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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Students' Descriptive Writing Ability Improvement Through Six Thinking Hats Strategy

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**Abstract:** This research aims to find out whether or not the use of the six thinking hats strategy improves the students' writing ability. It was conducted by using quantitative research with a quasi-experimental research design. Its' population was the ninth-grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Tinambung randomly taken as the sample consisting of 46 students for both the experiment and control class. The research data were obtained by giving descriptive writing tests in the form of pre-and post-test to see the effect of the six thinking hats strategy on the students' writing improvement and its results were analyzed using the SPSS program. The data analysis resulted that the six thinking hats strategy significantly improved the writing ability of ninth-grade students proved by the mean score of the students' pre-test in which the experimental class was 44.96 and the control class was 47.39; the mean score of students' post-test in which the experimental class was 83.26 and the control class was 62.91; the Sig (2 tailed) value is  $0.000 < 0.05$  meaning that  $H_0$  was rejected and  $H_1$  was accepted. These findings conclude that the six thinking hats strategy was able to be used to effectively improve the students' descriptive writing text.

**Keywords:** Descriptive, Writing, Six Thinking Hats.

## 1. Introduction

Writing is one of the skills helping a writer give information to numerous readers by revealing her ability to put pen and paper to express ideas through symbols on the paper (Klein, 1998). This way represents both surface and deep meanings and contents that could be communicated to other people in a good manner. Good writing is a major cognitive challenge as it is once a test of memory, language, and thinking ability. It demands rapid retrieval of domain specific knowledge about the topic from long-term memory (Kellogg & Raulerson, 2007). That is the reason why writing is not an easy thing to do as there are many things that have to be paid attention to including the prewriting process, drafting, revising and publishing. Additionally, to cater them all in a good construction, it needs a knowledge of grammar, word choice, technique of writing, type of texts and general knowledge. These are, in short, quite complex if no deep understanding of how to do it properly.

The complexity of making a good and logical sentence construction into a paragraph is the most considerable difficult language skill for the students of SMP Negeri 1 Tinambung. The result of the interview conducted in June, 2023 to the one of its English teachers found that the students had many problems in learning English writing due to the monotonous way of teachers presenting the English course for both productive and receptive skills in general and writing in particular in which the students can find any help write their ideas and feeling of either academic and non-academic issues of their. Additionally, the students



faced both linguistic and non-linguistic matters. Linguistically, they lack vocabulary and of grammar in which they could not find some appropriate words to use contextually and grammatically in their sentence construction. Furthermore, their learning motivation, interest, enthusiasm become their shortcomings in learning and developing their ability to write. When they got a writing part to rehearse their self-expression, it seemed effortless to make it, and they even stopped for a few minutes and left it without a single scribble on their paper. Additionally, their English teachers do not lead the students to learn writing through simple but meaningful ways. They usually come up with some considerable conventional teaching strategies in teaching language skills integrating with other language components of English as well. Therefore, the teacher should make a great deal of effort to find any alternative ways of teaching students writing.

Alternatively, six thinking hats strategy is one of modelling ways to do teaching writing in EFL classroom. It is considerably applicable as it is an increasingly clear and efficient way of thinking for students in learning either in individual or group. They only use a hat having six different colours, that is white, yellow, black, red, green and blue in which every colour represents one kind of thinking activity (Bono, 2007: 095 and Karadag in Hasanuddin, 2017:21). To apply this strategy the teacher should assign groups and pose focused questions related to the coloured hat represented. Every member of the group is looking and working in the same direction in which the intelligence, experience and knowledge of all the group members are fully empowered in such the simplest and lowest level of thinking to both develop confidence and remove ego of theirs.

