

## Teaching Writing a Descriptive Text by Using Zodiac Description

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### ABSTRACT

Teaching English in school is using GBA (Genre Based Approach). GBA is also known as text based teaching. There are twelve kinds of the monolog text can be taught in school by using GBA. One of them is descriptive text. Descriptive text is aim to make the students be able to tell or describe place, person, or thing. There are two aspects that they have to pay attention while describing something, they are *appearances* and *personality*. *Zodiac description* can be used in teaching *writing* especially in descriptive text. *Zodiac description* is a media which formed a paragraph that describe about someone traits or characters appropriate with their birth. There are some advantages in teaching *writing* by using *zodiac description*. *Zodiac description* can stimulate students' comprehension toward new words about someone characters, and make them interested to learn. In addition, there are some stages in this teaching, and it include to the four skill lesson especially in teaching *writing*. By the reason above, the writer is interested to adapt a media of teaching *writing* by using *zodiac description* in school to increase the students' comprehension about descriptive text.

**Key Words :** *Writing, Summary Technique, Organize idea.*

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### A. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the approach used in teaching English is GBA (Genre Based Approach). In this approach all of the English skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and competences (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation) are not taught separately, but they are taught integratedly through a text. According to Knight (in Christopher et al, 2001) Genre-Based Approach is a new post communicative language teaching, which is also known as Text-Based Teaching. This approach requires learners to have competence in using the language to communicate.

In GBA, there are three classifications of text which are taught in

high school based on their characteristic, they are transactional-interpersonal-text, fuction text, and monolog text. The example of monolog text are recount, report, discussion, explanation, exposition (analytical and hortatory), news item, anecdote, narrative, procedure, review, and descriptive text. Some of them are taught at junior high schools, and the others are taught at senior high schools. Descriptive text is one of the text that are learnt by students in junior and senior high schools. It is that kind of text that has purpose to make student be able to describe something, place, and people.

Writing descriptive text is not an easy work for the students. They should

have many vocabularies in their mind. Especially in describing people, the student should consider two aspects, they are appearances and personality. In writing a descriptive appearance, students describe about someone's performance or physics. Meanwhile, in writing a descriptive personality, they describe about someone's personality.

There are some problems faced by students in writing a descriptive text based on the writer's observation when she did practical teaching in SMP Adabiah. Firstly, the students are not able to organize their ideas, so they do not know how to start writing. It will happen as the students do not understand the generic structure and the language feature of the text because the teacher just explained what they got from the book. Secondly, the media used by the teacher is not attractive, so the student do not have curiosity to learn descriptive text. It is better for the teacher to find the appropriate media to attract students' attention to the topic. Beside that the lack of descriptive vocabularies is also one of a big problem that makes the students are not able to create a good descriptive text.

Based on the problem above, the writer wants to attract the students' interest in descriptive text. The lesson that the writer chooses is something interesting such as zodiac description. It is assumed that using zodiac description can be one of the alternative media in teaching writing a descriptive text in senior high school. Zodiac description is a description about someone's character or personality based on her or his birthday. It is an enjoyable media to motivate the students in writing a good descriptive text especially in writing descriptive personality. Zodiac description is also easy to find and most of students like to read about the zodiac. By using zodiac description the teacher will get the students to read, think, talk, and write about themselves and other people. Here, the writer would like to offer a few learning

activities to help students build up descriptive words easily and quickly.

### **The Nature of Writing**

There are two ways for expressing ideas or communicating. People communicate with others by using oral and written form. However, for communicating in a written form is more complicated than in a spoken form, because in the written form the writer has procedures that she or he has pass, in order to deliver her or his ideas. Lauer (1981:2) states that writing occurs as an arrangement of process of interactions that sometimes be complicated because writers combine so many activities almost at the same time. He also mentions six stages of the writing process. They are; finding and expressing the starting point, exploring, discovering and stating the focus, planning for aim and audience, developing and organizing the paper, critiquing and reviewing. Related to this idea, (Freedman, Dyson, Flower, & Chafe, 1987:13) says that there are five stages in writing process:

1. Stages 1 pre-writing (planning), getting ready to write.
2. Stages 2 drafting, getting the ideas down on paper.
3. Stages 3 revising, writer review or see again the writing.
4. Stages 4 editing, putting the pieces of writing into the final form.
5. Stages 5 publishing, publishing the writing.

