

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHING CREATIVE WRITING USING CINQUAIN POETRY

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ABSTRACT

This article aims at describing the effectiveness of teaching creative writing using cinquain poetry. The research was conducted at Lia Stephanie Elementary School. The students were given a pre-test, three time meetings, and a post-test. To figure out the significant difference between students' pre-test and post-test, research used 'Descriptive Qualitative Analysis' since this analysis could describe the facts found during the research and it could also explain whether the aim of this research was achieved or not. In addition, this research also observed the students during the process of learning in order to find out students' response toward the Cinquain poetry technique. Finally, the teaching creative writing using cinquain poetry was proved to be an effective medium at Elementary School.

Keywords: *teaching creative writing, creative writing, Cinguain poetry*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian dilaksanakan di Sekolah Dasar Lia Stephanie. Pelajar diberikan tes awal, dilanjutkan dengan tiga kali pertemuan, dan diakhiri dengan tes akhir. Untuk mendapatkan hasil yang nyata tentang perbedaan hasil tes awal dan tes akhir pelajar, penelitian ini menggunakan Analisis Deskriptif Kualitatif karena analisis ini dapat menggambarkan hasil yang diperoleh selama penelitian dan mampu membuktikan apakah hasil riset tercapai atau tidak. Sebagai tambahan, penulis juga mengamati pelajar selama proses pembelajaran guna memperoleh respons mereka terhadap hasil pembelajaran yang menggunakan teknik Poetry Cinquain. Akhirnya, disimpulkan bahwa pembelajaran menggunakan Cinquain Poetry terbukti mampu sebagai media yang efektif dalam pengajaran penulisan kreatif di Sekolah Dasar.

Kata kunci: *mengajar penulisan kreatif, penulisan kreatif, Cinguain poetry*

INTRODUCTION

According to the writer's experience in teaching elementary students, it is commonly found that the students cannot write without any guidance. When the writing activity comes, sometimes holding a pencil is still difficult for them; moreover, they lack in exploring their imagination and also knowledge of the language, such as grammar and vocabularies, which always become their real problems in writing activities. Besides, the teacher has to deal with students' laziness and boredom. However, it must be admitted that sometimes it is the teachers that set up the situation which do not give the students a chance to be creative. In this case, it is the time for the teacher to find out the medium in order to promote the students creative writing.

In the recent development, creative writing became popular for teaching elementary school students. It came along with the idea that the children should be given more freedom to express their ideas. Therefore, promoting creative writing is one of the essential skills that learners have to attempt since writing can be a bridge for them to have a communication in written language. Troyka and Hesse (2005) prove that people who are working in any fields in a day, they use thirty percent of their time in writing. Writing also helps them in expressing their ideas and feelings in written language. Hence, they need to learn different kinds of writing from the beginner level in order to make them better in producing their written language.

Cinquain poetry through the short and easy format in each theme leads the third year of elementary students to play with their imagination and feeling as well. Harmer (2001) believed that students will be more productive in producing the suitable expression of language in their writing when the teachers give them an "imaginative" writing exercise. That is why the writers are interested in discussing the Cinquain poetry as an alternative medium to be used in promoting creative writing to the third year of elementary students.

Creative writing is writing that expresses ideas and thoughts in an imaginative way. Harmer (2001) stated that, "the term of creative writing suggests imaginative tasks such as writing poetry, stories, and plays." Protherough as cited in Wyse and Jones (2008) stated that creative writing movement was the important one and the emphasis of personal, imaginative writing [needed] to be maintained and extended. Moreover, in the view of teaching, Gaffield-Vile as cited in Harmer (2001) commented that creative writing as, "Self-discovery, and self-discovery promotes effective learning." Therefore, the term of creative writing can help teachers to engage students' in writing since the students will try to produce their writing with appropriate language if the teachers create the imaginative tasks. Harmer (2001) added that, "While students are writing a simple poem about someone they care about, or while they are trying to construct a narrative or tell stories of their childhood, for example, they are tapping into their own experiences. This provides powerful motivation to find the right words to express such experience."

In addition, in term of creative writing the role of teachers is really needed. Teachers will find numbers of students who are difficult in writing imaginatively and it depends on how the teacher can encourage them to be motivated in imaginative writing tasks. Here Harmer (2001) recommended teachers should "build up" the term of creative writing in step by step. Therefore, in teaching creative writing to the elementary school students the writers start from "word, phrase, and sentence" before going to the whole composition.