Based on the obvious description of the students' writing issues above, this research was conducted to give a descriptive account of using six thinking hats strategy to improve the students' descriptive writing ability.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Writing

How writing is defined has already been assumed by numerous experts of applied linguists as follows:

- 1) Harmer (2004) stated that writing is a process and influence of genre forces. It is a form of thinking but it is thinking for the audience and occasion.
- 2) Batariola (2012) stated that writing is a way of expressing thought from mind to printing materials.
- 3) Klein (1985) defined writing is the ability to put pen and paper to express ideas through symbols. This way, representation on the paper will have meaning and content that could be communicated to other people.
- 4) Meyers (2005) assumed that writing is an action or a process of discovering and organizing ideas, putting them on a paper and reshaping and revising them.
- 5) Troyka, (1996) explored that writing is a way of communicating a message to a reader for a purpose to express oneself, to provide information for one's reader, to persuade one's reader, and to create a literary work.
- 6) Kellogg & Raulerson (2007) confirmed that writing is a test of memory, language, and thinking ability to demand rapid retrieval of domain specific knowledge about the topic from long-term memory.

Based on the definitions of writing described above, it is considerable that writing is the act of making up correct sentences and transmitted them through the visual medium as mark on paper and pen to express ideas/though that as a major cognitive challenge to achieve oriented purposes.

### 2.2. Component of Writing

There are five significant components of writing according to Jacobs (1981):

They are content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics.



- 1) Contents  
Content of writing should be clear to readers so that they can understand the message conveyed and get information formally. There are at least things that can be measured in connection with components, the composition should contain one central purpose only, have unity, coherence and continuity, and should be adequately developed.
- 2) Organization  
The organization of writing concerns the way the writers organize the ideas or message in the writing dealing with coherence, order of importance and general to specific, specific to general chronological order that happened from the beginning to the end.
- 3) Vocabulary  
Vocabulary is one of the important components of writing to express ideas as its effective use will always result in a good writing both in specific and technical writing. Vocabulary deficiency makes someone fail to compose what they are going to say since she feels difficult to choose what will help the writers to compose the writing and make readers easily understand the conveyed messages.
- 4) Language use  
Language use in all forms of writing unavoidably involves incorrect language and point of grammar particular for any foreign language use due to some available influencing factors of their appearances. We should not be able to do anything more than utter separate items of language for separate functions and grammar can help the students to improve the formal language used in written ways of ideas development as a result.
- 5) Mechanics  
There are at least two parts of mechanics in writing, namely function and capitalization. Function is important to clarify meaning in English writing capital letters to distinguish, for instance, between a particular and proper adjective, etc. It is very important, hence, since it looks to readers to recognize immediately what they write means to express.

### *2.3. Writing Process*

Brown (1994) explained that the process writing approaches tend to be framed in three stages of writing, namely prewriting, drafting, and revising. Firstly, prewriting stage encourages the generating ideas in numerous ways, (1) reading a passage, (b) scanning and/or skimming the passage, (c) conducting some outside research, (d) brainstorming, (e) listing, (f) clustering, (g) discussing a topic or question, (h) instructor-initiated question and probes, and (i) freewriting. Secondly, drafting is a series of strategies designed to organize and develop a sustained piece of writing. Before arranging the sentences to make sense of the ideas, stick to the topic that does not include information and support the main idea, and use the signal words to help the readers understand how the ideas in paragraphs are connected. Finally, revising is a series of strategies designed to re-examine and re-evaluate the choices that have been created into a piece of writing. In this step, the writer thinks as the reader, rethinks the approach, and makes changes that will improve the case. After that, she then edits and proofreads to eliminate errors and improve the coherence and readability of the idea presentation.

### *2.4. Six Thinking Hats Strategy*

Six thinking hats strategy is full of six different colour hats, namely white hat, red hat, yellow hat, black hat, green hat and blue hat. Karadag in Hasanuddin (2017:21) states that those colours symbolize the thinking system which is applicable in discussion or individual thinking. Al- Khataybeh (2015) thinking is the ultimate human resource, yet we can never be satisfied with our most important skill. No matter how well we become. The only people who are very satisfied with their thinking skill are those poor thinkers who believe that the purpose of thinking is to prove themselves right- to their own satisfaction. Additionally, Bono (2007:95) explained that six thinking hats is a strategy to do one kind of thinking activity at once. In thinking, we often try to do many things in the same situation. When looking at the fact of a problem, we try to arrange logical arguments while our

emotions always have a hand in when we try to produce new ideas to see whether our ideas can be done or not. No wonder sometimes we are in a maze. In other words, we could only do one thing well.

