USING STORY CIRCLE TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' ABILITY IN WRITING NARRATIVE TEXT

Diah Paramita Sari[1] and M.Sabri[2]
[1,2] Lecturers of State Polytechnic of Bengkalis
State Polytechnic of Bengkalis
Jl.Bathin Alam-Sungai Alam, Bengkalis-Riau, 28711 Phone: (+6277) 24566,
Fax: (+2766) 800 1000 e-mail: diah@polbeng.ac.id, sabri@polbeng.ac.id

***Abstract**: This study aims to discuss one way of solving the problems of students in writing narrative texts, namely by using Story Circle. In this activity, students were divided into several groups and then the teacher read one of the narrative texts in the form of fairy tales, fables or legends that they have never known before. They rewrote the text they had heard before in accordance with the generic structure and language features found in the narrative text, but with different versions according to their imagination. After they wrote the first few sentences of the story on the paper they had each, the students gave the paper to a colleague on their left. Then, their colleagues added the next sentence based on the idea of the story that had been written before. This activity continued until they completed the complication section of the story. When the paper returned to the real owner, the student wrote down the resolution. Activities Story Circle is expected to be one of the variations of learning to write in the class so that students are able to pour their ideas properly and precisely, especially in English. In addition, through this technique, students can creatively and freely develop story ideas.*

***Keywords:** writing, narrative text, story circle*

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the essential aspects that is concerned by our government in order to improve Indonesian human resource. Government realizes that during global era, people from different countries, cultures, and languages will interact each other and they will use the international language to communicate. Since English is one of the International communication languages, the government has decided to put English as an essential subject that has to be taught from elementary school to the university. It is expected that people,

especially students, can acquire English that covers the four language skills to prepare them in facing the global era.

Nowadays, in order to implement *Undang-Undang No. 20 tahun 2003 tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional and Peraturan Pemerintah No. 19 tahun 2005 tentang Standar Nasional Pendidikan*, Indonesian government has arranged a new curriculum called *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan* (KTSP) or School Based Curriculum. Basically, it is a curriculum in which every school, from elementary to senior high school, is expected to develop the curriculum independently based on *Standar Kompetensi Lulusan (SKL), Standar Isi (SI),* and *Panduan Umum* which have been arranged by *Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan* (BSNP). Moreover, the curriculum development is also generated by considering the local specification, local needs and students' ability where the school is located. However, this curriculum is basically a follow up of previous curriculum, *Kurikulum Berbasis Kompetensi* (KBK) or Curriculum 2004.

According to *Standar Kompetensi Mata Pelajaran Bahasa*

Inggris Curriculum 2004 and School Based Curriculum (KTSP), the goal of English teaching learning process is to make the students able to use English both oral and written form. Students are expected to have a good listening and speaking ability as well as reading and writing ability. Students will learn how to use their English in any circumstances, such as in daily activity, business, tourism, and education. It will help them when they move from classroom situation to the real world situation. Experience will also play an important role in this process. In addition, the teacher him/herself is also expected to be creative in generating teaching technique, media and material. He/she should make the teaching and learning process become an interesting activity in the classroom. The technique can be generated by adopting, adapting or if it is possible, it can be developed by the teacher him/herself. For the media and material, teacher can take them from any source, such as newspaper, magazine, internet or created by him/herself.

Moreover, *Standar Kompetensi Mata Pelajaran Bahasa Inggris*

Curriculum 2004 and School Based Curriculum (KTSP) explains that the teaching and learning process for English subject is done by using genres. There are twelve genres or types of text that should be taught by teacher to students; narrative, recount/spoof, report, procedure, news item, description, anecdote, hortatory exposition, analytical exposition, discussion, explanation and review. Each text has its own social function, generic structure and language features, and the four language skills are integrated during learning those texts.

One of the texts is narrative. It is considered as a kind of text that entertains, teaches history, and comes to make sense of the phenomena in this world. The material of narrative text is usually taken from the type of story such as fairy tales, folk stories, fable, and so on. Senior High School students are familiar with this type of text because their kindergarten and elementary school have told them many times about stories related to legend, fairy tale, folktale, or fable.

However, there are still some problems that emerge during teaching and learning writing skill for narrative text. Even though narrative text is well-known by senior high school students since they have ever heard narrative text in the form of fairy tales, folk stories, fable, folktale or legend, they still have some difficulties in generating ideas and developing the appropriate written text. Furthermore, conventional technique in teaching writing also makes students bored and unenthusiastic. They find writing as a monotonous activity in the classroom where they just sit behind their desks while concentrating in developing their ideas and figuring out an appropriate way to express those ideas.

