before was not effective.

By implementing quartet card game as a technique in the teaching and learning process it is proven to be able to improve the students' grammar mastery in writing descriptive texts. The improvement can be seen from the scores of the grammatical aspects in their descriptive texts taken from the results of pre-test and the post-test which can be seen in table 3.

Table 3. Score Progress of Students' Grammar Mastery in Writing Descriptive Texts from the Pre-Test and the Post-Test

	Total Average Score of Grammar Mastery
Pre-test	57
Post-test	73
Progress Point	16

This occurs because quartet card games are amusing and instructive game, especially as training for the memory. Technically, the activity in using this quartet cards does not stop right where the students do a grammar exercise and then check it out with the whole class but it continues to where the students have to read each sentence out loud again and again which makes it possible for them to retain their memory on the pattern of the grammar used in the sentence. In other words, students are unconsciously forced to memorize a concept. Through repetition, in the easy and relaxed atmosphere which is created by using games, students remember things faster and better. Ersoz (2000: 85) shares the same view that language games allow the use of meaningful and useful language which is used in real contexts and are able to provide a chance for pupils to use the language that they have learnt.

Finally, based on the results of the interpretations, the researcher claims that the use of quartet card games as teaching technique can help the students become interested, enjoying, and better in learning grammar in descriptive writing materials. In addition, the use of quartet card game can help the students' experience more interest in studying grammar in writing descriptive text.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

As the result of the study, the researcher carried out at the first year TKJ students in SMKN Pringkuku it shows that quartet card game are one of the teaching techniques, which can help the students become interested, enjoying, and better in learning grammar. By using quartet card games, the students could improve their grammar mastery in writing descriptive text. They became more active in discussing the material when they do a grammar exercise and start to arrange the writing in the cards into a piece of writing. Based on the findings of the study, it can also be concluded that quartet card games significantly increase students' grammar mastery in writing achievement especially in descriptive text. The sample t-test result of the pre-test and the post-test showed that there was a significant difference in students' grammar achievement after they were exposed to quartet card games.

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