

TEACHING PUNCTUATION THROUGH DESCRIPTIVE TEXT TO THE GRADE EIGHT STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study used a pre-experimental design to examine whether or not teaching punctuation to grade 8 students at SMPN 6 Palu through descriptive text could result in improved sentence punctuation. SMPN 6 Palu's eighth-grade students made up the study's sample population. The researcher used a pretest and post-test to gather data, assessing the students' proficiency with punctuation both before and after the intervention. The test's outcome reveals that students' post-test mean scores (72.11) were higher than their pretest scores (59.89). Using descriptive text in teaching punctuation can help grade eight students at SMPN 6 Palu to punctuate correctly, according to the hypothesis test results.

Keywords: Teaching, punctuation, and descriptive Text.

BACKGROUND

English is widely used and has a significant role, particularly in education. Students in Indonesia study English as a foreign language. It is a required subject that is now one of the ones examined in the National Examination. English classes teach four English skills: speaking, reading, and writing.

Writing is part of four skills, and it is essential to be learned and mastered by an individual. The importance of writing skills is especially in how the students write a sentence and how they put punctuation in it. Furthermore, these two matters sometimes need to be solved for English learners.

Based on the researchers' experience when conducting preliminary research in class Eight of SMPN 6 Palu, they found the problem in using punctuation. Some students still needed to improve in putting punctuation correctly when they wrote paragraphs. For example, put the full stop in the last sentence, and a comma, such as *She needs a pen, pencil, and paper to write a letter*. Instead, *she needs a pen, pencil, and paper to write a letter*. One of the

crucial things in writing is to put the correct punctuation so that the readers understand the sentence or passage easily. The researchers used descriptive text to teach punctuation because the researchers wanted the students to learn punctuation more accessible and based on Curriculum. Through descriptive text, the students were required to put appropriate punctuation in the correct places. The teacher can quickly correct the inappropriate uses of punctuation.

Based on the situation, the researchers took a principal problem, can the application of descriptive text in teaching punctuation enable the grade eight students of SMPN 6 Palu to punctuate correctly? The research objective was to determine whether the application of descriptive text in teaching punctuation can enable the grade eight students of SMPN 6 Palu to punctuate a sentence correctly. This study focused on the teaching of punctuation through descriptive text. The researchers focused on using full stops, commas, exclamation, and question marks.

There were previous studies related to this research. The first was Nurhidayah's (2013) research; the title of her research is "Teaching Punctuation to the eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Kasimbar through Controlled Writing." Based on the result of her research, she concluded that the value of the t-test is 4.51. Applying a 0.05 level of significance with 64 degrees of freedom (df) $33+33-2=64$, the writer found the t-table value (1,979). The hypothesis (controlled writing can improve students' ability to use punctuation and capitalization) is accepted. In other words, the use of controlled writing effectively improved students' ability to use punctuation and capitalization.

The second was conducted by Etinurwati (2016), which discusses the students' ability to use punctuation in descriptive paragraph writing. No student was classified as exceptional; 4 students, or 11%, were classified as good; 21 students, or 57%, were classified as fair; 12 students, or 32%, were classified as low; and no student was classified as failed, according to the analysis's findings. With a total average score of 59.7 on the punctuation proficiency test for writing descriptive paragraphs during the first semester of eighth grade at SMPN 2 Pardasuka in the academic year 2016–2017, it can be said that the student's proficiency was rated as fair.

Hasyim et al. (2017) conducted the third. The study's title was "The Use of English Punctuation in Improving Students' Writing Skills at The Sixth Semester of Letters of UMI Makassar." According to the data analysis, the sixth-semester English Department students in UMI Makassar could have done better when applying English punctuation. The students' low achievement is primarily due to the mistakes they continue to make when employing English punctuation. However, they are also influenced by the following factors: As a result of the experimental study, The results of the data analysis from

the pretest show that three students (15%) had low scores, ten students (50%) received low scores, five students (25%) received average scores, and two students (10%) received high scores. Furthermore, in the post-test, seven students (35%) received low marks, nine students (45%) received ordinary marks, three students (15%) received good marks, and one student (5%) received excellent marks. After learning proper punctuation, their writing skills have improved.

