

**IMPROVING STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE  
TEXT BY APPLYING THEMATIC DISCUSSION  
( A Classroom Action Research to Eighth Grade Students of SMP Negeri  
1 Kota Langsa)**

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**Abstract**

This study attempted to improve students' achievement in descriptive writing by applying Thematic Discussion. This study was conducted by using classroom action research. The subject of the research was class VIII-2 SMP N 1 Kota Langsa which consisted of 40 students. The research was conducted in two cycles; each cycle consisted of four meeting. The instruments for collecting data were quantitative data (writing test) and qualitative data (observation sheet, questionnaire sheet, and diary notes). Based on writing scores, students' score kept improving in every test and based on observation sheet, questionnaire sheet and diary notes, it was found that teaching-learning process ran well. Students were active, enthusiastic, and interested in writing. The result showed that Thematic Discussion technique significantly improved students' achievement in descriptive writing.

**Key Words: Writing Descriptive Text, Thematic Discussion**

**A. Background of Research**

English is the world's most important language. It is important to be learned in order to improve the quality of the social life. In Indonesia, English has been determined as the first foreign language as stated in the 1994 national curriculum. English is taught from the elementary level up to the university level. The purpose of learning English in Indonesia Curriculum is to enable the learners in communication, spoken and written.

In English there are four language skills, they are listening, speaking, reading and writing. The students must master the four

language skills so they can use English actively and passively also. Besides listening, speaking, reading, writing as a part of the language skill is the most difficult skill must be taught maximally by the teacher to the student.

Writing is also one of communication media. According to Byrne (2002:24) writing is a primary means of recording speech, even though it must be acknowledge as a secondary medium of communication, so it is conclude that writing is very important as one media of communication which can help us to have a good socialization by expressing our idea, feeling and

our opinion in order to have a good interaction with our society.

Partly because of the nature of writing process and the accuracy writing, the mental process that a student goes through when writing differs significantly from the way approach discussion or other kinds of spoken communication. When writing, students frequently have more time to think than they do oral activities. They can go through what they know in their minds, even consult dictionaries, grammar books, or other reference material to help them. Writing encourages students to focus on accurate language use because they think as they write, it may well provoke language development as they resolve problems, which the writing puts in their minds.

As Mc Crimmon (2000:56) states that writing is the most difficult skill in learning process of English writing is hard work. What makes the process of writing is difficult are psychological linguistic and cognitive (Byrne, 2002:9). It can be found in the process of teaching writing. There are problems, which are faced by students in writing namely many students cringe at the thought of writing. Some of the students do not learn that writing is a way to express their feelings or ideas or that writing is an important tool for communication with others. Many times writing in English as dreaded.

Procter (2001:7) explains the word 'achievement' derives from a verb 'achieve' which means: 1) to finish successfully especially for something anything. 2) To get as the result an action, 3) gain the something. Based on the Taxonomy

Bloom (2004:16) there are three aspect of learning achievement such as Cognitive, Affective and Psychomotor.

Cognitive consist of knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthetic and evaluation. Application includes the method on concrete case. Analysis includes the ability to divide the small parts into whole. Synthetic includes combining the new things into the new understanding and evaluation merits the ability to perform an opinion about something.

Affective is the changing of behavior that affects someone lies to do thing. There are acceptance, sign with the acceptance by using their senses and responds. Decision, decide a problem with a simple up to complex.

Psychomotor, the skill to do something, ready to do it based on physic and emotion, self control and become a habit. Therefore it is conclude that the achievement is a success in reaching particular goal, statues or standard, especially by effort, skill, courage, etc.

Writing is the process of arranging words, letters, sentences and paragraph on the bases of structure and some others related to one another. Barra (2005:7) states that, "Writing is to produce or reproduce written messages". In this case, we get conclusion that writing is one of language skill use hand to transform what we thing in our brain. In other words, writing is how do someone move what are there in their mind by written.

In teaching writing is expected as a communicative activity between the teacher and his or her students.

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In learning English writing is the same as learning other skills (reading, speaking and listening). The students should practice and do a lot of drills of exercises, continually and seriously studying language for students means that he or she learns how to communication on to another for using language.

Descriptive is a written English text in which the writer describes an object (Siahaan & Shinoda: 2008:89). In this case, the object can be a concrete or abstract object. It can be a person, an animal, a tree, a house or camping. It can be about any topic. Descriptive text is a text containing two components namely identification and description. The identification is to identify the object to describe. The description describes parts, qualities, and characteristics of the parts of the object.