In order to overcome these problems, teachers should provide their students an opportunity to develop their writing skill, and creatively generate techniques to make English teaching and learning process become an interesting activity in the classroom. There are many ways or techniques that can be used by the teachers in teaching writing, such as by using visual aids, newspaper, magazine, cards, internet, role play, problem based learning, group discussion, and so on.

In this study, a technique was chosen which can help students in developing and increasing their ability in writing. The technique was by using story circle. By using this technique, the students were asked to write a narrative text in which students add to each other's ideas by passing written narrative texts or stories from student to student. This method was used in group. Through this technique, students are expected to be able to create an appropriate and correct written narrative text. Based on the background above, the purpose of this research is to improve senior high school students' ability in writing narrative text by using story circle.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Writing in Second and Foreign Language Learning

Writing is a sort of communication which is used by writers to express and share their ideas, feelings, and thoughts. Writing which is created does not only inform society around the writer himself, but also society in another place, regional or even continent. It can stand through years and centuries, from generation to generation. Furthermore, there are several things that should be considered carefully by the writers during their writing, such as content, organization, grammar, and style. Bell and Burnaby in Nunan (1999) consider that writing is a very complex cognitive activity whereas the writer is required to demonstrate control of number variable simultaneously. At the sentence level, these include control of content, format, sentence structure, vocabularies, punctuation, spelling and letter formation. Moreover, beyond the sentence, the writer must be able to structure and integrate information into cohesive and coherent paragraphs or texts.

In addition, Dietsch (2003) states that effective writing is focused, fresh, and appropriate. The purpose and organization are clear; words and sentences reflect a sense of style; words mean what they are intended to; spelling observes standard usage; grammatical structures fit the ideas they bring; and the punctuation makes relationship clear.

Richards and Renandya (2003) say that the difficulties of mastering writing skill are not only in generating ideas and organizing ideas, but also translating these ideas into readable text. Moreover, Hyland (2003) identifies that there are some focuses in second and foreign language writing teaching, such as language structures, text functions, themes or topics, creative expressions, composing process, content, and genre and context of writing. These focuses are briefly explained as the following:

1. **Language Structures**

   Emphasis: language form Goals: grammar accuracy, vocabulary building, and second and foreign language proficiency Main pedagogic techniques: controlled composition, gap-fill, substitution, error avoidance, indirect assessment, and practice of rhetorical patterns.

2. **Text Functions**

   Emphasis language use
   Goals: paragraph and text organization patterns
   Main pedagogic techniques: free writing, reordering, gap-fill, imitation of parallel texts, writing from tables and graphs.

3. **Creative Expression**

   Emphasis: writer
   Goals: individual creativity, and self-discovery
   Main pedagogic techniques: reading, pre-writing, journal writing, multiple drafting, and peer critiques.

4. **Content**

   Emphasis: writer
   Goals: control technique
   Main pedagogic techniques: brain-storming, planning, multiple drafting, peer collaboration, delayed editing, and portfolio assessment.

5. **Genre**

   Emphasis : text and context
   Goals: control of rhetorical structure of specific text-types
   Main pedagogic techniques: modeling-negotiation-construction cycle, rhetorical consciousness-raising

   Writing is not only to put the words into sentences and paragraphs, but also to express ideas from experience to the words. In other words, writing is a transaction with words in which the writers free themselves from what they presently think, feel and perceive. Hence, there is no doubt that

writing is very difficult to be mastered by second and foreign language learners. Generating ideas, organizing ideas, and translating these ideas into readable text are the learners' problems in creating any written text in second and foreign language. The teacher should provide some various learning experiences in order to overcome these problems by considering the focuses of second and foreign language writing teaching.

According to *Standar Kompetensi Mata Pelajaran Bahasa Inggris Sekolah Menengah Atas dan Aliyah* Curriculum 2004 or School Based Curriculum, the teaching and learning process is developed by concerning language as social semiotic system. It is an approach of language teaching and learning for all language skills, including writing skill, which involved the use of text in social context or known as genre. Curriculum development is almost similar with a type of language approaches called Genre Based Approach, but it is only in some particular aspects.

