“ENHANCING STUDENTS’ WRITING SKILL THROUGH INTERACTIVE WRITING”

Isna Ningtyas Soduwuh, Muhammad Asrori, Hefy Sulistyawati
English Education Department of Teacher Training and Education Faculty
Sebelas Maret University
Email: isnaningtyass@gmail.com

Abstract
This study was aimed to (1) investigate whether and to what extent interactive writing can improve students’ writing skill (2) describe the classroom situation during the implementation of interactive writing in the writing class. This classroom action research was organized in two cycles. Each cycle comprised planning, acting, observing and reflecting. The qualitative data were gained through observations, surveys, and interviews. The quantitative data were gained by assessing the students’ writing skill through tests. Some findings were obtained from this research. First, implementing interactive writing was able to improve students’ writing skill. It was proved by the increase of the students mean score from 64.18 to 72.45 in cycle 1 and 79.70 in cycle 2. Besides, the improvement of students’ writing skill included the improvement of all aspects of writing. Second, implementing interactive writing in the writing class brought better changes dealing with the classroom situation. It promoted the classroom interaction and students’ participation. Furthermore, there were teacher’s supports during implementation of interactive writing. Last, the writing class was more enjoyable that affected to the students’ motivation during writing class.

Keywords: writing skill, interactive writing, teaching writing, classroom action research

Abstrak

Kata kunci: kemampuan menulis, interactive writing, menagajar menulis, penelitian tindakan kelas
Writing is one of the focuses of English lesson besides reading, listening and speaking. Writing is the way of making one’s thought visible to the world (Wagner: 2002, 6). According to Carrasquillo (1994: 76), writing is a highly personal activity in which the students convey ideas in written form and as social action that carry out a particular social function. Thus, in other words, teaching writing to students is also a way for teacher to promote students’ good communication skill.

Additionally, Manchon (2009: 86) acknowledges that writing involves both conceptual and linguistic processing. Writing can be perceived as a tool for language learning. It is because when students write, they will activate their prior knowledge of what they learned in their reading or listening activity related to the linguistics concerning to grammar, vocabulary, spelling, et cetera. In this case, writing gives students the chance to apply their linguistics knowledge. Thus, teaching writing to the students will reinforce their language acquisition.

Supported by explanations above, thus, writing is considered as a skill that must be taught and practiced by the students. In teaching learning process of English lesson, writing should not be ignored and abandoned by the teacher. It needs to be encouraged and nurtured during teaching learning process aiming to generate students with good writing skill.

Students’ writing skill, definitely, has significant influence to the quality of their writing whether the message is written effectively, and understandable by the readers. Ideally, the students who have good writing skill have knowledge of how to generate the ideas, organize the ideas sequentially, use correct diction, construct correct sentence structure, and use proper mechanic (includes punctuation, spelling and capitalization) in writing. Mastering the knowledge above will enable the students to have good writing skill.

In fact, finding students with low writing skill was a common phenomenon. Based on the preliminary research by conducting an observation in class X MIA 1 of SMA Batik 2 Surakarta, the researcher found that the students had low writing skill. Furthermore, the researcher found that the students always needed much more time in writing and they seemed confused of what to write and how to start it.
Next, the survey results through questionnaire showed that over 75% of the students found writing difficult and needed much more time to finish their writing. Meanwhile, concerning to the students’ writing skill the researcher found that 76% of the students had problems in grammar and text organization, over 55% of the students had problems in generating the ideas to be written and in using correct diction, and 30% of the students had problems in mechanic.

The students’ low writing skill can also be seen from the mean score of their pre-test, which was 64.18. It was below the standard score called by the school, which is 75. Furthermore, after analyzing their writing in pre-test, it was seen that: (1) The ideas of their writing was not connected and their writing lacked of logical sequencing and development. (2) The students made frequent mistakes in diction. In some cases, the meaning was confusing or obscuring. (3) Their writing that had limited knowledge of subject and little substance. (4) There were frequent mistakes in run on sentences, tense, article, agreement, and preposition. In addition, there were frequent deletions on their writing. (5) There were occasional errors of spelling, punctuation and capitalization as well as paragraphing.