Descriptive is a type of writing which describes something in details in order to enable the reader to see, hear, feel, and touch it directly or involve themselves in the event. The researcher transforms his/her message, observation, result and feeling to the readers through a description. In this case, a writer must be able to describe an object based on its specific characterization in details.

Descriptive writing refers to the process of describing something with a skill in words so that the readers may find a clear impression on the objects. Kiefer (2007: 51) states "Descriptive writing is a short of writing which the writer has determined the central focus for the description, details that the flesh out the idea can be chosen such as the

description of place, event and others."

Djuharie (2007: 432) states that descriptive text objects to describe someone, something, someplace, or an animal. Descriptive text consists of five components namely describing process, event, object (thing), person, and place.

According to Siahaan & Shinoda (2008:89), there are several parts in writing descriptive should be understood, they are:

1. Social Function

The social function of descriptive writing is to describe a particular person, place, thing or animal.

2. Generic Structure

The generic structures of descriptive writing are:

- Identification, which identifies phenomenon that will be describe.
- Description, which describe about parts; qualities or characteristics of something or someone in detail.

3. Grammatical Features

The following are several grammatical features of descriptive writing, they are:

- In descriptive writing, the present tense is predominantly used. The past tense is used to describe something in the past.
- The use of action verbs are needed in describing especially for describing behaviors.

- When describing feelings, mental verbs are used. Adjective, adverbs and adverbial phrases are used most often

As Carol (2001: 15) asserts that the process of writing occurs in five stages: (1) prewriting, includes exploring topics, choosing a topic and beginning to gather and organize details before write, (2) drafting, involves getting ideas down on paper in taught the format that intend for the finished work, (3) revising, it is the stage in which rework the first draft to improve its content and structure, (4) editing and proofreading, involve correcting errors in grammar, spelling and mechanics, and (5) publishing and presenting, are sharing the work with others.

Basically, by using thematic units in the English classroom, teachers will be offering their students a way to connect the language arts with real life issues. Thematic learning is a pedagogical model based on the selection of a theme or topic of study. In the model, "the theme" becomes the critical thinking binder that helps bring different and seemingly unrelated information together into a unified whole. The model encourages a student to think around a subject. It is inclusive and encourages the student to see and seek relationships between information and facts from various sources inside and outside of the classroom.

Trianto (2010:81) says that theme is the main idea which has been a central of thinking that must be developed for students. Theme is necessary to make the students to be a critical thinking. In this phase,

theme has been the main topic which will be discussed for students. So the students will share their opinion, their experience or their idea about the theme that is given.

The theme needs to be one that can be understood through the individual experience, but, it must also be capable of extending beyond the individual person to have meaningful connections in the larger framework of human experience — family, school, community, ecological systems. The choice of theme is central to the ultimate success of the project. The theme that is chosen must be related to the students' real life. It is very important because it will be more meaningful than give the students a theme in which they are never hear or see it before.

Barton, Glenn and Clarence (2008:88) say that group discussion is the participant of group of persons in the discussion of some subject or problem for which further information or action is mutually desired. Group discussion when well done is interesting and exciting. It gives each participant an opportunity to present his or her viewpoint and they force each individual to do straight thinking and come to definite decision. Group discussion is an informal discussion in which participants of the same educational standard discuss a topic of current interest. So, group discussion is a set of procedure or a collection of techniques which is used in the discussion some subject or problem for which further information or action that have an important place in both informal and formal learning.

Discussion may be used to (1) stimulate people to become aware of mutual problems, (2) help them in

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identifying the problems, (3) aid the in exploring these problems, (4) assist them in finding solution to problems and (5) provide an opportunity for them to plan programs of action. Discussion is that which learn the materials by discussing them in order to have some understanding and changes to behavior of the students. Based on the explanations a discussion technique makes students able to express their ideas for the problems. Discussion makes the students active; giving a theme in a discussion group will motivate the students to express their ideas. In this phase, they can elaborate the theme that is given. They can say everything that is related with the theme. One of the most values of discussion technique is that it provides a cooperative means of bringing together the facts and opinions of the members of the group so that conclusions may be reached. The contribution of each member of the group adds to the store of knowledge. There are many different ways to organize a class discussion. Various forms of discussion differ in their purpose, their structure, the pattern of interaction among students and the level of student thinking that can stimulated (Kindsvatter, Willen & Ishler, 2006:121).

