SHE'S GOT NICE SMILE: ENACTING PERSONAL PHOTOGRAPH IN TEACHING DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: August 2023 Revised: Sepetember 2023 Published: October 2023 **Keywords** *Descriptive Writing; Indonesia; Secondary Education; Personal Photograph;*	*English teachers agreed that developing their students' writing ability was the most chalenging than the other abilities This study explores the components of effective teaching descriptive writings. Specifically, this research examines a classroom practice of an English teacher at the State Islamic Junior High School (Madrasah Tsanawiyah) in Jember, East Java. This study focuses on how the English teacher enacted personal photograph in teaching writing and to investigate the students' perceptions toward the use of personal photograph in writing descriptive text. This study, which employs qualitative research, portrays the reality that occurs in the field related to the enactment of personal photographs in teaching writing descriptive text. There was a successful modelling of personal photograph based on students' views toward the learning that almost all beneficial. Aside from the successful practice, this research found minor drawbacks although did not impede the classroom practice.*

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, there has been stunning transformation in language teaching and learning. In the Indonesian context where English is taught as Foreign Language (hencfort EFL), the effort to deal with improving skills have been challenging. At schools, students must practice writing on a regular basis. These exercises appeared to improve the students' ability to write and explain themselves in a decent paragraph. However, without consistent and effective practice, students will be unable to write properly and effectively (Ferdiansyah, et.al., 2020).

Numeous researchers in the domain of EFL have observed several problems in teaching and learning writing, such as students' lack of lexico- grammatical proficiency, as well as cultural influence (Kozhevnikova, 2014). Aside from the difficulties that students confront, various things from the teacher would inevitably affect the process of descriptive text teaching and learning activities. Teachers' ideas on writing styles will influence how students learn to write in the classroom (Yaacob & Suriyanti, 2016). The findings reported that teachers aimed for error-free writing products will simply put the great emphasize on teaching grammar rather than focusing on the writing process itself. In addition, the lack of teachers' pedagogical skills, particurally on teaching- learning methods, on teaching writing tend to force them to simply employ convetional teaching strategies.

Earlier research revealed that several ways were employed for teaching and learning writing. For more than two decades, product and process approaches have constantly monopolized the majority of the writing instruction within the classrooms. According to Nunan (1999), "teachers in teaching writing were mostly concerned with the finished product of writing or the product approach, teachers focusing on the finished product." In fact, the two

most popular approaches in writing instruction are product and process approaches. For the product approach, teachers emphasize on the grammatical rules and lexical patterns when teaching writing. The accuracy of the writing is more important than the substance itself. According to Harmer (2002), the goal of the writing job and its end products are regarded as the most important aspects of the product approach. In spite of that, Leki (1990) verified that the majority of the writing instructors are frequently overly concerned with grammatical correctness and linguistic structure. Product-oriented writing projects often involved emulating, replicating, and altering the original examples provided by text books or instructors.

The product approach has been practical in several countries where English become a second or a foreign language, such as Africa, China, Indonesia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and many others (Ariyanti, 2010; Pennington, 1995; Zeng 2010; Mpepo, 2012; Mesthrie, 2008). According to particular research, instructors of writing were primarily engrossed in the end product of writing, which adressed to students' grammatical precission and error-free content. Accordingly, students became apathetic and reliant on their instructors. It was also said that the product approach ignored the processes involved in writing, such as how pupils wrote, formed ideas, and crafting their scripts. The process method, in contrast, highlighted students' writing process in which the techniques advise students on how to write, brainstorm, write, and revise their writing. In this regard, Tribble, one of the founders, stated "the process approach, emphasized that it was an approach to the teaching of writing which stresses the creativity of the individual writer, and which pays attention to the development of good writing practices rather than the imitation of models" (1996, p.160).