Generally, students have been familiarized to various kinds of songs or nursery rhymes since they are in kindergarten and they like to imitate some roles of people around them while they are playing with their friends. Regarding to this fact, it is a perfect time to introduce the genre of the poetry to them. Ruurs as cited in Nieuwenhuis (2009) stated that poetry is, one of the earliest forms of literature to which are children exposed and they love its natural rhythm and rhyme through nursery

rhymes, lap games, and songs, children develop language.” In addition, Wyse and Jones (2008) also supported that poetry is as an earlier “feature” in children’s first step to the language “acquisition”. Kennedy and Gioia (2010) stated that, “Poetry may state facts, but more important, it makes imaginative statement that we may value even if its facts are incorrect.”

Additionally, Lazar (2008) also commented that poetry is frequently breaks the ‘rules’ of languages, but by so doing it communicates with us in a fresh, original way. Therefore, poetry commonly consists of numbers of features such as rhythms, rhymes, meters, and other poetry elements. DiYanni (2001) commented that rhythm refers to the regular recurrence of the accent or stress in poem or song. DiYanni (2001) stated that meter is a count of the stresses we feel in the poem’s rhythm.”

However, not all of poetry forms have the same elements as mention previously. There are two kinds of poetry forms in general; they are open form and closed form. According to DiYanni (2001) open form suggested that poets capitalize on the freedom either to create their own forms or to use the traditional fixed forms in more flexible ways. While Stanford (2003) suggested that in closed form the lines and stanzas must be arranged according to established patterns. Despite the above forms of poetry, many people still enjoy reading or writing the poem.

Spiro (2004) stated that writing a poem includes exchanging ideas, writing, then editing, asking friends to read and respond, and rewriting. It gives a real and meaningful practice in all the skills of writing. Meanwhile, once the teachers start to introduce their students to the poetry writing, Rosen in Wyse and Jones (2008) suggests that teachers should connect to children everyday language as “starting points” for their writing. And “everything we remember, no matter how trivial: we mark on the wall, the joke at luncheon, word games, these like the dance of a stoat or the raven’s gamble are equally the subject of poetry.”

Lazar (2008) stated that when using poetry in the classroom, we could therefore exploit the more ‘deviant’ or unusual use of language we find in it as a basis for expanding the students’ language awareness and interpretative abilities. Sedgwick as cited in Wyse and Jones (2008) also supported that in writing, we as a teacher should aim to bring the precision of poetry- that unrelenting, largely conscious search for the right word and the largely unconscious search for the appropriate sounds, in terms of rhyme, rhythm, assonance and alliteration- to the emotion, the excitement of science.

Therefore, teachers should selectively choose the poems that they would use by considering to the level of the learners they teach. Lazar (2008) stated that teachers obviously need to ensure that they choose poems suitably graded to the level of the students and that the students are given as much help as possible in understanding the language of the poem.

Many people know that a Cinquain is a very popular form of poetry because of its simplicity. American poet Adelaide Crapsey about 100 years ago made it very popular. A Cinquain is similar to Japanese poetic forms, such as Haiku and Tanka.

Cinquains are just five lines long, with only a few words on each line, making them easy to write. The first and last lines have just two syllables, while the middle lines have more, so they end up with a diamond-like shape, similar to the poetic form called *the diamante*. Though they are just five lines long, the best cinquains tell a small story. Instead of just having descriptive words, they may also have an action (something happening), a feeling caused by the action, and a conclusion or ending. Here is one example of the Cinquain poetry of “Mama”.

Mama
Mama
Nice, happy
Working, helping, cooking
Mama does very hard work.
Mom

(Source: squidoo, 2014)

In line with the description above we defined that the Cinquain poetry is five line poem or stanza that have one topic to be described. Cinquain poem also helps the teacher to introduce the concept of language art since it helps the students to learn what are adjectives, nouns, or verbs. The process of teaching would be easier since the students could build their ideas through the pattern of Cinquain poems to one of the specific thing to be described on their poem. Wyse and Jones (2008) stated that using specific poetic forms based on syllabic patterns (such as the haiku or the cinquain) helps children work within particular confines and returning to such small tasks several times helps them develop self-criticism and the discipline of redrafting.