Thematic discussion is a technique that encourage students to be critical thinking. Thematic discussion is a discussion which discusses the interesting topic which is chosen by students themselves. Thematic discussion can be used in building up students' motivation and confidence in writing. To improve students' achievement in descriptive writing, thematic discussion can be

used to help the Students to associate ideas while describing identification and description.

There are some criteria in thematic discussion. Slayden (2006:12) states that thematic discussion should:

1. Have substance and apply to the real world.
2. Have available resource material.
3. Have a reasonable flow.
4. Be worthy of time to create, implement, and learn
5. Be meaningful to students.

The researcher expects by applying Thematic Discussion on writing descriptive text, the students are able to complete their writing task systematically. Next, the researcher hopes that Thematic Discussion can be a technique, which is tries to build an active learning and joyful writing. Therefore, the students are able to complete their descriptive writing task systematically.

Based on the explanation above the researcher would like to conduct research in extending to improve student's writing achievement through thematic discussion at SMP Negeri 1 Kota Langsa class VIII-2. Based on the background of the research before, the problem of the study can be formulated as follows: "Are the students' achievements in writing descriptive text improved if the students are taught by applying Thematic Discussion? The purpose of the research is aimed at finding whether the students' achievement in writing descriptive text improve if they are taught by applying Thematic Discussion The method used for this research are qualitative research with

classroom action research. The data gathered through experimental teaching and test

**B. Result**

**E.1 Procedure Data Collection**

Each research needs the concrete data to prove the write assumption. The data of this study well collected through an experiment performance among the second year student of SMP Negeri 1 Kota Langsa. Before the experiment took place the writer observes the class of English lesson. Then the researcher chose them to be the experimental group. They are forty female and forty male from 4 classrooms. Each class the writer chose them five male and five female from four classrooms the observation was intended to see how well the students speak English, and how many words can be remembered and can be wrote by the students. After doing the observation the students in both groups male and female students were given a pre test and post test. The researcher asked the students to answer, write or explain the sentence their writing paragraph. After getting a test the students of male and female groups is trough by the researcher. In this situation the used the approach, method and technique chosen in teaching learning process

**E.2. The Presentation of the test**

The following is the raw score of the female group. Both of the groups are the experimental groups.

**TABLE I  
THE RAW SCORE OF PRE-TEST AND POST TEST  
FROM THE FEMALE GROUP**

No	Name	Pre-test	Post test
1	2	3	4
1	AM	95	100
2	AR	95	100
3	AY	90	100
4	CA	90	100
5	DY	90	100
6	DS	90	100
7	EW	85	100
8	EA	85	100
9	ER	85	100
10	EZ	85	100
11	EE	85	100
12	EN	85	95
13	FH	85	95
14	LS	85	95
15	SM	85	95
16	NK	85	90
17	IR	85	90
18	SM	85	90
19	PM	85	90
20	HN	80	85
21	SK	80	85
22	SW	80	85
23	SF	80	85
24	MP	80	85
25	BR	80	85
26	WR	80	85
27	PJ	75	80
28	HR	75	80
29	RM	75	80
30	SN	75	80
31	SW	75	80
32	DF	75	80
33	IS	65	75
34	EE	65	75
35	IR	60	75
36	SU	60	75
37	HY	55	75
38	ST	55	75
39	ER	55	75
40	FT	50	70
	Total	3130	3510

TABLE II. THE RAW SCORE OF THE MALE GROUP

No	Name	Pre-test	Post test
1	2	3	4
1	AM	75	75
2	AR	75	70
3	AY	75	65
4	CA	75	70
5	DY	75	70
6	DS	75	75
7	EW	75	75
8	EA	70	65
9	ER	70	70
10	EZ	70	75
11	EE	70	60
12	EN	70	70
13	FH	70	65
14	LS	70	65
15	SM	70	65
16	NK	70	70
17	IR	70	70
18	SM	70	75
19	PM	70	75
20	HN	70	75
21	SK	70	65
22	SW	65	65
23	SF	65	60
24	MP	65	65
25	BR	65	65
26	WR	65	60
27	PJ	65	60
28	HR	65	65
29	RM	65	60
30	SN	60	60
31	SW	60	60
32	DF	60	60
33	IS	60	60
34	EE	60	60
35	IR	60	55
36	SU	60	55
37	HY	55	50
38	ST	55	50
39	ER	50	50
40	FT	50	50
	Total	2710	2625