Mauchlan (2005) states that genre are categories of discourse that share certain purpose and characteristics, procedure or contents confer regularity on the way the text is presented and make communicative goal for the students. There are twelve texts that are used in curriculum 2004 and KTSP for Senior High School for English subject; Descriptive, Recount/spoof, Analytical Exposition, Hortatory Exposition, Report, Anecdote, Discussion, Review, Explanation, Procedure, News Item, and Narrative. These genres are followed by some standard competencies for all skills. According to the curriculum, standard competency of English subject at senior high school for writing skill is telling various meanings from various short and simple essay of functional in form of recount, narrative, procedure, descriptive, news item, spoof, report, analytical exposition, hortatory exposition, explanation, discussion, and review in daily life context.

In order to achieve this standard competency of writing, the teacher is expected to be creative in designing various classroom activities. Brown (2004) suggests that there are four types of writing activities; imitative writing,

intensive (controlled) writing, responsive writing, and extensive writing. They are briefly explained as the following:

1. **Imitative Writing**

   This type includes the ability to spell correctly. The students have to attain skills in the fundamental, basic tasks of writing letters, words, punctuation, and very brief sentences.

2. **Intensive (Controlled) Writing**

   In this type, most assessment tasks are more concerned with a focus on form, and are rather strictly controlled by the text design. The students have to attain skills in producing appropriate vocabulary within a context, collocation, idioms, and correct grammatical features up to the length of a sentence.

3. **Responsive Writing**

   This type requires the students to perform a limited discourse level, creating logically connected sequence of two or three paragraphs. It is more focused on the discourse conventions that will achieve the objectives of the written text. It has a strong emphasize on context and meaning.

4. **Extensive Writing**

   Extensive writing implies successful management of all the process and strategies of writing of all purposes, such as an essay, a term paper, a thesis, etc. The writer focus on achieving a purpose, organizing and developing ideas logically, using details to illustrates ideas, demonstrating syntactic and lexical varieties, and so on.

   By concerning the standard competency of writing for English subject in KTSP, and types of writing activities explained before, responsive writing is the most suitable type of writing activity to be applied in senior high school. It fulfills what the standard competency expects from the senior high school students in writing performance. Based on *Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Nasional No. 41 tahun 2007 tentang Standar Proses untuk Satuan Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah*, the teaching and learning process in Junior and Senior High School is covered by three steps; Pre Activity, Whilst Activity and Post

Activity. They are explained as the following:

1. Pre Activity

Pre activity is an early activity of learning process which is purposed to increase students' motivation and focus their attention thus they can participate actively during teaching and learning process. In this stage, teacher prepares the students for the learning process physically and mentally. Moreover, the teacher tries to explore the students' background knowledge which has correlation to the topic. In building their background knowledge the teacher can discuss or give some questions which are related to the topic. The teacher also explains to the students about the basic competencies they should acquire in learning process.

2. Whilst Activity

Whilst activity is a learning process purposed to accomplish the basic competencies. The learning process is done by interacting, inspirating, enjoyable, challenging, motivating students to actively participate, and giving enough space for idea, creativity and independency based on their talent,

and physical and psychological development. In this stage, the method used is based on students' characteristics and the subject that is being taught. It consists of exploration process, elaboration process, and confirmation process.

a. Exploration

In this activity, a teacher:

1) involves the students to find a large amount of information related to the topic/theme of their learning material.

2) uses various learning approach, learning media, and other sources.

3) facilitates the interaction among the students, between students and teacher, students and the environment, and other learning sources.

4) involves the students in each learning activity; and

5) facilitates the students to do any experiment at laboratory, studio, or at the field.

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b. *Elaboration*

In this activity, a teacher:

1) makes the students get used to various reading and writing activities by giving certain meaningful tasks.

2) facilitates students by giving some assignments, discussion, and other activities which are purposed to emerge new ideas, both oral and written.

3) provides the students with the opportunity to think, analyze, solve any problems, and act without fear.

4) facilitates the students in cooperative and collaborative learning.

5) facilitates the students to create a fair competition in order to improve learning achievement.

6) facilitates the students to write exploration report both oral and written, both individual and groups.

7) facilitates the students to present their individual and group report.

8) facilitates the students to arrange a show, tournament, festival, and the product they have produced.

9) facilitates the students to do activity which can rise their pride and self confidence.

c. *Confirmation*

In this activity, a teacher:

1) provides a positive feedback and emphasizing through oral, written, sign, or even gifts to students' achievements

2) gives confirmation towards the result of students' exploration and elaboration from various sources.