Next, concerning to teaching writing, a teacher has a crucial role in the classroom as a facilitator in providing an environment that is conducive (Gray in Olson, 1987: 2). In other words, the teacher needs to provide writing activities that is interactive for the students in order to make conducive classroom situation. Furthermore, a teacher needs to facilitate the students in writing composition as the concept of writing as a process. The teacher should concern more to the scope that writing is perceived as a process rather than as a product. Teaching the students a step-by-step procedure in writing process will help the them lead to the completion of a piece of writing (Caswell and Mahler, 2004: 4).

In fact, the teacher did not provide writing activities that is interactive for the students. The teaching learning tended to be monotonous since it was teacher-centered. The teacher did not use particular strategy in teaching writing that motivated and engaged the students more in writing class. Furthermore, the teacher did not facilitate students in writing composition as the concept of writing as a
process. The teacher did not give enough supports during writing class that enables the students to be aware on aspects of writing that must be concerned in writing.

In relation to the state of students’ writing skill and classroom situation by concerning to the causes of it as explained above, a proper strategy of teaching writing can be implemented such as interactive writing. According to Callella & Jordano (2002: 4), in the process of interactive writing, every student is given opportunity to apply what he or she knows about language and builds on their prior knowledge. Students have an active role in the writing process as the teacher scaffolds the learning. In addition, Lacina and Silva (2011: 133). The teacher scaffolds instruction to help the students to solve the problem encountered by them.

During interactive writing, scaffoldings that are given personally to the students is more effective than giving it to the whole class. It is because the students will be engaged more to teacher’s scaffoldings. They found it as an obligatory to listen well to the teacher’s scaffoldings. Furthermore, giving scaffoldings personally to the students during interactive writing can be varied and can be adapted to the students’ need. Besides, teacher’s scaffolding can be used as reinforcement to students’ learning in writing composition.

Besides, as the students take turns to compose a text in interactive writing, it engages the learners a little better. The learners who are daydreaming before had become more focused because they had a tool to help them learn how to read and write better. They had become active participants in the learning process (Pappas & Raymond, 2011: 246).

Interactive writing can also be a valuable instructional method that greatly not only does it engage the learners, but it also improves their language development, writing, and spelling skills. Concerning to the learners, they have observed by implementing interactive writing continuously, the learners’ vocabulary, grammar, and writing skill as well as their confidence increase (Petterson, Schaler, and Clemens, 2008: 496).

Concerning to the implementation of interactive writing in this study, the researcher modified it into four sessions:
1. The teacher provides an experience on through a video. Then, the teacher facilitates a conversation with the whole class to discuss the topic and the outline of their writing. It is also helpful for students to have a brainstorming (establishing the topic session).

2. The teacher demands them to make a draft in groups (drafting session).

3. The teacher invites the group one by one to take turn write their sentence(s). Continuing the previous sentence, the teacher scaffolds them dealing with the nature of text being learnt, aspects to be concerned during writing, and revision on their sentence(s). The teacher is allowed to give further needed explanations (constructing text session).

4. The teacher reads aloud the text after the completion of the text. Then, the teacher revises the whole text dealing with the aspects of writing. Alternatively, the teacher leads the students to revise the text. At the same time, the teacher can give needed explanation about aspects to be concerned in writing. Last, the teacher asks the students to copy the text having been constructed on their book (revising session).

Due to this, the research was aimed to (1) investigate whether and to what extent interactive writing improve students’ writing skill (2) describe the classroom situation during the implementation of interactive writing in writing class.

**RESEARCH METHODS**

This study applied a classroom action research. Tomal (2003: 5) states that “action research is a systematic process in solving educational problems and making improvements”. Action research is more focused to improvement within the context of study.