Most of the teachers who attended a discussion forum only use a kind of hat, not all the hats at the same time. A Coloured hat is used as a metaphor for each situation and each colour has one kind of thinking and describes the difference of point of view. Developing a condition or time is symbolized by the step of using a hat, either word for word or figure of speech. At principle this strategy shoves the students to thinking appropriately based on the hat that they use. Visible image of the six thinking hats strategy is as follow:

- 1) White hat: the student will be asked to look for information and facts about the topic. For being able to point the students to think, question directions needed are like, what information that we have, what information that we need and what information is less etc.
- 2) Yellow hat: the students will be asked to find out the benefit thing or positive effect about the topic. Question direction that can be used to point the students to think like, what is the benefit aspect in this problem, how to get the advantage and who will get the advantage etc.
- 3) Black hat: the students will be asked to find out the negative effect about the topic. Question direction that can be used to point the students to think like, is this true, will it be a success, what is the risk of the problem and what will be a resistance to it etc. In this way, the students will be critical minded.
- 4) Red hat: the students will be asked to find expression for what they feel and how their emotion is about the topic. Question direction that can be used to point the students to think like, how is our feeling about the problem and how is the others feeling about the problem.
- 5) Green hat: the students will be encouraged to think creatively and find out alternatives about the problem. Question direction that can be used to point the students to think like, what is the new idea of the problem, how to do the idea etc.
- 6) Blue hat: the students will be asked to make a conclusion. The blue hat controls thinking direction then gives discussion results. Question direction that can be used to point the students to think like, what must they get in the discussion, what problem they face about, what the effect of the problem, what is the discussion result, what is the solution and how is the conclusion.

The six thinking hats make the students more active because the hat instructs the students' mind to act based on the task and function of the hats that they use. Using the six thinking hats done by grouping and controlling based on the colour and task of the hat, so that the students can do a command and their assignment based on the colour hat. The colours then are mixed to get the result of colourful thinking.

### *2.5. The Ways of Using Six Thinking Hats Strategy*

Bono (2007: 120) states that there are two ways in using the six thinking hats, they are (a) using base on for a while requirement to enable people to suggest someone to use a certain hat or to change the hat, and (b) systematic using. For the sake of second use of this strategy, the order of thinking hats has been arranged before and thinkers do it based on arrangement. This use is sometimes done to talk about the subject quickly and effectively. The arrangement is determinable by using blue hats that design the thinking program about a problem which is a subject. This strategy is useful for solving a dispute or misunderstanding about something, and for people who do not use their way of thinking.

### *2.6. The principles of Six Thinking hats Strategy*

There are five principles of using this strategy, namely (a) choosing a topic to present in which the teacher chooses a topic related to the material; (b) creating students' packets in which the teacher should create student packet, introducing six thinking hats, the activity in

learning process, giving the name of group and assigning the role; (c) dividing into group in which the teacher should divide a class into some group and each group consist 4-5 members, (d) initiating the six thinking hats in which the students' group will rotate from the first station and move around the classroom, and each team writes comments for the material, and (e) presenting result in which one group has visited all the stations and the students return to their seats and discuss to prepare their presentation.

### *2.7. Applying Six Thinking Hats Strategy*

The procedures of applying this strategy are as follows:

- 1) The teacher selects the topics that will be used for six thinking hats.
- 2) The strategy is introduced to students, such as how the method works.
- 3) The teacher divides the students into groups consisting of 4-5 members.
- 4) The teacher provides one topic as a material of learning for all groups.
- 5) The teacher gives the colour of the hat to the students.
- 6) The teacher gives a chance to students to analyse the topic.
- 7) The teacher gives a chance to students to write what the hat the students got.