3) facilitates students to do a reflection in order to gain learning experience which they have done.

4) facilitates the students to gain the meaningful experience in order to attain basic competencies:

   a. The teacher has to be a resource and facilitator in order to answer, by using polite and formal language, the questions from the student who has some difficulties.

   b. The teacher solves the problem

   c. The teacher provides a reference for the students to check their exploration.

   d. The teacher gives information for further exploration.

   e. The teacher gives motivation for those who do not participate or do not have enough participation.

3. Post Activity

Post Activity is an activity purposed to end the teaching and learning activity which can be done through creating summary or conclusion, assessment and reflection, feedback, and follow up activity.

Therefore, teaching writing in senior high school, as well as teaching other skills in English subject, involves some texts which are expected to help the students during learning activity. Each text is taught through three distinct steps, pre activity, whilst activity, and post activity.

Narrative Text

Narrative text is a kind of text that has to be taught at Senior High School based on the KTSP or School Based Curriculum. It is a text that aims at retelling events or activities that happened in the past which is intended to entertain the readers or listeners. Moreover, narrative text describes a sequence of events. To comprehend a narrative text, the reader has to know the idea, a point to develop an idea and a series of event.

In addition, Brereton (1992) adds that the story of a narrative itself has to have a purpose, some plans and some ends in view. The characteristic of a good narration are telling an exciting story, illustrate a point about human nature, and show how an experience dramatically changes someone's life.[17] According to Derewianka (1991), there

are several characteristic of narrative text:

1. Purpose (Social Function)

    The purpose of narratives is to entertain, to teach or inform, to embody the writer's reflections on experience, and to nourish and extend the reader's imagination.

2. Text Organization

    a) Orientation: set the scene and introduces the participants

    b) Complication: problem arise

    c) Resolution : the problem is resolved for better or worst

3. Language Features

    a) Specific, often individual participants with defined identities. Major participants are human, or sometimes animals with human characteristics

    b) Mainly action verbs (material processes), but also many verbs which refer to what human participants said, or felt, or thought (verbal and mental processes).

    c) Normally past tense

    d) Many linking words to do in time.

    e) Dialogue often included, during which the tense may change to the present or future.

    f) Descriptive language chosen to enhance and develop the story by creating images in the reader's mind.

    g) Can be written in the first person (I, we) or third person (he, she, they)

    Basically, the characteristics of narrative text that have been described by either Derewianka, or Gerot and Wignell are similar, specifically for the purpose or social function of narrative and its language features. The only characteristic of narrative text which is different between those experts is the generic structure or text organization of narrative. Gerot and Wignell add evaluation and reorientation in their generic structure of narrative.

    Thus, the generic structure or the text organization of narrative used in this paper is consists of orientation, complication, and resolution. This text organization is chosen because it is commonly occurred in most narrative texts used in school. Furthermore, the social function and language features of

narrative text used in this paper are basically same with those experts.

Story Circle

Story circle, or some called this technique as circle writing, is another technique for writing skill which involves groups of students and having them writing a story in a circle by passing their papers to the student next to them after writing a sentence on the paper they have in front of them.

Hermer (2007) describes story circle as a writing activity in which each student in the group has a piece of paper on which they write the first line of a story which the teacher dictates to them. Then, they have to write the next sentence. After that, they pass their papers to the person next to them, and they write the next sentence of the story they now have in front of them. They then pass the paper to the next student and again write the next sentence of the new story they have now. In the end, when the papers get back to their original owners, those students write the conclusion.

Based on the concept of this technique, the written text is generated by making students to adapt the ideas that have been stated by their friends before. Welch (2004) states that the concept of circle writing is a collaborative writing activity where the students add each other's ideas by partially written stories from student to student, and ideas are generated as students adapt to each new paper. In other words, students' creativity in this writing technique becomes so important in order to produce ideas as well as written text. They are not allowed to write the same sentences for each paper. Thus, they have to read their friends' sentences that have already written on the page before they write the sequence.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that story circle is a writing activity where students sit and work together in a circle, passing their paper after write their own sentences, and adding the next sentence on the paper they have in front of them. It is not merely adding some same sentences for each paper, but students should creatively write the next sentence by adapting the ideas that has been written by their friends before.