There are some approaches that the teachers have to choose during the practice of writing skill. The teachers need to decide the methods according to the level of the learners whether they are young learners or adult. Harmer (2001) stated that the age can be defined as the main factor that affects the teacher to decide “what” and “how” to teach. Besides that the teachers have to choose whether they want their students to concern more in the process of writing than its product and also whether the teachers want to promote their students in creative writing.

In the teaching of writing, the teachers can decide whether they want to focus on the product or the process of writing itself. Harmer (2001) comments that if we concentrate on the product, we only focus on the “aim” of the activity and in the end of product while the focus on the process approach is on the phases through the piece of writing.

McKay (2006) stated that the products of writing are numerous, and in many forms, determined by different purposes and audiences and contexts for writing. It is also supported from the online article in “<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/articles/product-process-writing-a-comparison>” that the product approach encourages the students to mimic a model text which is commonly presented and analyzed at an early stage. A model of this approach is described as follows. (a) Model texts are read, and then features of the genre are highlighted. For example, if studying a formal letter, students' attention may be drawn to the importance of paragraphing and the language used to make formal requests. If studying a story, the focus may be on the techniques used to make the story interesting, and students focus on where and how the writer employs these techniques. (b) This consists of controlled practice of the highlighted features, usually in isolation. So if students are studying a formal letter, they may be asked to practice the language used to make formal requests, practicing the 'I would be grateful if you would...' structure. (c) Organization of ideas; this stage is very important. Those who favor this approach believe that the organization of ideas is more important than the ideas themselves and as important as the control of language. (d) The end result of the learning process; students choose from a choice of comparable writing tasks. Individually, they use the skills, structures and vocabulary they have been taught to produce the product; to show what they can do as fluent and competent users of the language.

Badger and White As cited in Ho (2006) stated that writing in the process approaches is seen as predominantly to do with linguistic skills, such as planning and drafting, and there is much less emphasis on linguistic knowledge about grammar and text structure. In the process approach, students are taught planning, drafting, revising, editing and publishing at each phase of the writing process to

help them to write freely. Troyka and Hesse (2005) also stated that the better you understand the writing process, the better you will write; and the more you feel control of your writing, the more you'll enjoy it. And there is no single way exists for applying the writing process”.

Meanwhile, Troyka and Hesse (2005) offered six stages of writing process: planning, shaping, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading. The view that is used in this thesis is almost similar to the way that Troyka and Hesse defined the writing process.

METHOD

The research conducted at the third year of elementary students of Lia Stephanie School in the academic year of 2011 - 2013 divided into two classes. They are III-A and III-B which consists of twenty two students in each class. In III-B is chosen as an object consisting of eleven boys and eleven girls. It is as an experimental class in which the Cinquain poetry will be implemented as a medium to teach a creative writing. All students in III-B are Indonesian so that Indonesian language is sometimes needed throughout the process of teaching and learning to get students more understandable of the classroom activities.

There were five meetings done in this research. Each meeting had eighty minutes. In the first meeting the students had a pre-test. They were asked to write five-line sentences for one hour with four different titles given by the writer. In the second meeting until the fourth meeting they were taught by using Cinquain poetry to promote a creative writing. During the process of implementing the new technique in the classroom process, the writer introduced three different titles of Cinquain poetry. They are *Mama*, *Cat*, and *Marissa*. Finally, in the fifth meeting the students had a post-test. During the post-test the students were asked to write Cinquain poetry in different title; *my dog*, *my home*, and *my best friend*. The result of their writing was scored using the analytic method scoring. Then, the result from students' pre-test and post-test was compared in order to be analyzed by the writer and it would be figured out as a conclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In using Cinquain poetry as the new technique of teaching creative writing at the third year of elementary students, there are several phases of creative writing that the students should follow such as pre-writing, writing, revising, editing, and post-writing which have been explained in the previous section. This is a classroom activity. While those phases are implemented by the writer in the process of learning in the classroom, there is an interaction between the teacher and the students. The activity happened during the research also can be identified as a measurement since the responds from the students help the writer in measuring their comprehension.

Topic: “Mama”

The lesson plan:

A. Greetings

B. Pre-writing

* Reading the poem

* Pre-teaching vocabulary

* Leading questions:

- What is your mama like?
- What is your mama doing?
- Do you want to tell another thing about your mama?
- Does anyone call mama with other names?