### *2.8. The Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Six Thinking Hats Strategy*

Al-Khataybeh in Hasanuddin (2017) classified the advantages and the disadvantages of using the six thinking hats strategy. Advantageously, this strategy is increasingly clear and efficient; the intelligences, experience and knowledge of all the members of the group are fully used; everyone is looking and working in the same direction; the colours and hats (cupboards) provide a visual image that is easy to learn, remember and use; the strategy can be used on simple level; students ask quality questions; students develop confidence; and removal of ego. Disadvantageously, this strategy needs extensive preparation such as training students on how to use the six thinking hats and preparing the hats (cardboards) with different colours, also selecting special topics that have divergent ideas; it needs a friendly classroom atmosphere because it is a method based on cooperative learning; it needs more critical thinking; and it is less efficient for kids (elementary school) who cannot express their opinion logically yet.

## **3. Method**

This research applied quantitative methods using a quasi-experimental design conducted in the ninth-grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Tinambung which is located in Tinambung, Polewali Mandar Regency, West Sulawesi. It used a cluster random sampling technique taking two classes, that is IX-1 class as the experimental group and IX-2 as the control group. Writing test given in the form of pre-and post-tests for both the groups was the only instrument of this research to gain the required data to reveal the findings of the addressed question, that is the improvement of students' descriptive writing ability before and after using the six thinking hats strategy for the experimental group and any other conventional ways of teaching writing for the control group. The data found were finally analysed descriptively.

## **4. Results and Discussions**

The results of data analysis obviously show that the six thinking hats strategy significantly improved the students' descriptive writing ability indicated by the results of the students' writing mean score of pre and post-test, the rate percentage score of pre-test and post-test of the experimental class and the control class, and hypothesis testing described in the following lines.

### *4.1. The Mean Score and Standard Deviation of the Students' Pre- and Post-test*

The table 1 was a pre-test analysis pointing the mean score and standard deviation of pre-test for both the experimental and control class.



**Table 1.** Mean Score and Standard Deviation of students' pre-test

Scores	Experimental Class		Control class	
	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Pre-Test	Post-Test
N	23	23	23	23
Min	31	70	31	44
Max	69	95	81	88
Mean	44.96	83.26	47.39	62.91
SD	9.888	8.869	12.731	11.123

The table 1 shows that the mean score of students in pre-test for both classes was categorized into poor classification indicating that they have low productivity before they were given treatment. In post-test, the mean score for the experimental class was 83.26 and the control class was 62.91 meaning that the score of the experimental class was higher than the control class and simply showing that the use of six hats strategy was positively improved the students' writing ability compared with the control class learning writing skills using any other conventional teaching ways.

*4.2. The Percentage Score of Pre-test and Post-test of Writing of the Experiment and the Control Class*

The improvement of students' descriptive writing ability could also be seen in the percentage score of pre-test and post-test of writing for both classes as seen in the table 2.

**Table 2.** The Percentage Score of Pre-test and Post-test of Writing of the Experiment and the Control Class

No.	Classification	Score	Experimental Class				Controlled Class			
			Pre-Test		Post-Test		Pre-Test		Post-Test	
			F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Very Good	86 - 100	0	0	7	30.43	0	0	1	4.35
2	Good	71 - 85	0	0	15	65.22	1	4.35	4	17.39
3	Fair	56 - 70	5	21.74	1	4.35	6	26.09	13	56.52
4	Poor	41 - 55	6	26.09	0	0	5	21.74	5	21.74
5	Very Poor	< 40	12	52.17	0	0	11	47.83	0	0
	<b>Total</b>		23	100	23	100	23	100	23	100

The table 2 shows the students' score in pre-test before giving treatment. The percentage of the students' writing ability in both classes were quite low, figuring out that the students' mean score in both classes was relatively similar and categorized into a very poor classification. After giving treatment, the rate percentage of the students' descriptive writing ability for both classes were improved indicating that through the six thinking hats strategy use made the students get higher scores than the students in control class.

*4.3. Hypothesis Testing*

To prove whether students' descriptive writing ability significantly improved for both the experimental and control classes or not, it needs to interpret the output of the independent samples test.