In this study, the procedure of Story Circle applied is adapted from

Harmer's Story Circle. Generally, students still follow steps explained before. However, the writer tries to adapt the Harmer's Story Circle by adding and omitting some steps. For example, the writer omits the steps that the teacher dictates the first line of the story, and adds a step that the teacher read aloud a story for the students twice. Moreover, students are not going to write a new story, but they are asked to write a new version of the story they heard from the teacher before.

DISCUSSION

Teaching Writing Narrative by Using Story Circle

To get the better result of teaching writing through Story Circle technique, the teacher needs to set the classroom procedure. The classroom procedures should include three activities of presentation of material in writing. The activities are Pre activities, whilst activities, and post activities.

Procedure of Teaching Writing Narrative by Using Story Circle

There are three steps in teaching writing through Story Circle technique.

They are Pre activity, whilst activity and Post activity.

a. Pre Activity

This activity aims at helping the students to recall the background knowledge related to the topic or problem they are going to discuss and also to motivate the students to study. It also improves the students' idea about what they are going to write.

There are several activities in pre activity:

1. The teacher stimulates students' background knowledge by asking some questions:

    a. Do you like reading a story such as fairy tales or legends?

    b. What is your favorite story?

3. The teacher divides the students into several groups, this step is intended to form several group of students for discussion session and story circle/circle writing. Each group consists of five to ten students. The teacher gathers them around a large table or pulls desks into a circle.

4. After asking students about narrative text, the teacher tells

them a story that is new for them. The story can be a legend, fairy tale, or fable from another country. For example, teacher can tell the story of "One Inch Boy", a fairy tales from Japan. The teacher tells the story twice. A sample of text:
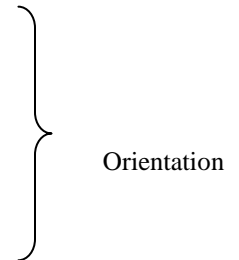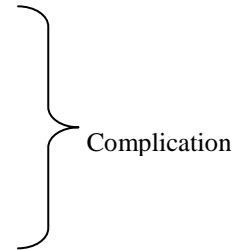
One Inch Boy

Long time ago, in Japan, there was an old couple that wished for a child. They wished for a child of any kind, even if he was only an inch tall, and their wish was granted. They got a child and sure enough he grew no taller than one inch. They named him Issun-Boshi

Orientation
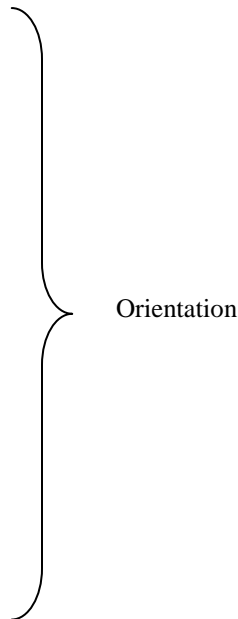
which meant One Inch Boy

One day Issun-Boshi decided he wanted to see the world. His parents wanted Issun-Boshi to have a fun life so they gave him a bowl, chopsticks and a needle he could use as a sword and waved goodbye. When Issun-Boshi came to the city, he was taken into care of a nobleman and was a servant for the princess.

Complication

Orientation

Issun-Boshi and the princes became good friends. One day on their way back from a nearby temple, they were stopped by a large green

demon called an oni. The princess thought she was doomed for surely she could not be saved by a one inch boy. But the one inch boy acted quickly. He climbed the oni quickly and poked it in the tongue with his sword. Issun-Boshi jumped from the demon's mouth just before it turned and ran.

Complication

The princess was saved! Then she made a wish. "I wish for Issun-Boshi to grow tall." The princess squeezed her eyes shut and then opened them again. But the boy was still one inch tall. Then slowly, inch by inch, Issun- Bosh grew taller until he was the size of a full

Resolution

grown man. Issun-Boshi and the princess were married and they lived together happily for the rest of their lives,each over five feet tall.

Taken from:

http://www.legendsoftheeast.com

5. When the teacher tells the story for the first time, students are asked to listen to the main ideas. Then, when the teacher tells the story for the second time, students are asked to jot down important words in order to help them to remember the sequence and language features of the story. They should be reminded not to write detailed notes from the story they heard.

6. Then, the teacher asks the students some questions and let them find the answers in their group discussion, for example:

    a. Have you ever read or heard about the story told just now?

b. What is the suitable title for the story?

c. Who are involved in the story?

d. Where did it take place?

e. What happened to the character(s)? What happened next?

f. What happened to the character(s) in the end of the story?