The model of action as it is proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (in Burns, 1999: 32) involves four essential steps: (1) Planning (analyzing the findings of pre-research, making lesson plan covering the steps in doing the action of teaching and learning process, preparing the material as well as the students’ worksheet and students’ handout used during the implementation of interactive writing and post-test, preparing the scoring rubric, and preparing tools used for observing); (2) Implementing the action (interactive writing was implemented); (3) Observing (note
taking dealing with the process of teaching learning); (4) Reflecting (analyzing the data obtained as well as the strengths and the weaknesses of the implementation of interactive writing).

This study was conducted at SMA Batik 2 Surakarta. The subject of the research was the students of class X MIA 1 of SMA Batik 2 Surakarta in academic year of 2014-2015. This class consisted of 33 students. There were 18 female students and 15 male students. It was conducted from January to August 2015 and consisted of two cycle.

Both qualitative and quantitative data were used in this study. The qualitative data were gained from observations, surveys, and interviews. It was analyzed by using framework from McKernan (1996) as adapted in Burns (1999: 157). Those processes are: (1) assembling the data, (2) coding the data, (3) comparing the data, (4) building interpretation, (5) reporting the outcome. Meanwhile, the quantitative data were gained from the tests and analyzed by using descriptive statistics.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

First, dealing with the students’ writing skill, there was improvement on the mean score of the students’ writing. Table 1 shows the mean score of pre-test, post-test 1 and post-test 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 The Students’ Mean Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test 2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The improvement of students’ writing covered all aspects of writing that can be shown in the chart 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart 1 The students’ mean score of the aspects of writing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PreTest</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dealing with the improvement of the students’ writing skill, thus, it can be summarized as in the table 2.

Table 2 The Research Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point</th>
<th>Before Research</th>
<th>After Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Content</td>
<td>• Their writing lacked of knowledge related to topic.</td>
<td>• The ideas were in adequate range.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Their writing had little substance.</td>
<td>• Some of the students’ writing had limited development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Their writing were rarely developed that can be seen on their writing which</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lacked of adequate development of topic.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Organization</td>
<td>• Their writing lacked of cohesive devices.</td>
<td>• The students were able to organize the ideas better than before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• It was logical but incomplete sequence</td>
<td>• However, in some cases, it was loosely organized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Their writing lacked of logical sequencing and development.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Vocabulary</td>
<td>• Some of the students had limited range of vocabulary.</td>
<td>• It had adequate range.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The students made mistakes in diction.</td>
<td>• The students made occasional errors of word choice as well as words usage,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• In some cases, the meaning was confusing or obscuring.</td>
<td>but the meaning was not obscuring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Grammar</td>
<td>• The students made mistakes in run on sentences, tense, article, agreement,</td>
<td>• The students made several errors of tense, word order, article but the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and preposition</td>
<td>meaning was seldom obscuring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• There were some deletions on their writing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Mechanics</td>
<td>• There were occasional errors of spelling, punctuation and capitalization as</td>
<td>• The students demonstrated mastery of conventions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>well as paragraphing, but meaning was not obscuring.</td>
<td>The students made few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization as well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>as paragraphing, but meaning was not obscuring.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Second, dealing with the classroom situation, based on the reflection in the cycle 1 and 2, there were some changes dealing with classroom situation that were presented in the table 3.

Table 3 The Research Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before Research</th>
<th>After Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. There was poor teacher’s support during writing class.</td>
<td>1. There were rich teacher’s supports during writing class, as in establishing the topic, constructing text, and revising session of interactive writing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The students were passive. Teaching learning process tended to be teacher-centered.</td>
<td>2. The students were active. The students highly participated during interactive writing as in constructing text session. The students were engaged to the teaching learning process. The teaching learning tended to be student-centered.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. There was poor classroom interaction.                      3. The classroom interaction was higher. The interaction included the students to the students as well as the students to the researcher. It can be seen during establishing the topic, constructing, and revising session of interactive writing.