What is Punctuation?

Punctuation is crucial in assisting the reader in determining intonation. It signals the reader to speak louder or pause when he or she is about to stop, in other words. Boardman and Frydenberg (2008:11) state that punctuation marks vary significantly from language to language. Crystal (2015) explains that punctuation is necessary because it makes writing more readable and makes a sentence much easier to read. The marks also instruct us on how to read aloud with pauses, rhythm, and melody, similar to those found in speech. To use punctuation marks correctly, one must have a basic understanding of sentence structure.

There are some definitions of punctuation. According to Parkes (2016), punctuation is a crucial part of written language that primarily clarifies structural ambiguities in a text and flags subtleties of semantic significance that may otherwise go completely uncommunicated or, at best, be considerably more challenging for a reader to understand. Farlex (2017) states that punctuation is the term used to describe the specific markings, signs, and symbols employed within and surrounding sentences to structure and facilitate accurate understanding and comprehension. With punctuation, a text would be a smooth stream of letters with rhythm, organization, and significance.

In English, the inappropriate use of punctuation can create distorted writing meaning. Therefore, excellent and correct

punctuation use is significantly needed. According to the Encyclopedia, punctuation is a set of symbols typically employed in written and printed texts to denote meaning and break sentences, words, and fragments. It frequently denotes discourse characteristics like pauses and intonation contours.

Function of Punctuations

The function of punctuation marks is to convey precise meaning while writing. According to Hamilton (2007), there are two punctuation systems in use, the close system, and the open system. Every type of precise composition, including laws, contracts, legal and ecclesiastical statements, and the like, requires a rigid or close structure that uses points whenever possible. In the more prevalent kinds of composition, the open or accessible system is used, which omits points whenever they can be removed. The punctuations have functions. They are explained briefly next.

• The comma (,)

The comma is the most commonly used punctuation mark. Commas can show the reader how extra information has been added to a sentence. Straus et al. (2014) state that commas regularly designate a short-term pause; they are 'more' final than periods. He also gives the rules for using commas. They are:

1. Use commas to divide words or word groups into a simple series of three or more items.
2. Use a comma to distinguish two adjectives when the adjectives are interchangeable.
3. a) Many novice writers join two separate clauses using a comma rather than a period. This results in a comma splice, which is a run-on sentence. b) Put a comma at the end of the first clause in sentences when two separate clauses are connected by connectors like and, or, but, etc. c) A comma is typically not required if the subject does not come before the second verb.

Example: *He responded incorrectly despite thinking rapidly.*

4. a) After some words that begin a phrase, such as also, yes, why, hello, and hey, a comma should be used. B) To distinguish expressions that break up the flow of a sentence, use commas (nevertheless, after all, by the way, on the other hand, however.).
5. Use commas to separate a person's name, nickname, term of endearment, or the title when they are being addressed directly.
6. Use a comma to separate the day of the month from the year, and always place one after the year.
7. When separating a city from its state, remember to use a comma and follow the state with one.
8. Traditionally, a comma comes after the last name when a person's name is followed by Sr. or Jr. There is no longer a requirement for this comma. If a comma does come before Sr. or Jr., it must be followed by another comma when the name appears in the middle of a sentence.
9. Commas should also be used to separate titles or degrees alongside names.
10. Use a comma after a dependent clause at the beginning of a sentence.
11. To separate unnecessary words, sentences, and phrases, use commas.
12. The following description is optional and should be separated by commas if something or someone has been appropriately identified.
13. To begin or end direct quotations, use commas. End the quoted text with a comma, even if it is only one word, if the quotation comes before what he said, what she wrote, what they said, what Dana insisted, or something similar.
14. A comma should be used to divide a statement from a question.
15. A comma should be used to separate sentences with opposing elements.

16. a) When specific introductory phrases or keywords, like specifically, that is, i.e., e.g., and for instance, are followed by a list of items, a comma should be placed before and after them. B) If the word etc. is used in the middle of a phrase, commas should come before and after it.

Period /Full stop (.)