* Re-reading the poem (together)

C. Writing

D. Revising

C. Editing

E. Post-writing

*Ask three students to read their poems in front of the class

Report

Before the process of learning in the classroom started, as usual the writer had to deal with the students' behavior. The messy seats and also the students' noise had to be handled before the process of learning started. Since this was the first meeting of introducing the new technique so that the writer had to create a conducive environment.

The writer started to deal with the unfriendly situation by giving them a simple command.

T: "Students, let's clean your table."

T: "I will count one to five then, you have to clean your table"

Ss: "Yes Miss"

After they tidied up their things and they seemed ready to study. The writer greeted them. All the students stood up and greeted the writer. The greetings went well. The writer continued to write the Cinquain poetry of "Mama" on the white board. The writer wrote the Cinquain poetry of "Mama" in a bigger size that all the students in the classroom could see the poem clearly.

Afterwards, the writer started to read the Cinquain poetry of "Mama" loudly so that the students could listen what the poetry was about.

Mama
Mama
Nice, happy
Working, helping, cooking
Mama does very hard work.
Mom

(Source: squidoo, 2014)

In the Cinquain poetry of "Mama" the writer gave a stress on the first line since the writer wanted the students to know that the poem is about a figure of Mother. In this particular poem there are only two difficult words that the students found. They are the word of "nice" and "does". Some of the students directly asked for the meaning of the word "nice" and "does" to the writer. The writer preferred eliciting the students to giving them the exact meaning of the difficult words. The writer started to elicit the students.

T: "Anyone knows what nice is?"

Ss: "Don't know miss"

T: "Well, can you guess if I say Jessica is a nice person. She is smart. She likes helping her friends"

S1: "Baik ya miss"

T: "Excellent!"

T: "So, nice is something good"

- T: "What about does?"
 T: "if I say Abi always does his homework"
 S1: "finish miss?"
 T: "almost correct"
 S2: "Mengerjakan ya miss?"
 T: "Yes, very good!"

In this particular poem the writer also did a brain storming in the topic of "mama". The brain storming did in order to build students' ideas in their next writing phase. The writer started to do the brain storming by writing the word of "Mama" on the center of the white board and the writer asked some questions.

- T: "ok, listen to me and look at the white board here. Actually this poem is about my mama"
 The writer was pointing to the poem of "Mama" which has been read. Then the writer continued with the question.
 T: "What is your mama like?"
 S1: "Maksudnya apa miss?"
 T: "Hmm, okay for example my mama is nice, tall, happy, etc. What about your mama?"
 S1: "Oh...My mother is beautiful miss"
 T: "Right, that's what I mean"
 T: "Others?"
 S2: "My mother is smart miss"
 S3: "My mother is small miss"
 T: "Do you mean your mother is thin?"
 S3: "No miss. My mother is small"
 T: "Ah, do you mean your mother is short?"
 S3: "Yes miss, she is short"

Two of the students' answers were written on the white board under the words "Mama". Those two words were beautiful and smart. It became the following form:

Mama
 Beautiful, smart

Then, the writer started to ask the question in order to build the students' ideas to write the third line of the poem.

- T: "What is your mother doing?"
 Since they have studied about present continuous so that they are familiar with that kind of question.
 S1: "She is sleeping miss"
 S2: "She is cooking"
 S3: "My mother is shopping miss"
 S4: "She is teaching miss"
 S5: "She is cleaning miss"
 S6: "My mom is singing"
 T: "Wow, excellent!"
 T: "All of you have great ideas"

All the students looked so enthusiastic to express their own ideas in answering the third question. But, the writer only wrote three action verbs of their answers on the white board. They are cleaning, teaching, and cooking. The writer added those three action verbs in the third line.

Mama
Beautiful, smart
Cleaning, teaching, cooking

The writer continued to give the students the question in order to build their ideas in writing the fourth line of the Cinquain poem. The writer started with the question.