4. Writing class was monotonous. Some students seemed not being interested to write. 4. Writing class was more enjoyable. Students seemed being more interested to write.

The changes of classroom situation which were obtained from observation was supported by the results of survey of post-research. Based on the results of the questionnaire, 97% students agreed that teacher provided scaffoldings to the students during the implementation of interactive writing. Next, dealing with the students’ activeness in the process of teaching learning, 93.9% of the students agreed that during the implementation of interactive writing, they actively participated as in the *constructing text session* in which the students took turn to compose a text. What is more, the entire students declared that during the implementation of interactive writing, the classroom interaction the students to the students as well as the students to the teacher were better. Last, 97% of the students agreed that implementing interactive writing altered the writing class more enjoyable.

*Third*, it is related to difficulty encountered in implementing interactive writing class. As in *interactive writing—constructing text session*, in which the students took turn to compose text with the scaffolding given by the researcher, the class started to be noisy. It happened as the researcher concerned only on the group taking turn to compose a text, particularly in giving scaffoldings and needed explanation to them. This difficulty is a part of the weakness of interactive writing.

1. **The implementation of interactive writing can enhance the students’ writing skill**

The findings of the research showed that the implementation of interactive writing in the writing class was able to enhance the students’ writing skill. The improvement of students’ writing skill was proved by the improvement of the mean scores. Besides, the improvement of students writing skill involved the improvement of all aspects of writing covering content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanic.
As the principle of interactive writing as it is acknowledged by Jordan and Callella (2002) as well as Lacina and Silva (2011), the students take turn to compose a text with the help of teacher’s supports in the form of scaffoldings. Scaffolding is a teaching technique including responsive conversation, open-ended questions, and encouragement for students to verbalize their thinking. It provides the students with verbal assistance and promotes discovery based on their level of sophistication. Next, according to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2004), scaffolding can be given in the forms of questioning, prompting and probing, providing reminders, giving clear step-by-step instruction, and demonstrating.

Dealing with the implementation of interactive writing in this research, it was modified into four sessions: establishing the topic session, drafting session, constructing text session, and revising session. In establishing the topic session, the students took a note dealing with the topic. This session was designed to facilitate pre-writing activity, assisting the students to get ideas before writing. Soter and Hawisher (1990: 149) argue that because of the existence between planning and writing, based on the Cognitive Process theory by Flower and Hayes, a teacher is encouraged to foster pre-writing in their students’ writing. Providing pre-writing activity, as the starting point of establishing the topic session, the video was played. Then, the researcher facilitated a conversation with the whole class to discuss the topic with the help of picture series as in the student’s worksheet. In addition, the researcher led a discussion with the students in getting the meaning of vocabularies list in their worksheet.

This session was followed by drafting session in which the students made draft in pairs as in the first cycle and in groups as in the second cycle. Drafting session was purposed to facilitate the students to prepare the students for the next session, which was constructing text session. Grouping the students whether in pairs or groups eased the students during drafting. It enabled them to help each other dealing with the problems encountered during writing. Furthermore, it enabled them to learn from each other. Besides, the groups existing would work together in the next session, constructing text session.
Following this session, constructing text session was conducted. In this session, the students had an active role by taking turn to compose a text as the researcher scaffolded them. In addition, the students practiced what they had learnt and known dealing with the language. It was in line with Calella and Jordano (2002: 4) who argue that in the process of interactive writing, every student is given opportunity to apply what he or she knows about language and builds on their prior knowledge. Besides, according to Sears (1998: 155), it allowed the students to experience in constructing a piece of English writing in a supportive context and enabled the students who less experienced in creating an original piece of writing to observe the step-by-step process involved in writing. In this session, the groups would take turn to compose a text. In the first cycle, a group of two students voluntarily took turn in this session. Conversely, in the second cycle, a group of four students took turn to compose the text based on the order. Grouping the students provided the wider chance to the students in participating constructing text session.