The first observation result of this academic literature revealed that secondary school sudents had some issues in writing, particularly descriptive writing. Students must pay close attention to grammar and tenses. This reality seemed to strengthen the study by Yacoob and Suriyanti (2016) in which English teachers were worried about their students' understanding in grammar and tenses. This reason seemed to be normal to the situation in Indonesia or in non-native English countries. Additionally, when students' lexical knowledge is severely constrained, it makes writing even more challenging for them. According to the observations, the pupils also struggled to visualize the topics in their heads and put their ideas into writing. Aside from the difficulties of the students, the English teachers agreed that developing their students' writing ability was the most chalenging than the other abilities. To do so, the teacher highlighted that students were required to have sufficient grammatical capability, and that it is necessary to pay serious attention on teaching media, in addition to other components of writing to assist students improve their writing skills, particularly in writing descriptive text as suggested by Heaton (1988).

The English teachers of Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri 1 in Jember, East Java, chose to shift their focus from procedure to product. They were also using a new media for teaching descriptive text, having previously used traditional writing tests from a text book and shifting to personal images to tackle those issues. As a result, the teachers opted to utilize photographs of well-known public individuals to prompt pupils to recognize and describe them, followed by their own personal portrait. This study investigated the classroom practices of selected teachers who informed the use of personal photographs as instudtion media of descriptive text, as well as the students' perceptions of the teachers' execution of the tactics.

Literature Review
The stages of writing that the writer should employ are discussed in the writing process. For example, Harmer (2002) affirmed that there are four stages in writing: preparation, drafting, editing, and final manuscript. Planning is the stage in which students generate a list of topic-related ideas. They plan out what they will write in the initial draft. Drafting is the

stage at which students begin writing the first draft after they have compiled a list of ideas relating to the topic. They write the ideas they intend to write without worrying about making mistakes. After completing their first draft, students should rewrite it during the editing stage. The final stage is when students rewrite their manuscript after revising with classmates and teachers. Similarly, Oshima and Houge (1997) stated that writing is a type of engaging activity that examines thoughts, emotions, and the expression of feelings via the recording of occurrences. Writing is a method of expressing information in written form. Writers should know how to write well because writing is a process that requires certain skills such as how to handle words, phrases, and paragraphs.

In the interim, texts are varied. There have been various types of text including narrative, descriptive, argumentative, expository (Inman & Gardner, 1979). Particularly, writing a descriptive text involves vivid description of somethings. In literatures, a descriptive text is one that uses human senses to describe how something looks, feels, smells, tastes, and/or sounds in order to let the reader visualize the object, place, or person in written form (Inman & Gardner, 1979; Gerot, & Wignell, 1995; Kane, 2000). It has been assumed that a good descriptive writing should properly encourage the reader's imagination to imagine the things or people being described. And a photograph is a type of visual media in the form of a still image that has frequently been used as a medium to assist teachers and students in the teaching and learning process, particularly when teaching descriptive writing.

A photograph is also provided as a high creative value image that is vivid and, more importantly, information rich. Raimes (1983) suggested that photographs may bring the outside world inside the classroom, allowing pupils to readily visualize and communicate their ideas and thoughts in textual form. Meanwhile, Hornby (2007) stated that using visuals can help students identify a theme or an idea for what to write and visualize something in a simple way. A personal photograph is a photograph that depicts an object or a specific subject, such as a well-known person or public figure. Students can freely write and describe people, places, and anything else linked to subjects or objects according on their choices.

There have been several previous researches in relation with the use of personal photograph as the teaching and learning media in descriptive writing. Study by Aini (2021) proved that the use of personal photograph can improve students' skill in writing descriptive text. Her study was conducted by taking an Islamic junior high school (SMP Islam) student at sub-district Rambipuji, the district of Jember in the academic year 2020/2021 as the participants of her research. Previous to the enactment of personal image the students faced difficulties in practicing descriptive writing. Most students obtained low scores under the minimum criteria of success determined previously. The researcher then advocated using personal photographs as instructional medium in teaching writing. The study used classroom action research (CAR) and claimed success since 70% of the students obtained the goal score after using personal photographs as the media in teaching writing with a focus on descriptive language. Study by Safitri (2017) reported that using personal photographs properly can help students enhance their ability to write descriptive language. The research used a quasi-experimental method with a two-group pre-test and post-test design, and the findings revealed that the Second-grade students of MTs Negeri Gowa indicated "very poor" score on pre-test, and after necessary treatment the students' ability in writing were getting improved. The result confirmed that there was significant improvement for the students' writing ability after being taught by using Personal Photograph.