- T: "Do you want to say another thing about your mother?"
S1: "Iya miss. My mother always call friends"
T: "Your mother always calls her friends"
T: "Really?"
S1: "Yes miss"
S2: "My mom work hard every day miss"
T: "Wow, She works hard every day"
S3: "Miss, tadi kan Jessie bilangnya she work hard every day. Kok tadi miss bilangnya jadi she works hard?"
T: "Ok, that's a good question!"
T: "Everybody, listen to me!"
T: "I put /s/ at the end of the word "works" because it is your mother's routine, right and we have to put /s/ or /es/ at the end of the action verb if the subjects here are she, he, or it"

In the Cinquain poem of "Mama" the writer found the difficulty in building students' ideas in the fourth line since the students were asked to answer in a longer words than in the previous lines. Most of the students have a problem in grammar when they tried to express their ideas in the fourth line so that the writer tried to make their sentence correct by doing a repetition. After that the writer added one of the students' answers in the following form:

Mama
Beautiful, smart
Cleaning, teaching, cooking
She works hard everyday

The writer continued to build students' ideas in the last line which focused on the synonym of the word of "mama". The writer started with the following question:

- T: "Is there anyone who calls your mother with mama?"
Most of the students in the class raised their hands. But others they had others name for their mother. Then, the writer asked to one of the students that didn't raise his hand.

- T: "Roger, do you have another name for your mother?"
S1: "Iya miss"
T: "What is it?"
S1: "Mami miss"
T: "Ok, good!"
T: "What about others?"
S2: "Enyak miss...hahahaha"
S3: "Nyokap miss...hahahaha"
T: "Sherwin, Do you call your mom with Enyak?"
S2: "Hahaha... No, miss"
T: "Ok, let me put the word of mami in the last line of this poem"

Then, the writer added the word of “mami” in the last line of the poem so that it became a complete Cinquain poem:

Mama
Beautiful, smart
Cleaning, teaching, cooking
She works hard everyday
Mami

The writer asked all of the students in the classroom to read the poem that they had made together. The students read the poem very fluently with the nice intonation.

After they had read the poem together, the writer asked them to do their writing. The writer distributed a piece of paper which was completed with the guidance for them how to write their own Cinquain poem since it was the first time for them to write their own Cinquain poems. Here is the form of their writing activities.

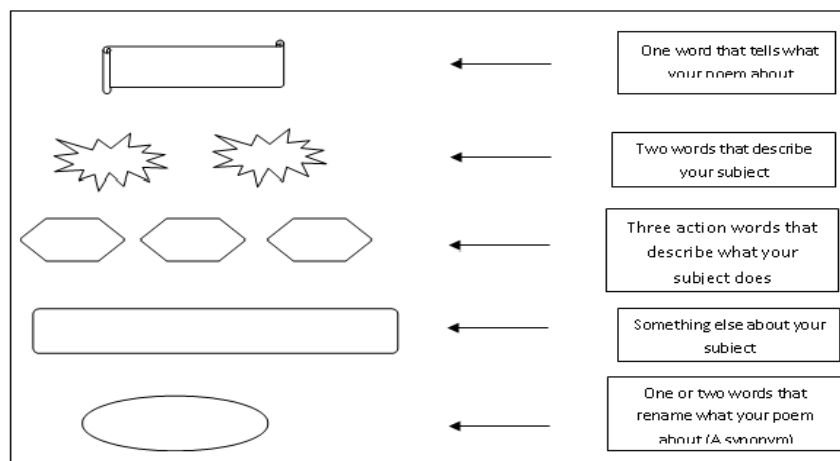


Figure 1 Writing Activities
(Adapted from NTCE/IRA, 2004)

As soon as the students finished their writing, the writer asked them to check again their writing. The writer gave the time for them to do a revision and editing. Most of the students forgot about the comma in writing their first Cinquain poem and some of them forgot the number of the words that they had to write in each line. The writer walked around to control their writing. While the students were doing their revision and editing in this particular poem, the students asked to the writer about the meaning of some vocabularies that they used in their writing. This following interaction happened in the process of revising and editing.

- S1: “Miss bener gak kalau aku bilang gini: my sister with me”
T: “Do you mean your sister is always with you?”
S1: “Maksudnya dia selalu sama-sama dengan aku miss”
T: “Exactly. Your sister is always with you, right?”
T: “It means you’re always together”
S1: “Iya miss, thank you miss”
T: “Ok, you’re welcome, Devina”

After the students finished their revising and editing phase, they copied their writing in a piece of buffalo paper completed with the photos of their member of family that based on their title of Cinquain poetry. In the pre-test the writer had told them to bring a piece of buffalo paper and a photo of their family members. Most of the students were doing the activity perfectly however the writer had to wait longer to collect one of students' papers.

The writer closed the class by calling three of the students to come in front of the class to read their own Cinquain poem. It was as one of the ways in post-writing.