Next, dealing with scaffoldings which were given by the researcher while the students were writing, giving scaffoldings personally to small group of students; it is more effective than giving scaffoldings to the whole class. The students focused and engaged more to teacher’s scaffoldings. They found it as an obligatory to listen well to teacher’ scaffoldings. Furthermore, scaffoldings given personally to the students during interactive writing can be adapted to the students’ need. Lacina and Silva (2011: 132) argue that teacher scaffolds instruction is to help the students in solving the problem encountered by them.

Scaffolding the students, the researcher started to scaffold the students dealing with the nature of explanation text covering the generic structure, language feature of explanation text, and the sentences that would be typed by concerning to nature of explanation text, which part of the text they should focus on. In addition, in this session, the researcher was permitted to give her support by giving scaffoldings dealing with the aspects of writing such as content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanic. In this case, the scaffoldings given by the researcher might be varied one to another based on the
scaffolding needed by the students. In addition, the scaffoldings given were based on the problems encountered by them. It helped and assisted the students in overcoming problems having been found by them. In addition, during this session, the researcher was also able to give needed explanation to the students. Besides, during this session, the researcher was given a chance to give the direct feedbacks on what they write. The feedbacks were dealing with the mistakes they made. The students who did not pay attention to the written feedback given by the teacher to their writing, this session provided a chance to them to be more engaged to the feedbacks which were directly given by the researcher.

Teacher’s scaffolding can be used as reinforcement to students’ learning on writing composition. Through scaffolding given by the teacher, the students were able to learn and internalize writing composition and the strategy of learning from the scaffoldings given by the researcher. According to Callella and Jordano (2002: 3), interactive writing also helps the teacher give them skill and strategies to use.

What is more, as the researcher gave scaffoldings to the students dealing with the aspects of writing as well as the nature of the text to be learnt, that was explanation text; it made the students to be more aware of the aspects of writing and the nature of the text during writing. As the students took turn to write in participating this session, it engaged more the students to the process of writing itself. Callella and Jordano (2002: 3) point out that in interactive writing; the students become more aware to what they write while working together with their teacher. Furthermore, it enabled the researcher to teach the students dealing with the use of punctuation, tenses, and capital letter. It is in line with Sears (1998: 155) that it allows the teacher to explain and model the use of punctuation and capital letter in meaningful contexts as well as introduce the students the use of tenses in meaningful contexts.

Last, at the end of the implementation interactive writing, in revising session, the researcher gave feedbacks to the text having been constructed by the students. The feedbacks were focused on the aspects of writing. In addition, the researcher was able to give a review of the nature of the text being taught,
that was explanation text. The researcher was given a chance to give needed explanation dealing with the text having been constructed.

Particularly, concerning on the discussions above, thus, interactive writing had advantages on the improvement of students’ writing skill since interactive writing provided chance to the students to practice about language during writing composition as the teacher gave scaffoldings. In addition, it provided pre-writing, drafting, writing, and revising activity.

2. The classroom situation during the implementation of interactive writing in the writing class

Implementing interactive writing in the writing class changed the classroom situation into the better one. As the principle of interactive, as it is stated by Lacina and Silva (2011: 132) the teacher scaffolds instruction by helping the students in solving the problem encountered by them during interactive writing. In interactive writing, teacher supports students and corrects the mechanical errors they make (Tompkins, 2003: 371). In this researcher, the researcher who played role as a teacher was given a chance to give her support as a teacher during writing class as in each procedure of interactive writing as in establishing the topic session, drafting session, constructing text session and revising session by giving needed explanation and scaffoldings. It enabled the teacher to assist the students in the writing composition as in constructing text session by giving scaffoldings.