The figure 1 shows that the value of the Sig Levene for Equality of variances is 0.636, so it could be interpreted that the data variance between the experimental class and the control class was homogeneous. Besides, the Sig (2 tailed) value is 0.000 < 0.05, so the basis for decision making in the independent sample T test is concluded that H0 was rejected and H1 was accepted meaning that there was a significant difference between the mean score for both classes.

During the observation process, it was found that the ninth grade of SMP Negeri 1 Tinambung, especially the experimental class in which the students did not have the motivation to write any kinds of text including descriptive one in English empirically proved by the sentence constructions were ungrammatically made showing they did not like the writing activity at all. To overcome this condition, it needed to give any exclusive

treatment to students by applying one of teaching writing strategies, that is six thinking hats. This strategy is one kind of activity in one change at a time consisting of six hats colours and each colour has a kind of thinking activity. White hat: the students had to propose facts and information about problems that were talking about; Yellow hat: the students had to provide the benefit of things and the positive side from the topic we were talking about. Red hat; the students had to provide their feelings related to the problem they were discussing; Black Hat: the students had to provide the bad things or the negative side from the problem or topic we were talking about; Green hats: the students had to provide some new ideas related to the problem or topic they were discussing; Blue hat: the students had to provide conclusions and decide the solution after collecting the answer from all hats, but the blue hat was not a hat that had function in the last session, but the blue hat could control another hat. It was like what type they wanted to review if there were unclear answers. This strategy was one of the problem-solving strategies in which the students had to find solutions from the problem or topic given. In this strategy, the students were divided into six groups based on the strategy. To help this activity run well, the cardboards were used and given to the students consisting of those colours symbolizing the type of thinking activity that students should do based on the command on the cardboard to find the solution from the problem or topic given. This strategy was helpful for the students to get any progress of improving their writing ability as proved by the result of the scored gained (see table 1, 2, and 3). It may come on the surface since most students could share ideas then express the ideas and they enjoyed learning writing through the six thinking hats, even so, a few students still got shy and doubted to write or express their ideas directly. However, they were able to express their ideas step by step as a result.

		e's Test for		Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Post-test	Equal variances assumed	0,227	0,636	-6,860	44	0,000	-20,348	2,966	-26,326	-14,370
	Equal variances not assumed			-6,860	41,921	0,000	-20,348	2,966	-26,334	-14,361

**Figure 1.** The result of T-test

In line with the advantages of this strategy, this research was supported by Handayani (2014) finding out that six thinking hats were effective in the discussion learning process. She furthermore suggested that to achieve a good result through this teaching strategy, the teacher should create good conditions and use an interesting way in using strategy so students enjoyed and felt challenged, the students could share their ideas and their opinions with each other by using the instruction on the colourful cards given on their hats.

Furthermore, the students in control class were taught writing through writing sentences in group work. To begin this activity, the rules of discussion were explained in detail then the students were divided into some groups based on the materials given. The topic was given for each group and in the discussion process all students had to give a response, suggestion and answer after providing the material of each group. However, this learning way of writing did not lead the students to have a better bridge to work together to produce a good result of any descriptive writing given proved by the score they gained (see table 1,2, and 3). In line with the findings, the English teachers are suggested to, in large extent, apply the

similar way given to the experimental class or they may alternatively find any applicable ways of leading the students to have a good writing skill in English as well.

## 5. Conclusion

The descriptive account of findings and discussion above lead to a conclusion that the use of the six thinking hats strategy effectively improved students' descriptive writing ability proved by t-test statistical procedures, the result of the analysis showing that there was improvement from the pre-test to the post-test in which the mean score of the students for the experimental class was 44.96 in pre-test and 83.26 in post-test, and the control class was 47.39 in pre-test and 62.91 in post-test. Due to the effectiveness of this strategy in teaching descriptive text to junior school students, it is highly recommended that English teachers alternatively use it in delivering any writing genres to the EFL students whatever the level of English proficiency they have.

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