The analytical method of scoring was used in this research in measuring students' ability in writing their Cinquain poetry. The analytical method of scoring is used by the writer since there are three aspects which are used while the writer is checking students' writing. Those three aspects are vocabulary, mechanics, and also form. The teachers give the scale from five to ten in each aspect on students' writing.

The focus of vocabulary aspect is in words' choosing when the students wrote their own writing the rare of vocabulary that they used the higher they get their point. The mechanics is related to the punctuations or spelling of words that the students used on their writing. The fewer their errors in spelling or punctuation, the higher they get their point. The focus of the form is in students' ideas while they are expressing on their writing. If they express their ideas connectedly, they will get higher point. In addition, to accumulate the score that students achieve on their writing and also the average of their result, there is a standard form of scoring:

$x = \text{Vocabulary}$

$y = \text{Structure}$

$z = \text{form}$

$\sum \text{score} = (x + y + z \div 3) \times 10$

$\text{Average} = \sum \text{Total score} \div \sum \text{student}$

During the analysis of this research, the writer found that the students had their improvement in their writing skill. Therefore, in this analysis the writer took two tests toward the students in order to measure their improvements before and after the new technique is implemented. Those two tests are pre-test and post-test. The pre-test was held in the beginning of this research and the post-test was held at the end of this research. Besides that, the writer also distributed and collected the questionnaire which was answered by the students in order to know their preferences in improving their writing skill.

The data on pre-test result shows that out of twenty two students, the average score is sixty point one. According to the pre-test result, almost all of the students do not know how to write a good poem in term of creative writing. They are lack in expressing their ideas in words. The highest score on the pre-test is sixty five which means students' ability on writing is lower than before the technique of teaching creative writing using Cinquain poetry was implemented.

On the other hands, the data on post-test result shows that after the technique was implemented, there is an improvement on the students' average score. The average score on the post-test is seventy six point four which means that the students' have better understanding in writing a poem and they are able to express their ideas into a good piece of poem. All of the students' score on the post-test are above sixty five. There are two students who almost get the maximum score on their post-test, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 The Average Result

No	Student	Pre-test			Post-test			Score	
		Aspects			Aspects				
		Vocabulary	Mechanic	Form	Vocabulary	Mechanic	Form		
1	Student A	7	5	6	60	7	8	7	73
2	Student B	6	6	6	60	8	8	8	80
3	Student C	6	6	6	60	8	9	8	83
4	Student D	7	6	6	65	8	6	7	70
5	Student E	6	6	5	57	7	7	7	70
6	Student F	6	6	5	57	7	6	7	67
7	Student G	6	6	6	60	8	7	7	73
8	Student H	6	5	6	57	8	8	9	83
9	Student I	6	6	6	60	8	8	8	80
10	Student J	7	6	6	65	7	7	7	70
11	Student K	6	6	5	57	7	6	7	67
12	Student L	7	6	6	65	8	7	9	80
13	Student M	7	5	6	60	7	7	7	70
14	Student N	7	6	6	65	9	8	8	83
15	Student O	5	5	5	50	6	7	7	67
16	Student P	6	7	6	65	8	7	8	77
17	Student Q	7	6	6	65	9	9	9	90
18	Student R	6	6	6	60	8	7	9	80
19	Student S	6	6	6	60	7	7	7	70
20	Student T	5	6	6	57	8	9	9	87
21	Student U	5	6	6	57	7	7	7	70
22	Student V	6	6	6	60	9	9	9	90
Total					1322				1680
Average					60,1				76,4

The above data shows that all the students, at the end of creative writing learning had improved their writing skill. It is proved by the average scores which are significantly increases. Almost all of the students enjoy writing Cinquain poetry at the end of creative writing learning. They wrote their own Cinquain poetry for the writer on the last meeting. Even though, the writer did not ask them to write Cinquain poetry for the writer. But, they are getting used to express what they are feeling in the form of Cinquain poetry.

CONCLUSION

Teaching English using Cinquain poetry is proved to be an effective medium at Elementary School. Once the students follow the phase of creative writing process, they will find the easiness of writing so that they enjoy writing their own poetry. They successfully enriched their vocabularies. They become more aware of the use of punctuations and words spelling on their writing. Even though, they still found difficulties in words spelling because not all the words that they wrote on their poems were discussed in classroom discussion. They also could connect their ideas while they were writing their poems. Besides that, they could finish each activity given by both individual and pair work and also give the appropriate feedback toward the classroom discussions.

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