In addition Krashen (1984:17) describes the process approach in teaching writing, which comprises four basic stages; planning, drafting, revising, and editing. There other stages could be inserted after the drafting stages; these are responding, evaluating, and post-writing. For example, at the planning (pre-writing) stage, teachers can help students generate ideas through such activities as brainstorming, clustering, and rapid free-writing.

Considering the opinions above, it can be concluded that writing is not just the way in expressing and communicating the

ideas with others, it also has a continuous and complicated process which has some stages that have to be learned by the learners before they used it to deliver ideas, feeling, and thought. As an activity, writing also needs time to be mastered.

### **Teaching Writing at Senior High School**

Teaching is defined as a way in delivering knowledge to students or pupil in school (Hamalik 2004:2). He also adds that teaching is an effort to organize environment that creates a good learning condition for students. In the same line, Corden (2000:8) suggest that classroom learning can best be seen as an interaction between teacher's meaning and those of the pupils, so what they take away is partly shared and unique to each of them. It means that classroom activities need to be carefully organized in order to provide learning experiences that start student's development as an individual and social being.

According to Lauer (1981:8) writing and learning are integrative processes. Thus they can not be separated from each other. Furthermore, he also states that writing in school should be more than "story writing"; it should focus on particular genres. Writing is a powerful learning tool, thus teachers teach it with many ways and strategies in order to reach goal of teaching English.

In addition, Beck (1986) explain some strategies for the teacher in implemeting process writing. There are some pointers which can be used by the teacher when implementing process writing:

#### 1) Teacher Modeling

Teacher should model the writing process at every stage and teach specific writing strategies to student through meaningful classroom activities.

#### 2) Relating Process to Product

Students need to be guided to set and achieve specific writing goals at every stage. A first draft looks quite unlike another draft that has gone through several revisions.

#### 3) Working within Institutional Constraints

Process skills can be systematically taught each time until the entire series of such skills is developed over the period of time.

#### 4) Catering to Deverse Student Needs

The teacher should implement a flexible program to cater to different student needs. The teacher need to know what the individual student knows and works from there.

#### 5) Exploiting the Use of Computers in Process Writing

Many words-processing programs are user-friendly enough for students to handle. Their direct application to process writing, especially for the purpose of drafting, revising, or editing, is rewarding for both the teacher and the students.

According to school-Based curriculum (KTSP) that is applied in Senior High School, teaching learning process of English is focused on learner's activity, which involves four aspect of language, speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Based on the curriculum, the process is presented in two cycles, oral cycle and written cycle. Thus, there is no doubt to say that writing is important for the student in order to make the process of teaching and learning effective and efficient.

### **Descriptive Text**

In this recent year there is an increasing of the use of genre in teaching language program. Gerot (1995:17) states that genre can be defined as a culturally specific text-type which result from using a language (written or spoken) to accomplish something. She also states that genre is a kind of specific text which has a specific function, structure, and significant language feature. In addition, Mack (2003) adds that genre is a recognized category of works that share a common form, purpose or content.

Based on GBA, there are many kinds of texts that are taught in high school level and one of them is monolog text. The kind of text that include to monolog text are recount, report, discussion, explanation,

exposition (analytical and hortatory), news item, anecdote, narrative, procedure, review, and descriptive.

Descriptive text is one of the texts that are learnt in senior high schools. According to Bernet and Stubbs (1990) description is a kind of persuasion where the writers wish to persuade the reader to share judgment that what they describe.

Besides, Gerot and Wignell (1994) say that descriptive are aimed to describe a particular person, place, and things. The generic structure is included to two ways; there are identification (identifies phenomenon to be described) and description (describe parts, quality, characteristic). In addition Martin (in Refnaldi, 2005) says that purpose of descriptive text is to give an account of imagined or factual events and phenomena.

Shortly, the main goal of descriptive text is to describe specific things, animal or human, and certain thing. There are two points explained in descriptive text, they are identification and description. After learning this text, students are expected to produce a good description about people, things, and place around them.

### **Media of Zodiac Description**

As a tool for learning or teaching, media has undoubtedly always facilitated the task of language learning for both instructed and non instructed learner. In second language classroom, the extent to which media are used has varied widely, depending on the methodology selected. In some methods, media have figured significantly as a force that drives the curriculum.