These questions are given in order to make the students analyze the story they have been told before carefully. Thus, the teacher can find out whether the students understand the story.

7. Then, the teacher writes down the titles given by the groups on the black/whiteboard.

8. After writing the titles, the teacher asks the students to read those titles and asks them to pick one title which is considered as the best one to be the title for their story.

9. After that, the teacher teaches the students about narrative text. Teacher explains the social functional, generic structure and language features of narrative text.

b. Whilst Activity

This activity can be done in team or group working. In whilst activities, the students should follow these procedures:

1. The teacher asks the students to sit on circle desks of their groups and asks each of them to prepare a piece of paper.

2. The teacher explains the concept of story circle/circle writing where they will add other students' ideas by passing their written story to the student next to them. Moreover, the teacher also explains that they will write a narrative text, using the text organization (orientation, complication and resolution), and language features. If necessary, they can use the notes they have as the guidance or help them to generate language features. In addition, the teacher asks the students to write a new version of the story they heard before. They are allowed to

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change the complication and the resolution of the story.

3. The teacher and students discuss the rules of story circle. Each student will start the story by writing two lines on their own paper. The next sentence is not added before passing to the next student, on their left side. Each student will add another two lines. It continues around the circle until every student has contributed to each story.

4. The teacher begins the activity by instructing each student to write down their name at top of the page. Then, teacher lets students having adequate times to write the first two lines on their papers.

5. Later, the teacher asks them to stop by saying "Finish the sentence you are working on, and then lay your pencils down. You are going to pass your papers to the person on your right. Write another sentence that continues the story. This time, however, your sentence should make sense with what has

already been written on the paper you get."

6. As they have their friends' papers, the teacher encourages students to first read what is on the page, and then continue the story. Moreover, the teacher encourages originality and creativity. It is possible that some students have a tendency to add the same line to each page without consideration for the individual story. The teacher suggests that students respect the words already on the page and that they contribute as best as they can.

7. After that, they pass the paper to the next student and again write the next sentence of the story they have.

8. When the papers get back to their original owners, those students write the resolution of the story.

9. The teacher asks a student from each group to read the story they have, and compare the story they have made with the original story. Then, the teacher and

students discuss the difficulties they have during writing activity.

c. Post Activity

In the post activities, the teacher asks students to check and fix any mistakes in their story. After finishing the text, the teacher collects those writing which is considered as the best one from each group. Finally, teacher gives reward to the group who has a good writing.

THE ADVANTAGES OF USING STORY CIRCLE TECHNIQUE

There are some advantages in using Story Circle as a technique in teaching writing:

a. Story Circle can help students to put their ideas down in simplest way because students only have to adapt the ideas that their friends have already made before.

b. Story Circle inspires creativity in students as the writers of all age and experience because they are free to generate ideas in different perspectives after reading their friends' writings.

c. Story Circle enhances storytelling skills and an understanding of narrative structure.

d. For all students, this technique is more fun, exciting, and lots of laughs because the story that they made together.

e. This technique can help teacher to build positive relationship among students because it involves the whole class cooperation to accomplish the task.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS
CONCLUSIONS

In this study, writer has described one of language teaching techniques for writing skill called Story Circle. It is a technique in which each student has a piece of paper in front of them on which they write the first lines of the story they have heard before. Then, they pass the paper to the person on their left side, and they write the next sentence of the story they have in front of them right now. The process continues until the papers get back to

their original owners, and they write the resolution of the story.

It is expected that this technique can help students in generating ideas in writing and make them get used to writing activity through a simple and interesting way. Meanwhile, the students are enjoying the activity, they also experience writing in the same time. Moreover, Story Circle inspires creativity in students as the writers of all age and experience because they are free to generate ideas in different perspectives after reading their friends' writings. Finally, this technique can help teacher to build a positive relationship among the students since it involves the whole class cooperation to accomplish the task.

SUGGESTIONS

From the conclusion above, it is suggested to English teacher to apply this technique in teaching writing. It is expected that this technique can help the students to solve problem in writing, provides them with another experience of writing, and guide them to be a good writer. Furthermore, it helps students to generate ideas into a good text.

The writer suggests that during applying Story Circle, teacher should monitor students writing since there is a possibility that they write the same lines for each paper. Teacher can emphasize that they have to write by using their own words in order to keep the students to be creative and respect to their friends creativity. Finally, it is necessary for teacher to have some applicable and interesting techniques in order to improve students writing skill as well as to gain their interest in writing.

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