A declarative sentence ends with a period, often known as a complete stop. Other applications for it as a sign are covered in the following sentences. According to Straus et al. (2014), the rules for the Use of the Period are as follows:

1. Use a period at the end of a complete sentence that is a statement.
2. If the last word in the sentence ends in a period, do not follow it with another period.
3. Use a period after an indirect question.

Hamilton (2007) earlier states other Uses of the Period. They are:

1. One decimal point is represented by a period.
2. To denote an ellipsis, the period is placed in groups and is separated by spaces.

Question Mark (?)

The question mark is used when information is sought by asking. According to Straus et al. (2014), there are five rules for using a question mark. Namely:

1. After a direct inquiry, only use a question mark.
2. a) A question mark is used in place of a period to conclude sentences. b) Capitalize the term after a question mark following Rule 2a.
3. a) Avoid the standard error of using question marks with statements that contain questions in them, known as indirect questions. After an indirect inquiry, a period should be used. b) Some phrases have the guise of questions but are demands or

declarations. Since they do not demand or anticipate a response, they are known as rhetorical inquiries. There should be no asterisks after *many*.

4. Use a question mark if a sentence contains both a statement and a question mark.
5. Question marks and quotation marks are logically placed together. If the quoted text contains a question, a question mark should be included between the quotation marks.

The Exclamation (!)

The exclamation mark is the mark of intense emotion. Straus et al. (2014) list the rules of using exclamation as follows:

1. To convey emotion, emphasis, or surprise, use an exclamation point.
2. Instead of a period, an exclamation point is used to terminate sentences.
3. When writing in official business writing, avoid using exclamation points.
4. Exclamation points used excessively indicate sloppy writing. Use these marks only if you are confident that they are necessary.

Definition of Descriptive Text

Descriptive text is a Text to give information. The description of a specific thing, animal, person, or others—like our pets or someone we know well—makes up the context of this type of prose. It differs from Report, which describes things, animals, persons, and others.

Descriptive text is one of the text types taught in English. As its name suggests, the text is descriptive. A standard definition of descriptive Text from Martin (1985:143) is that descriptive text is writing that explains a person, a place, an idea, an organization, or an activity. While Meyers (2005:60) explains that readers can more effectively understand the subject matter if a writer describes a scene. It is in line with Oshima and Hogue's (2007:61) add that by appealing to the senses, descriptive writing describes how something appears, feels,

smells, tastes, and/or sounds. This means descriptive text can give a clear view of a subject.

The Purpose of Descriptive Texts

The objective of a description, according to the meaning of the word, is to give the reader a sense of a scene, a subject, or a location. According to Wilbur (1966), the description's purpose is to give the reader a precise idea of a person, location, or thing. Meanwhile, White (1986) said that there are several aims of descriptive text:

1. The definition of "see" is "to assist the reader in seeing the objects, individuals, or sensations you present; the description is essential for all rhetorical purposes, not only expressiveness."
2. To explain means to make a subject clear to the reader. For instance, a science writer might describe the design of an airplane wing to help the reader understand how mechanized flight is possible.
3. To convince is to describe things in such a way as to pique readers' interest. In order to demonstrate forcible entrance and convince the jury that the accused committed burglary, a counsel can, for instance, detail the damage to a bedroom window.
4. To recreate is to require the reader to produce something. For instance, the description enables the reader to recreate the event mentally, especially the sensory delights of that experience, which heightens their interest in the topic.
5. To demonstrate suggests that the writer intends to show the reader something. The dynamic quality of nature and how its operations are more intricate and beautiful than non-observers can comprehend is illustrated when a writer describes the thawing of Walden Pond after a long, cold winter.

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

This study concentrated on teaching punctuation through descriptive text. The researchers used pre-experimental research. Pre- and post-tests were used in this study. Before employing descriptive text, the pretest was given to get some initial information on the students' testing abilities in punctuation. The post-test was given to gauge how well the student had learned punctuation following the treatment. The research design proposed by Arikunto (2010):

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| O1 | X | O2 |
|----|---|----|

Where: O1 : Pre-test
X: Treatment
O2 : Post-test

In order to do the research and get the data needed, the researchers determined the population. The population of this research was the Eighth-grade students at SMPN 6 Palu, which consisted of ten classes that are labeled alphabetically (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J). The following table indicates the population.