**TABLE III. THE CALCULATION OF MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF PRE TEST FROM THE MALE GROUP**

I	F <sub>1</sub>	B	X <sub>i</sub>	F <sub>1</sub> .X <sub>i</sub>	$\frac{(X_i - \bar{X}_1)^2}{F_1}$	F <sub>1</sub> (X <sub>i</sub> - $\bar{X}_1$ )
50-54	4	49,5-54,5	52	208	192,65	770,6
55-59	2	54,5-59,5	57	114	78,85	157,7
60-64	10	59,5-64,5	62	620	15,05	150,5
65-69	11	64,5-69,5	67	737	1,25	13,79
70-74	7	69,5-74,5	71,5	500,5	31,58	221,09
75-79	6	74,5-79,5	76	456	102,41	614,48
Σ	40		388,5	2635,5		1928,16

$$\begin{aligned} \bar{X}_1 &= \frac{\sum F_1 \cdot X_i}{N} \\ &= \frac{2635,5}{40} \\ &= 65,88 \end{aligned}$$

And

$$\begin{aligned} S_1^2 &= \frac{\sum F_1 (X_1 - \bar{X}_1)^2}{N - 1} \\ &= \frac{1928,16}{40 - 1} \\ &= \frac{1928,16}{39} \\ S_1^2 &= 49,44 \\ &= \sqrt{49,44} \\ &= 7,03 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Range} &= \text{the highest data} - \text{the lowest data} \\ &= 75 - 50 \\ &= 25 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{The number of class data} &= 1 + 3,3 \log n \\ &= 1 + 3,3 \log 40 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
 &= 1 + 3,3 * 1,32 \\
 &= 5,35 \\
 &= 5 \\
 \text{Interval} &= \frac{\text{Range}}{\text{The number of class data}} \\
 &= \frac{25}{5} \\
 &= 5
 \end{aligned}$$

TABLE IV. THE CALCULATION OF MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF POST-TEST FROM THE MALE GROUP

I	F <sub>2</sub>	B	Xi	F <sub>2</sub> .Xi	(Xi-X <sub>2</sub> ) <sup>2</sup>	F1(Xi-X <sub>2</sub> ) <sup>2</sup>
50-54	2	49,5-54,5	52	104	192,65	521,64
55-59	2	54,5-59,5	57	114	78,85	248,64
60-64	6	59,5-64,5	62	372	15,05	226,93
65-69	9	64,5-69,5	67	603	1,25	11,90
70-74	14	69,5-74,5	71,5	1001	31,58	157,11
75-79	7	74,5-79,5	76	532	102,41	431,35
Σ	40		388,5	2726		1597,57

$$\begin{aligned}
 \bar{X}_2 &= \frac{\sum F_2 \cdot X_i}{N} \\
 &= \frac{2726}{40} \\
 &= 68,15 \\
 S_2^2 &= \frac{\sum F_2 (X_2 - \bar{X}_2)^2}{N-1} \\
 &= \frac{1597,57}{40-1} \\
 &= \frac{1597,57}{39}
 \end{aligned}$$

$$S_2^2 = 40,9$$

$$= \sqrt{40,9}$$

$$= 6,4$$

Range = the highest data – the lowest data

$$= 75 - 50$$

$$= 25$$

The number of class data =  $1 + 3,3 \log n$

$$= 1 + 3,3 \log 40$$

$$= 1 + 3,3 * 1,32$$

$$= 5,35$$

$$= 5$$

$$\text{Interval} = \frac{\text{Range}}{\text{The number of class data}}$$

$$= \frac{25}{5}$$

$$= 5$$

$$Z = \frac{X^1 - X^2}{\sqrt{\frac{(S_1)^2}{n} + \frac{(S_2)^2}{n}}}$$

$$= \frac{65,88 - 68,15}{\sqrt{\frac{(7,03)^2}{40} + \frac{(6,4)^2}{40}}}$$

$$= \frac{-2,27}{\sqrt{\frac{49,42 + 40,96}{40}}}$$

$$= \frac{-2,27}{\sqrt{\frac{90,38}{40}}}$$

$$= \frac{-2,27}{\sqrt{2,25}}$$

$$= \frac{-2,27}{1,50}$$

$$Z = -1,5$$

TABLE VI. THE CALCULATION OF MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF PRE-TEST FROM THE FEMALE GROUP

I	F <sub>2</sub>	B	Xi	F <sub>2</sub> .Xi	(Xi-X <sub>1</sub> ) <sup>2</sup>	F1(Xi-X <sub>2</sub> ) <sup>2</sup>
50-54	4	49,5-58,5	54	216	526,70	2106,8
55-59	4	58,5-67,5	63	252	194,60	778,4
60-64	6	67,5-76,5	72	432	24,50	147
65-69	20	76,5-85,5	81	1620	16,40	328
70-74	4	85,5-94,5	90	360	170,30	81,2
75-79	2	94,5-103,5	99	198	486,20	972,4
Σ	40			3078		5013,8