Study by Kusumaningputri and Widodo (2018) about the use of digital photograph-mediated intercultural tasks showed that using digital photograph has promoted students' learning in English language classroom. In all shorts, photograph has unique characteristic and can help learners learning language in many ways. In Kusumaningputri and Widodo (2018)'s study it is reported that the utilization of digital photograph was found useful as a

medium to navigate students intercultural understanding, and also as the object of learning (material), thus the students could describe or mention their cultural values built-in the pictures.

RESEARCH METHOD
Research Design
The qualitative descriptive methodology was used in this study. To investigate the enactment of a personal photograph in a classroom practice, the qualitative research approach was adopted. This study looked specifically at the English teacher's usage of personal photographs in the classroom. This includes issues encountered by students while learning English as well as their attitudes on the use of personal photographs. The data sources were obtained verbally from the participants in the study and related to perceiving and interpreting various aspects of their environment. Qualitative research refers to methodological approaches used to comprehend, analyze, describe, and create a theory about a phenomenon or context (Creswell, 2007).

Researchers can recreate reality and grasp its significance using qualitative research, which emphasizes processes, occurrences, and authenticity (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). The field research methodology used in this study. Field research uses a specific scene or location as the data source and research process. In this case, the researchers become data collectors while also being active in the field in order to obtain thorough information. The field study was chosen by the researchers because it is the most appropriate research type for learning in-depth about the implementation of personal photographs as learning media as well as learning material in teaching writing descriptive text.

Research Participants
The research undertaken for this study was executed during the period of January to February in the year 2023. The investigation was conducted within the premises of an Islamic Junior High School, known as Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri (MTs.N) 1 Jember, situated at Jalan Imam Bonjol no.1 in the locality of Tegal Besar, within the sub-district of Kaliwates, in the district of Jember, East Java province, Indonesia. This selection of the research site was made with careful consideration of its relevance to the research objectives, given the school's specific educational context and location. To collect comprehensive and meaningful data for the study, a combination of research methods was employed. These methods included observations, interviews, and document review. Prior to the formal commencement of observations, a preparatory phase was undertaken by the researchers. During this stage, the researchers conducted pre-interviews with two English teachers associated with the school. This preliminary engagement with the teachers allowed for a contextual understanding of the English language teaching practices and challenges within the school. The initial observations made during the preparatory phase revealed a notable trend within the school's student body. Specifically, it was observed that a significant proportion of the pupils faced difficulties in their English language learning journey, with a particular emphasis on challenges related to writing skills. The manifestation of these challenges formed a pivotal aspect of the research focus. The research cohort consisted of a class comprising 40 male and female students. It is essential to underscore that all observations and interactions with the students were conducted with their full consent and a clear understanding of their voluntary participation in the study. Their willingness to be involved in the research was instrumental in facilitating a robust and ethical research process.

Instruments
After the consent was given, then observation was done to document their activities in the classroom. During their activity in learning English, videotaping was done and the video

and other electronic devices were put in a hidden place in order to avoid learners' nervousness being videoed or recorded. Sometime in the observation phase we were interviewing some of them. This way has given chance for us to see and sometime took notes to get important information, such as students' profile and performance more detail. In this phase, we focused on the selected students who had been confirmed before the activities within their interaction in the classroom. Their involvement in the classroom activities were intensely observed. We also took note on how the participants made use of the personal photograph in the *descriptive writing* process. This endeavor was accomplished to fulfill the research purposes in order to get rich data important for analysis phase. When the process was completed, then the oral data in the form of recordings were transcribed. Finally, the data were selected to be analyzed in the next phase, the data analysis process.