Table of Student Distribution

| No. | Name of the Class | Number of Students |
|-------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. | A | 25 |
| 2. | B | 25 |
| 3. | C | 25 |
| 4. | D | 25 |
| 5. | E | 25 |
| 6. | F | 25 |
| 7. | G | 25 |
| 8. | H | 25 |
| 9. | I | 25 |
| 10. | J | 25 |
| Total | | 250 |

Each class contains 25 students. This makes the total number of students 250. Thus, the number of this research population is 250 students.

For a large population, the researchers chose the sample of this research by applying a cluster random sampling technique—the technique used to get an experimental group. In selecting the sample, the researchers did the following steps. Firstly, the researchers wrote down the word S (sample) and B (blank) on paper. Secondly, the researchers folded the paper and put them in a glass. Thirdly, one of the students from each class took one paper. Finally, the student who got the word S on paper was from class VIII J. Therefore; class VIII J became the experimental group.

This research had two variables. They were the independent variable and dependent variable. The independent variable was teaching punctuation through descriptive texts, and the dependent variable was the student's mastery of punctuation.

In this research, the researcher used a test as the main instrument. The test covered the pretest and post-test. The researcher administered a test as the main instrument to get the data to measure the student's ability to use punctuation before and after giving treatment. The test consisted of a pretest and a post-test, and both of the tests covered putting correct punctuation tests, which have similar test items, but the researcher rearranged the number. The researcher used the Completion test and rewriting paragraph.

Table of Test and Scoring System

| No. | Kind of test | Total Number | Score each number | Total score |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Completion test | 20 | 1 | 20 |
| 2 | Rewrite paragraph | 15 | 1 | 15 |
| Maximum score | | | | 35 |

With the data at hand, the researchers performed a statistical analysis. The following table displays the scoring

methodology for each test type on the pretest and post-test.

Table of Test Scoring System

| No. | Criteria | Score |
|-----|--|-------|
| 1. | Every correct answer | 1 |
| 2. | Every incorrect answer/unanswered item | 0 |

In analyzing the data, the researcher first computed the individual score by taking the student's obtained score, dividing it by the maximum score, and multiplying it by a hundred. To calculate the mean score of the individual scores of students, the researcher used the formula (Best & Kahn, 2006) as follows:

$$M = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

Where;

M = Mean score

\sum = sum of the score

N = number of students

After getting the mean scores of the pretest and post-test, the researcher computed the formula of the sum of squared deviation using the formula proposed by Mason and Bramble (1978:200) :

$$S_d = \frac{\sqrt{\sum (d - \bar{d})^2}}{n - 1}$$

Where

S_d = Standard deviation

d = Deviation

\bar{d} = Average difference between the pairs of score

$n-1$ = degree of freedom

The researcher then used the formula suggested by Mason and Bramble (1978:199) to test the hypothesis and assess the efficacy of the treatment after calculating the square deviation.

$$t = \frac{\bar{d}}{S_d/\sqrt{n}}$$

Where:

T : The value of t-counted

\bar{d} : Average difference between the pairs of scores

S_d : Standard deviation of the difference

n : Number of students

To prove whether the hypothesis of the research is accepted or rejected, the criteria for testing the hypothesis are as follows. If the t_{counted} value is higher than the t_{table} value, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. In other words, using descriptive text can significantly increase the Eighth-grade student of SMPN 6 Palu in putting correct punctuation. However, if the t_{counted} value is lower than the t_{table} value, the hypothesis (H_o) is rejected. Using descriptive text does not increase the Eighth-grade student of SMPN 6 Palu in putting correct punctuation.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The pretest was administered to the students before treatment. The pretest measured the student's ability to use punctuation before treatment. The experimental class consisted of 25 students. The students' scores in the pretest can be seen in the following table:

Table of Students' Scores in Pretest

| No | Students | Obtained score | Maximum score | Individual score(x) |
|----|----------|----------------|---------------|---------------------|
| 1 | AHM | 23 | 35 | 65.71 |
| 2 | AL | 19 | 35 | 54.29 |
| 3 | DI | 22 | 35 | 62.86 |
| 4 | FA | 23 | 35 | 65.71 |
| 5 | IGE | 19 | 35 | 54.29 |
| 6 | MA | 26 | 35 | 74.29 |
| 7 | MOH | 16 | 35 | 45.71 |
| 8 | MUH | 25 | 35 | 71.43 |

| | | | | |
|--------------------|-----|-----|----|---------|
| 9 | MUS | 25 | 35 | 71.43 |
| 10 | MU | 21 | 35 | 60.00 |
| 11 | NUR | 19 | 35 | 54.29 |
| 12 | RA | 24 | 35 | 68.57 |
| 13 | RAT | 15 | 35 | 42.86 |
| 14 | RI | 16 | 35 | 45.71 |
| 15 | SA | 18 | 35 | 51.43 |
| 16 | SE | 24 | 35 | 68.57 |
| 17 | TI | 24 | 35 | 68.57 |
| 18 | VI | 25 | 35 | 71.43 |
| 19 | WI | 21 | 35 | 60.00 |
| 20 | YE | 16 | 35 | 45.71 |
| 21 | YOU | 22 | 35 | 62.86 |
| 22 | YUS | 16 | 35 | 45.71 |
| 23 | ZUL | 24 | 35 | 68.57 |
| 24 | GI | 22 | 35 | 62.86 |
| 25 | AG | 19 | 35 | 54.29 |
| TOTAL (Σ) | | 524 | | 1497.15 |

To find out the students' mean scores in the pretest, the researcher used the formula as stated previously. The calculation is as follows:

$$M = \frac{\Sigma x}{N}$$

$$M = \frac{1497.15}{25}$$

$$M = 59.89$$

The above computation shows that the mean score in the pretest is 59.89.

After the treatment, the researcher again tested the students using the same test. It was given to determine the student's ability to use punctuation after treatment for six meetings. The result of the post-test is shown next.

Table of Students' Scores in Post-test

| No | Students | Obtained score | Maximum score | Individual score(x) |
|------------------|----------|----------------|---------------|---------------------|
| 1 | AHM | 25 | 35 | 71.43 |
| 2 | AL | 23 | 35 | 65.71 |
| 3 | DI | 25 | 35 | 71.43 |
| 4 | FA | 25 | 35 | 71.43 |
| 5 | IGE | 23 | 35 | 65.71 |
| 6 | MA | 32 | 35 | 91.43 |
| 7 | MOH | 25 | 35 | 71.43 |
| 8 | MUH | 28 | 35 | 80.00 |
| 9 | MUS | 28 | 35 | 80.00 |
| 10 | MU | 28 | 35 | 80.00 |
| 11 | NUR | 31 | 35 | 88.57 |
| 12 | RA | 30 | 35 | 85.71 |
| 13 | RAT | 21 | 35 | 60.00 |
| 14 | RI | 21 | 35 | 60.00 |
| 15 | SA | 25 | 35 | 71.43 |
| 16 | SE | 28 | 35 | 80.00 |
| 17 | TI | 26 | 35 | 74.29 |
| 18 | VI | 27 | 35 | 77.14 |
| 19 | WI | 29 | 35 | 82.86 |
| 20 | YE | 23 | 35 | 65.71 |
| 21 | YOU | 27 | 35 | 77.14 |
| 22 | YUS | 24 | 35 | 68.57 |
| 23 | ZUL | 28 | 35 | 80.00 |
| 24 | GI | 28 | 35 | 80.00 |
| 25 | AG | 26 | 35 | 74.29 |
| TOTAL (Σ) | | 656 | | 1802.85 |

Then the mean score of students in the post-test is also computed.

$$M = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

$$M = \frac{1802.85}{25}$$

$$M = 72.11$$

As a result, 72.11 is found as the mean score of the students in the post-test.

After the score of the students in both of pretest and post-test were presented, the data from the pretest and post-test were

analyzed statistically. To compute the mean deviation score, the researcher divided the total deviation score by the number of students. It was to determine whether there was a significant difference between the mean of the pretest and the post-test after the treatment had been given.