Brinton (2001) supposes that media is an important motivator in the language teaching process because media materials can lend authenticity to be classroom situation, reinforcing for students the direct relation between the language classroom and the outside world. Hartnett (as cited in Brinton, 2001) shared that perspective by saying that media tools appeal to students'

senses and help them process information, thus increasing their motivation toward language learning, reinforcing the teaching points, and saving the teacher unnecessary explanation.

The use of media in classroom presents some challenges for teachers. Some other studies showed the use of media has helped involve student more integrally in the learning process and to facilitate language learning by making it a more authentic and meaningful process (Nunan, 1999; Spreling 1996; Warschaver, 1995). In addition Brinton (2001) said that the preparation of teacher-made media materials demands an investment of time and energy beyond that number of normal lesson planning. As a result, quite a large number of language teachers express their inability to use media in their classroom.

### **Zodiac Description**

The word of zodiac literally means animals and refers to the pattern of configurations of creatures as seen in the twinkling stars at night. Zodiac is an imaginary area of the sky containing twelve groups of stars that some people believe affect the character according to people positions when they born. Zodiac can be divided into twelve sign, they are; Capricorn, *The Sea-Goat* (December 22-January 20) ; Aquarius, *The Water-Bearer* (January 21-February 19); Pisces, *The Fishes* (February 20-March 20); Aries, *The Ram* (March 21- April 20); Taurus, *The Bull* (April 21-May 21); Gemini, *The Twins* (May 22-June 21); Cancer, *The Crab* (June 22-July 22); Leo, *The Lion* (July 23-August 22); Virgo, *The Maiden* (August 23-September 23); Libra, *The Scales* (September 24-October 23); Scorpio, *The Scorpion* (October 24-November 22); and Sagittarius, *The Archer* (November 23-December 21).

Zodiac description is related to descriptive text to describe something. It is one of the media that can be used in teaching writing descriptive text in the

classroom. It describes about people's characters based on their birthday. It is extremely symbolic with the astrology sign that represent and help someone increases a greater understanding of people's personality and what they do in life. Laimichelle (2006) says that zodiac sign is an appropriate media in improving student's vocabulary mastery and help them to describe about people's personality. Zodiac description describes about someone's positive and negative traits or characters. It can be found the up date by internet and magazine.

## **B. TEACHING WRITING A DESCRIPTIVE TEXT BY USING ZODIAC DESCRIPTION**

### **Teaching Activity**

Every teacher who wants to get successful in teaching has to understand how to present the lesson to the students. Mostly, in teaching writing a descriptive text by using zodiac description, teacher has to know everything that relates with the process of teaching and learning. In order to make the process of teaching and learning more effective and efficient, there are three phase activities to be implemented in the teaching learning process that have to be done by the teacher in teaching a descriptive text by using zodiac description.

There are some preparations that teachers have to do before presenting the lesson in the classroom. It is necessary for the teacher to have good perparation. They should comprehend and master what they will teach in order to create a more interesting teaching and learning process for students. There is a standard process that might be applied in the process of teaching and learning. It has some procedures that teacher may apply it in teaching a text, they are:

### **Pre-Teaching Activity**

In this step, the teacher should do the following activities:

- a. Preparing the students, both physically and psychologically to join in the learning process. For example: the teacher greets the students, and then ask about the students' condition and readiness to learn. The purpose of this activity is to make the students are ready to learn about descriptive text.
- b. Preparing some questions related to student's knowledge about zodiac description. The teacher can open the lesson by asking some questions, such as:
  1. Do you like reading magazine?
  2. Have you ever seen the zodiac description in a magazine?
  4. What the name of zodiac do you know ?
  3. Do you believe or not with the zodiac description?
- c. Explaining the goal of the learning or basic competence of teaching writing a descriptive text by using zodiac description to the students. The teacher should explain:
  1. What is zodiac?
  2. What is zodiac for?
  3. What kind of name of zodiac?
  4. Which is the students' zodiac based on their birth?

The basic competence of this learning is to explore the meaning of a simple short essay in form of descriptive text related to the surrounding environment.

- d. Teaching the material and explaining the activities. The activity which will be taught to the students should be clear explained by teacher.