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Range} &= \text{the highest data} - \text{the lowest data} \\ &= 95 - 50 \\ &= 45 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{The number of class data} &= 1 + 3,3 \log n \\ &= 1 + 3,3 \log 40 \\ &= 1 + 3,3 * 1,32 \\ &= 5,35 \\ &= 5 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Interval} &= \frac{\text{Range}}{\text{The number of class data}} \\ &= \frac{45}{5} \end{aligned}$$

$$\text{Interval} = 9$$

$$\bar{X}_2 = \frac{\sum F_1 \cdot Xi}{N}$$

$$= \frac{30,78}{49}$$

$$= 76,95$$

And

$$\begin{aligned}
 S_1^2 &= \frac{\sum F_1(X_1 - \bar{X}_1)^2}{N-1} \\
 &= \frac{5013,8}{40-1} \\
 &= \frac{5013,8}{39} \\
 S_1^2 &= 128,55 \\
 &= \sqrt{128,55} \\
 &= 11,44
 \end{aligned}$$

**TABLE V. THE CALCULATION OF MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION OF POST TEST FROM FEMALE GROUP**

I	F <sub>1</sub>	B	X <sub>i</sub>	F <sub>1</sub> X <sub>i</sub>	(X <sub>i</sub> -X <sub>1</sub> ) <sup>2</sup>	F <sub>1</sub> (X <sub>i</sub> -X <sub>1</sub> ) <sup>2</sup>
50-54	8	49,5-58,5	72,5	580	234,09	1872,72
55-59	6	58,5-67,5	78,5	471	84,49	518,94
60-64	7	67,5-76,5	74,5	591,5	10,89	76,23
65-69	4	76,5-85,5	90,5	362	7,29	29,16
70-74	4	85,5-94,5	96,5	386	75,69	302,76
75-79	11	94,5-103,5	102	1122	210,25	2312,75
Σ	40		524,5	3512,5		2312,75

Range = the highest data – the lowest data  
 = 100 – 70  
 = 30

The number of class data = 1 + 3,3 log n  
 = 1 + 3,3 log 40  
 = 1 + 3,3 \* 1,32  
 = 5,35  
 = 5

Interval =  $\frac{Range}{The\ number\ of\ class\ data}$

$$\begin{aligned}
 &= \frac{30}{5} \\
 \text{Interval} &= 6 \\
 X &= \frac{\sum F_i \cdot X_i}{N} \\
 &= \frac{3512,5}{40} \\
 &= 687,8
 \end{aligned}$$

And

$$\begin{aligned}
 S_1^2 &= \frac{\sum F_i (X_i - \bar{X}_1)^2}{N-1} \\
 &= \frac{5112,56}{40-1} \\
 &= \frac{5112,56}{39} \\
 S_1^2 &= 131,09 \\
 &= \sqrt{131,09} \\
 &= 11,44 \\
 Z &= \frac{X^1 - X^2}{\sqrt{\frac{(S_1)^2}{n} + \frac{(S_2)^2}{n}}} \\
 &= \frac{10,85}{\sqrt{\frac{13087+128,36}{40}}} \\
 &= \frac{1085}{\sqrt{259,23}} \\
 &= \frac{1085}{\sqrt{6,480}} \\
 &= \frac{10,85}{2,54} \\
 Z &= 4,25
 \end{aligned}$$

The calculation shows that the calculated Z – score is -1,5 between the two test. These means is less than 1,96. So, the null hypothesis (H0) is

accepted and alternative hypothesis (H<sub>i</sub>) is rejected. This means that there is no significant difference between the two means. In addition the groups have same level of vocabulary knowledge.

### C. Conclusion

After analyzing the data, it was found out that students' descriptive writing achievement were improved from the cycle I until cycle II. It means that there was an improvement towards students' descriptive writing achievement through thematic discussion technique. The analysis of quantitative data stated that the scores improve from the first test to the last test eventually. Furthermore, it was also proved through the observation sheet, questionnaire sheet and diary notes which indicate there is an improvement in learning result through applying Thematic Discussion Technique in teaching and learning process from the first cycle to the second cycle. Therefore, it can be concluded that thematic discussion technique can improve students' descriptive writing achievement.

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