Table of Mean Deviation of Pretest and Post-test

| | Student's Score | | deviation | (d- \bar{d}) ² |
|-------|-----------------|---------|-----------|------------------------------|
| | Post-test | Pretest | (d) | |
| Total | 1802.85 | 1497.15 | 377.13 | 1249.17 |

Since $\sum d = 377.13$, $\bar{d} = \frac{377.13}{25} = 15.09$. Then, each result of the students' deviation score is subtracted by 15.09, and then, the result of that subtracting is squared and put in (d- \bar{d})² column.

The researchers first calculated the difference's standard deviation before determining if it was statistically significant. 1.47 (S_d) is the outcome. With the standard deviation, the t value is calculated to calculate the significance of the test difference. The calculation produced the value $t=52.03$.

The researcher must test the research hypothesis to demonstrate whether it is accepted or rejected. It is based on the findings of the aforementioned data analysis. The researcher used the accepted standards of acceptance or rejection criteria before testing the hypothesis.

According to the criteria, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted if the t-counted value is higher than the t-table value. It denotes that the post-test and the pretest show a substantial difference.

The researcher discovered that the value of the t-counted is 52.03 based on the outcome of the statistical calculation. The researcher determined the value of the t-table to be 1,711 by consulting it with the degree of freedom (df) = 25-1 = 24, and 0.05 critical value. It demonstrates the difference between the t-counted and t-table values. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0)

is accepted. In other words, the grade eight pupils of SMPN 6 Palu can punctuate appropriately by using descriptive text to teach punctuation.

Discussion

After setting up the data analysis, it became clear that the subject's mean pretest scores were 59.89. The subject's study-related aptitude could be a lot higher. It implies that the learning objective still has to be met.

The researcher treated the pupils using descriptive language after realizing how poorly the students could correctly employ punctuation. A total of six meetings were received it. Two 40-minute meetings totaled 80 minutes each. While teaching punctuation, the researcher also taught the students how to write descriptive texts. The procedure was carried out throughout the school day.

At the beginning of the meeting, the researcher gave descriptive text without punctuation to the students and explained the use of punctuation such as full stop, comma, exclamation mark, and question marks and how to answer the questions in the text. Then, she introduced punctuation in the descriptive text to the students.

The next day, she explained to students how to punctuate using descriptive text correctly. After that, she asked the students to answer the questions from the text and guided them while they did the exercises. These activities were used in every meeting up to the sixth meeting.

In order to gauge the student's interest in learning punctuation exercises using descriptive text, the researcher tracked their progress throughout the treatments by observing them in each meeting. The kids appeared excited to master punctuation in the program's first session. The students' eagerness when the researcher requested them to punctuate appropriately in the text during the next, and subsequent meetings shows that they were trying to understand

how to do so. They performed the tasks more easily while appearing enthralled.

After the session, the researcher offered the students a post-test to gauge how much their knowledge and proficiency in instructing punctuation through descriptive text had improved. Because they already know how to respond to a question about a text using descriptive text, the students found it simple to respond to the question during the test.

Then, the researchers computed and processed their scores after administering the post-test. According to the results previously displayed, the average post-test score was 72.11. The student performed better on the post-test than they did on the pretest. It demonstrated how useful it was to teach punctuation through descriptive text.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

The researcher arrives at these conclusions after examining the research's findings. It was determined that the value of the t-counted is more significant than the value of the t-table based on the study findings and discussion. It denotes acceptance of the research hypothesis. In other words, the grade eight pupils of SMPN 6 Palu can punctuate adequately by using descriptive text to teach punctuation.

Suggestion

The researcher would like to share the following recommendations with individuals involved in the learning and teaching processes to encourage the quality teaching of English. To maximize the teaching-learning process and prevent boredom among the pupils, teachers are first encouraged to be more innovative in their instruction. To ensure that students understand what to accomplish and that the time is used as effectively as possible, the media and detailed instructions for each stage must be prepared. Second, because descriptive text is taught at all grade levels,

not just junior high, the English teacher can use it to differentiate the other types of text types or use it to teach punctuation as an appealing alternate method of instruction, particularly for writing. Last but not least, this research finding can inform readers or teach them something while serving as a resource for other scholars.

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