In addition, the students’ participation was higher since the teaching learning process tended to be student-centered. The students were given a chance to participate during composing text as in constructing text session. It is in line with Callella and Jordano (2002: 4); who state that interactive writing increases class participation in the act of writing. The students had become active participants in the learning process (Pappas & Raymond, 2011: 246).

Furthermore, the classroom interaction was more dynamic than before. Malamah-Thomas (1987: 7) argues that interaction means acting reciprocally or acting upon each other. In this case, classroom interaction includes the students talk and teacher talk. During this research as in drafting session of interactive
writing, in which the students made draft in group, the students started by
talking one to another to discuss dealing with the ideas to be written. What is
more, the interaction that was established in the classroom between a teacher
and the students in which the teacher gave scaffoldings to the group of students
in *constructing text session* of interactive writing as well as the students’
responding to the teacher’s scaffolding were more intensive. It is similar to
Hong Xu (2010: 212) stating that in interactive writing, there is much
interaction between the teacher and the students as well as the students and their
peer. However, the researcher’s talk and the students’ talk were established in
mother tongue due to the students’ competency in English.

Last, the implementation of interactive writing in writing brought good
influence to the students’ motivation during writing class. The students seemed
more motivated during writing class since the writing class was more enjoyable
since the students took an active role during the writing class. It is similar to
Andriyani (2012: 62) having conducted a study that interactive writing gave
positive influence upon the students’ motivation.

Additionally, based on the discussions above, it could be seen that
implementing interactive writing had advantages on the classroom situation: (1)
it promoted the classroom interaction and students’ participation; (2) there were
rich teacher’s supports; (3) the writing class was more enjoyable that affected
to the students’ motivation during writing class. In other side, implementing
interactive writing in the class had a weakness as the students started to be noisy
as in the *constructing text session*. It happened as the researcher concerned only
in giving scaffolding and needed explanation.

**CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

As the principle of interactive writing, it allowed the students to take an
active role to take turn in composing the text as in *constructing text session* of
interactive writing. Furthermore, it allowed the teacher to give her support in
teaching writing, as she gives scaffolding to the students when they took turn to
write. The scaffoldings given were dealing with the aspects of writing as well as the
nature of the text to be learnt. Furthermore, the scaffoldings given by the teacher
might be varied one to another based on the scaffoldings needed by the students. The scaffoldings given were based on the problems encountered by them. In addition, interactive writing enabled the teacher to give needed explanation to the students.

*First,* implementing interactive writing in writing class were able to enhance the students’ writing skill. It could be seen from the students mean score which increased from 64.18 to 72.45 in cycle 1 and 79.70 in cycle 2. Implementing interactive writing was able to improve the students’ skill in generating the ideas, organizing the ideas, and using correct vocabulary as well as grammar and mechanics. The improvement of these skills could be seen from the improvement of each aspect of writing. *Second,* implementing interactive writing in the writing class brought better changes dealing with the classroom situation. It promoted the classroom interaction as the interaction between the students to students as well as the students to the teacher. Furthermore, interactive writing allowed the teacher to give her support as giving them scaffoldings. Besides, it promoted the students to be more active since interactive writing was students-centered. The students were engaged more during writing class. Last, the writing class was more enjoyable that impacted to the students’ motivation during writing class. However, during the implementation of interactive writing, particularly in constructing text session, in some cases, the students started to be noisy. It happened as the researcher concerned only in giving scaffolding and needed explanation. This situation indicated it was as a part of the weakness of interactive writing.

Additionally, dealing with the weakness of interactive writing having been figured out, the researcher suggests to English teachers to concern more in managing the classroom aiming to make the class to be more conducive during the implementation of interactive writing. Next, the researcher suggests the students to pay attention to the teacher’s explanation as well as teacher’s instruction during teaching learning process. Besides, the researcher suggests schools to establish the environment to be comfortable for students to learn. Last, other researchers are encouraged to conduct classroom action research aiming to enhance students’ writing skill using a different technique, media, and medium.