### **Whilst Activity**

In this step, the teachers have to create the teaching and learning process more challenging, pleasant and interactive for the students. The teachers also have to motivate them to participate actively and give them a chance to develop their independent and creatively based on their interest, talent, and their development both in psychology and physical. There are three processes in this activity, they are:

- a. Exploration Process

- 1) Involving the students in searching information that related with the topic that will be learned by applying some principles of learning such as, learning from any sources or learning back to nature. In this process, teacher explain about twelve kinds of zodiac and asks the student to memorize. Teacher gives question to the students based on the explanation and asks student writes the answer directly. For example:

1. Someone who was born in December 22-January 20 has the Capricorn sign.
2. Someone who was born in January 21-February 19 has the Aquarius sign.
3. Someone who was born in February 20-March 20 has the Pisces sign.
4. Someone who was born in March 21-April 20 has the Aries sign.

5. Someone who was born in April 21-May 21 has the Taurus sign.
6. Someone who was born in May 22-June 21 has the Gemini sign.
7. Someone who was born in June 22-July 22 has the Cancer sign.
8. Someone who was born in July 23-August 22 has the Leo sign.
9. Someone who was born in August 23-September 23 has the Virgo sign.
10. Someone who was born in September 24-October 23 has the Libra sign.
11. Someone who was born in October 24-November 22 has the Scorpio sign.
12. Someone who was born in November 23-December 21 has the Sagittarius sign.

- 2) Using many learning approaches, media and other sources. In this process, teacher distributes a media (the symbols of zodiac sign and its description) to the students and asks them to understand about this media. Example:



3) Facilitating the interaction between students and students, and between students and teachers, environment and other sources. In this process, the teacher together with the students discuss the meaning of new words that they get from zodiac description.

1) Involving the students to participate actively in learning process. In this process, the teacher asks students to find which sign description of the students based on their birthday. By doing this activity the teacher will involve students actively both in written and spoken skill.

b. Elaboration Process

1) Asking the students to read and to write freely about themselves based on their zodiac. In this process, teacher can divide students in pair. The exercises given to the students for example: students write about their zodiac description and their partner.

2) Facilitating the students by giving exercises and discussion in order to find new ideas both in oral and in written form. In this process, the teacher asks each student to introduce their own zodiac description to their partner the reason why he/she agrees or disagrees with the description.

3) Facilitating the students in cooperative and collaborative learning process. In this process, the teacher divide them into small group.

- 4) Facilitating the students to compete freely in order to increase learning achievement. In this process, the teacher asks each group to choose and discuss about someone who they familiar with. For example: a famous actress, politician, a teacher, etc.
- 5) Facilitating the students to write an exploration's report that is done in oral or in written form, both individual and group. In this process, one member from each group report the result of their discussion.

#### c. Confirmation Process

- 1) Giving positive feedback and maintenance in form of oral, written, gestures, or reward toward their success in learning process.
- 2) Giving confirmation to the result of exploration and elaboration of students by using any sources and media.
- 3) Facilitating the students to have a reflection to get learning experience that has been done.
- 4) Facilitating the students to get meaningful experiences in reaching basic competence.

#### Post Activity

In this step, the teachers conclude or summarize the lesson by herself or together with the students. Then, the teacher assess the activities that have been done consistently. The teachers also give feedback toward the process and learning achievement. Finally, teacher gives homework about description by writing zodiac description of their family member.

### The Advantages of Using Zodiac Description

There are some advantages in using zodiac description to teach writing a descriptive text:

1. By using zodiac description, teacher can help students to increase their ability in writing people's personalities description more easily.
2. It is a great way to expand student's knowledge of new words and their meaning.
3. Zodiac descriptions gives many activities that make students are motivated to speak, read, think, and write about themselves and other people, thus make students are more active in learning process.
4. Zodiac descriptions link four skills (reading, speaking, listening, writing) so the students are able to master the four skills in learning English, especially for writing.

### C. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the discussion previously, the writer can find that teaching writing a descriptive text by using zodiac description seems more effective, enjoyable and useful for students because when they learn it, they can do several interesting activities and strategies. This paper applies three phase activities. They are pre-teaching activities, whilst activities, and post-teaching activities. There are some advantages in using zodiac description to teach writing a descriptive text. The first, by using zodiac description teacher can help students build up descriptive words more easily and quickly and also increase their ability to describe someone's personality. The second one is by using zodiac description students can expand their knowledge of new words and their meaning. Besides that, by using zodiac description the students are



motivated to speak, read, think, and write about themselves or other people. Finally, zodiac description links four skills; speaking, reading, listening, and writing, so the students are able to master the four skills in learning English.

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