Data Analysis

After the data have been gathered, we continued to do data analysis. In this process, the data collated through observation, interview, and document analysis were transcribed, then categorized and analyzed based on the themes that appeared. Therefore, data analysis in this research was thematic analysis. This approach was employed to give meaning toward the themes that appeared from observation, interview, and document review. Since the most important process from data analysis was ***meaning making***, that is the process of giving meaning based on interpretation and deep examination. Then, the next process was validating the appearing themes by employing ***member checking*** done by co-researcher and teachers. The next step was validating particular data by cross checking with other sources the so-called *disconfirming evidence.*

Interpreting in data analysis process is called "rationalization" or how researchers make ***sense*** of the data. Thus, this process required clarity of explanation in order to make readers easy to understand the phenomena being exposed. In the sense that the collated data must be categorized, systematized, and grouped under appearing themes. Interpreting specific attitude or perception underlying research practices, in so far, were included in this process. Thus, a data analysis process includes *data condensation*, *data display, data verification and conclusion drawing* (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). This analysis also portrayed and explored the characteristic of English learners in the classroom as a community of practice, and this was the main reason why a qualitative researcher employs thematic analysis.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Safira (pseudonym), is a female teacher of English at an Islamic Junior High School in the district of Jember, East Java in Indonesia. She appears attractive and friendly. She taught English at the eighth grade (year 8). Becoming a teacher at the school, prior to teaching in the class, she is needed to write a lesson plan. The goal of distributing the lesson plan to students prior to teaching was to achieve effective learning. The teacher also created a fun and motivating activity at the same time the activity was also challenging for the students. The English instructor at the school had previously prepared a lesson plan for the English class based on the school's syllabus. The following excerpt was interview result with Safira:

> *In addition to the original learning objectives established by the lesson plan, I want my pupils to enjoy class and be able to compose a paragraph under my direction. I deliberately only go over the basics because I want my students to comprehend what I'm saying by writing about the picture I prepared beforehand for the exercise.* (Interview: Safira.LP. 22 February 2023, the original interview was done in Bahasa Indonesia, this interview is translated by the researchers)

The lesson plan has been identified as an essential component of class activities (Gower et al, 2005). The teaching and learning process proceed smoothly, as planned in the lesson plan. To fulfill the learning objectives, the teaching and learning process was developed, and thus method, time management, and learning media were crucial components. The above

excerpt indicated that the English teacher was obliged to create yearly plan the so called *Prota*, and semester plan the so-called *Promes*. The document analysis done in this study showed that all materials should be included in the plan and the teacher's statement about lesson planning above was strengthened by her documentation of the lesson plan. The teacher additionally confirmed that the key learning objectives based on these lesson plans must be met. The teacher added her personal aim for the class, stating that she wanted the students to enjoy the lesson and be able to follow her advice and support in writing a descriptive paragraph based on the worksheet and the media she had previously prepared.

The teacher's ability in planning the teaching and learning in class is critical in ensuring that the learning process is on track and well-structured in order to achieve the desired outcomes. The lesson plan is a projection for the forthcoming class and is related to what is required to achieve the learning goals. The class's conception is determined by what the teacher has planned such as found in Hayati (2014) in relation with the function of a lesson plan. Her study confirmed that a lesson plan consisted of the whole activities that must be prepared in classroom. The study also demonstrated that when the lesson plan was properly implemented by the teacher, half of the teaching and learning process was completed successfully.

To strengthen the data taken from document analysis and interview, an observation was conducted by employing participant observation technique. The data showed that the English teacher employed personal picture as the learning medium in the classroom. The observed class was eighth grade (year 8). The learning activity was shared into three stages which included *pre-teaching activity*, *main or whilst activity*, and *post activity*. In pre-teaching activity, the teacher checked the student presence list and continued to a lead-in activity which promoted learning. The classroom situation was friendly and she created a motivating atmosphere as well. Following the pre-teaching activity, the teacher delivered the materials and gave necessary instructions. We knew from this observation that the teacher used short sentences in her instructions which was found to be effective. Even though her pronouncing words sound to be a kind of Javanese accent, but it didn't hinder from delivering a series of understandable instructions. This can be seen from students' responses. There was no doubt that the students understood the instructions.

During the main activity, the teacher divided the class into several groups to complete the following task, which included composing a descriptive paragraph based on personal photos they possessed. It was discovered that there was a grammatical problem in which the students were unable to create grammatically accurate phrases in order to construct a good paragraph. Aside from that, the most pressing issue was that they found it difficult to generate ideas. Nothing was incorrect with the teaching and learning process. The teacher had already given the students some topics or themes and had helped them with appropriate vocabulary, but the students appeared to be bewildered at first and did not know what to do to start writing. This evidence demonstrated that students' positive responses were not always parallel with their ability to develop a paragraph. This was clear when they listened to their teacher's instruction, they seemed to understand it, but they experienced difficulty when they were practicing how to develop a paragraph. As a consequence, the students' result in writing was not in line with the intended goal.

Knowing the results, in the next stage the teacher guided the students to start writing with several steps which triggered them to write. The teacher instructed students to look at the photo as a group. The teacher instructed the pupils to make a list of their observations about the physical appearance of the figure in the picture. It helps them to think and have ideas to compose sentences (Dwigustini et al., 2021; Wahid & Sudirman, 2023). Then, the teacher requested that pupils recall their experiences and memories relating to the image. The teacher allowed the pupils to discuss their findings with their groups. After the students had finished

discussion, the teacher asked the students to write a paragraph using the list. Meanwhile, the teacher went around the class to monitor and gave help while reminded the students related to the use of, for example, adjective or conjunction to make the paragraph easy to read (Haerazi & Kazemian, 2021; Kazemian et al., 2021). Once the initial draft was completed, the teacher requested the students to double-check and edit their paragraphs. And the teacher pointed one student in each group to present their writing before collecting their work to her.

Based on field data, it was determined that teachers in the observed school were required to develop a lesson plan prior to teaching in the classrooms. There were no rejection or complaint from the teachers. It was difficult to deny that the teachers' presence and lesson planning were crucial in achieving the learning goal. Lesson plans were once regarded to be extremely important; nevertheless, without a teacher to supervise the learning process, learning would result in low achievement, if not deceptive. As a result, we argued that delivering a lesson plan prior to teaching was intended to facilitate planned and effective learning. In addition, the presence of a teacher (such as Safira) may create a cheerful and inspiring environment and at the same time this will increase students' motivation in learning. It was evidenced that the above point 1 up to point 7 showed the importance of a teacher in the classroom process.

She's Got Nice Smile

Safira, the English teacher, took a picture out of her red hang-up bag. She has taught English at the school for about five years. She appeared confident and enthusiastic. The picture she had prepared beforehand was a picture of a little girl she took from the internet.

Figure 1: Anahita (source: https://www.pxfuel.com/en/desktop-wallpaper-fxuai#google_vignette)

The picture of Anahita shown by the teacher was able to attract students' attention. As a matter of fact, the sweet little girl was so cute and has got nice smile. Almost everyone in the classroom knew her because she was famous in Whatsapp's sticker. Safira as a young teacher knew this and she employed this picture to teach how to write a descriptive text. This exposure was evidenced that the following activity was more important in which students were assigned to bring their own photograph and write their own descriptive text using their own photograph (Hadi et al., 2021; Astiatih & Akfan, 2023) In this stage, this finding indicated that the teacher has successfully engaged the students into productive activity, describing picture. And thus, the descriptive writing task was fulfilled by engaging personal photograph. Hence, the lesson was successful.

The lesson plan is usually modified by the teacher based on their needs for execution. The teacher adapted the overall lesson plan from the package into a one-meeting lesson plan.

Based on the most recent government rules for the year 2019, the teacher created a lesson plan for a single meeting that included elements such as school identity, class/semester, major, lesson, material, lesson year, time allocation, learning goals, base competencies, indicator, learning material, method, learning media, learning activities, and assessment. As the English teacher indicated during the interview with the researchers, the instructor updated the lesson plan for the descriptive material at some point since the teacher believes some of them need to be adjusted. The teacher confirmed that if she followed the original lesson plan, she would be unable to achieve her goal of including the personal photos in the fashion she had planned. Because the time for teaching was originally longer than specified in the lesson plan, the teacher adjusted the major activity while making a minor change in the time allotment. The teacher provided learning material from the students' text book, focusing on defining a girl's appearance with a personal photograph she had previously printed.

Learning media, particularly personal photographs, were found to be effective in improving communication between teacher and students. The lesson plan had been functioned as guide to help the lesson achieve its aims (Bayram & Bikmaz, 2018; Goh & Fang, 2017). Before selecting the images, the teacher should consider several points. In an interview with the researchers, the teacher explained why she chose the medium difficulty level of the photograph. The teacher said the picture should have some obvious information and be straightforward to convey. Students, for example, should not be concerned with how to describe an image, such as how the person in the picture should have a normal shape, colors, or whether the person is smiling, frowning, or laughing, and so on. The figure's outfit had to be straightforward to explain in terms of colors, shape, and so on. The teacher also stated that she chose the colorful, high-resolution image so that the pupils would be able to see it clearly.

In the context of English language instruction, the pivotal role of teachers in enhancing students' writing skills cannot be overstated. Central to this role is the teacher's awareness and proficiency in employing effective strategies to nurture students' writing abilities, particularly in crafting descriptive paragraphs that utilize personal imagery. This awareness encompasses not only an understanding of the technical aspects of writing but also a pedagogical competence in conveying these essential components to students. The teacher's capacity to impart crucial elements of descriptive paragraph writing, such as the incorporation of personal imagery, emerges as a cornerstone of success within the educational process. This awareness entails the ability to guide students in harnessing their own experiences, thoughts, and sensory perceptions to construct vivid and engaging written narratives (Fatiani et al., 2021; Ma & Yuen, 2008; Plakan & Wang, 2019). By doing so, students can cultivate their descriptive writing skills, enabling them to paint intricate mental pictures through words. The significance of this teacher's awareness extends beyond the individual student level; it reverberates throughout the broader educational landscape, particularly in the EFL contexts. Successful integration of these pedagogical strategies contributes to the overall efficacy of English language instruction in EFL environments. It fosters an environment where students are not only equipped with linguistic competence but also with the capacity to express themselves eloquently and creatively through the medium of written language.

CONCLUSION

This study discovered some benefits and minor drawbacks to implementing the personal photograph, including; a) teachers were able to determine each student's English level based on their writing results and thus were able to evaluate the students' behavior and level of activeness in class. b) Analyzing personal photographs was found to be an excellent way of training students' critical thinking skills. c) The use of personal photographs might encourage pupils to share their opinions and write from their point of view. d) The use of personal photographs was discovered to motivate students to learn English while also enhancing

entertaining activities. Apart from the benefits of using personal photographs as media in teaching descriptive writing, there were a few drawbacks that emerged, such as: a) the enactment took a long time. This was demonstrated when the teachers ran out of time before the planned activity was completed and the teacher appeared to have less expertise in managing time; b) numerous pupils appeared to be less interested in being passive in class; and c) the class was a little tense when the English lesson was presented at the end of the day.

SUGGESTION

In accordance with the research findings, it is proposed to the English instructor to consider time management in the classroom and to use and supply the media employed, which is personal photographs of varying levels of complexity ranging from the easiest to the most difficult. It also takes into account the varying levels of English comprehension for various students. In this instance, the instructor can be fully prepared for any forthcoming or unexpected problems that may arise in the classroom, such as students' boredom in learning due to a disparity in understanding level between each student.

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