

THE OF PEER GROUP COLLABORATION TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING ABILITY

(A Mixed-Method Study at the Seventh Grade in a Junior High School in Tasikmalaya)

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ABSTRACT

This study reports the effect of practicing peer group collaboration to develop students' writing skill. This study aimed to reveal the differences between the students who were taught by practicing peer group collaboration and those who were not. A mixed method study is employed as a research design in this study. This study took place at the seventh grade in one of Junior High Schools in Tasikmalaya. The writer adopted purposive sampling to choose two classes as the participants of this study. First group was control group and the second one was experiment group. Three instruments to collect the data were utilized. They were test, observation and questionnaire. The quantitative data is taken from the writing test, while qualitative data was taken from classroom observation and questionnaires. The writing test was analyzed by means of the statistical descriptive based on the pre-test and post-test result taken from Fraenkel, et al. (2012, p. 196). The results showed that the value of t-test (=6,619) is higher than the value of t-table (= 2.000) which means that the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. The observation result showed that most students presented positive response in teaching learning writing by means of peer group collaboration. The questionnaire result showed that most students were more excited, active and confident in learning by means of peer group collaboration technique. This study concluded that the practice of peer group collaboration technique could develop students' writing skill and knowledge.

Keywords: *descriptive text, Peer Group Collaboration, teaching writing*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is tranfering ideas into a text form. It means also how to state feeling and communicate it indirectly into written form. It requires a lot of practice to produce a good writing. Patel & Praveen (2008, p. 125) stated that, "Writing is a skill which needs to be taught and practised. Writing is an important aspect of language learning

because it contributes to the students a very good means of fixing the vocabulary, spelling, and sentence pattern.” Writing is the most difficult skill students can master. Most students encounter the difficulties in writing. Once in a while, they are getting hesitated in building their ideas into written text. In line with Patel & Praveen, Richard (2008, p. 303) described that writing is the most complicated skill in language learning to master for students as a foreign language learners. sometimes they face difficulties while producing and constructing the ideas. This argument is backed up by Brown, (2003, p. 218) who declared that “we fully believe the difficulty of learning to have good writing in any language, even in our own mother tongue.” The difficulty is not only about producing and organizing ideas but also transferring them into readable text.

The skills that embraced in writing are very complicated, the student must pass through a lot of practice. The primary problem in writing that the students face is difficult to produce the ideas and manage it into text form. Additionally, writing needs other skills to master, such as, mastery vocabulary, grammar, spelling and punctuation. The teachers should find the way out to help the students. The teachers require a suitable teaching and learning technique to solve this problem. There are so many teaching and learning techniques that can be used by the teachers. One of which is a group collaboration that is considered to be able to solve learning problem in writing. Morcom (2016, p. 81) said that peers generate one of the most essential contexts for child development and socialisation because they put out the formulation of an individual’s values and comprehending of social norms for manner which means peers group is creating a significant effect for the children to collaborate to solve their problem. The student is more active and the teachers acted as as a facilitator or stimulator for the student to generate a good writing. To sum up, peer group collaboration is a technique that provide the students an opportunity to construct their ideas by collaborating to get some new knowledge and experience within the social interaction.

Concerning this study, there have been several showing that peer group technique can enhance students’ writing skill. It highly supports students in increasing their writing skill, such as the studies carried out Mashadi (2014), Troester (2015), and Aschermann (2015). In general, these studies revealed that peer group is a teaching technique used as tool to improve the students’ writing ability. The underlined facts showed that peer group technique can improve students’ writing ability.

Peer group is students oriented-based teaching technique process. The student can practice it not only the extent of the knowledge but also their social interaction by means of collaboration. Morcom (2016, p. 81) said that peers generate one of the most essential contexts for child development and socialisation because they put out the formulation of an individual's values and comprehending of social norms for manner which means peers group is creating a significant effect for the children to collaborate to solve their problem. Besides, Morcom (2016, p. 83) added that collaborative learning is student-centred education which focussed on values, so it is compatible with research where students are expected to examine their values, build mutual respect and learn to collaborate. Collaboration means working together within their social interaction, the students understand their values, build their mutual respect and learn to work together to solve their problems.

The aforementioned background of the study generated the research questions formulated as follows:

1. Is there any significant difference in writing descriptive text between students who are taught by using peer group collaboration and the students who are not?
2. How do the students at the seventh grade in a junior high school in Tasikmalaya participate in teaching learning process using Peer Group Collaboration technique?
3. How do the students at the seventh grade in a junior high school in Tasikmalaya perceive on the use of peer group collaboration to improve the students' writing ability?

METHOD

This research paper was carried out under the approach of quantitative research method blended with qualitative research method to answer the research questions. Cresswell (2012, p. 535), declared that "a mixed method research design is a procedure for collecting, analyzing and "mixing" both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single or series studies to figure out a research problem." In line with Cresswell, Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012, p. 557), added "mixed method research embraces the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods in a study."

In this research, two group designs were employed to collect the data. It was quasi-experimental designs (pretest-posttest control group design) which can answer research question number one. Fraenkel et al. (2012, p. 275) said that quasi-

experimental design doesn't include the random assignment. To determine the students test result, they were being randomly selected based on specific criteria. In conducting the research there were also two classes to be measured. This study used the matching-only design to collecting the data from the classes. According to Fraenkel et al. (2012, p. 272) "The matching-only design was the opposite from random assignment with matching only in the fact that random assignment is not practiced." It means that the classes were not randomly chosen but measured under specific condition to be measured. The first measurement was conducted as the pretest, the second as the posttest. It means there were two groups embraced in this research paper. The first group is experiment group (treatment group) which was treated with Peer Group Collaboration between pre-test and post test. The second group was the control group which was treated with a pre-test then post-test with no treatment.

Data Collection Procedure

The systematical steps are very essential in considering the study. In this research, there are several procedural steps. This research paper employed test to collect the data. Those steps are, pre test, treatment, post-test, questionnaire, and interview. According to Cresswell (2012, p. 297), "pre-test gives a measurement prior to received treatment." Both control and treatment class are equipped with same pre-test. Pre-test is in the form of written test and making a descriptive text about specific topic. The time allotment of pre-test lasted about 30 minutes to complete.

After the pre-test from both classes, the treatment was addressed to the treatment class and it was not given to the control class. The students were divided in some of group into two members for each group and they started to explain about peer group. The students collaborated after the pre-test.

Next step, both classes were served with a post-test to measure and find out the influence of peer group collaboration on students' writing ability particularly in descriptive text and also to collect the data. And then, the data were analyzed and compared with the result between control class and experiment class.

Data Analysis

In analyzing and calculating the data, the writer utilized t-test to see whether there was a significant difference between groups. The t-test functions to find out the difference about control class and experiment class. According to Fraenkel et al. (2012, p. 233), "t-test is a parametric statistical test that functions to figure out whether a

difference between the means of two samples is significant.” This analysis was underpinned the theory from Fraenkel et al. (2012, p. 140) as follows:

1. Displaying the scores of pre-test and post-test into the distribution table.
2. Computing the difference between pre-test and post-test of each group.
3. Adjusting means difference (M) of each group.

Fraenkel et al. (2012, p. 196) said, “The mean is another average of all the scores in a distribution.” The calculation formula to compute the mean was adopted from Fraenkel (2012, p 196), as follows;

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

Where:

- \bar{X} = the mean of distribution
 $\sum X$ = the sum of scores
 N = total number of students

This study uses experimental group and control group, which is the mean of each group was described as follows:

- a. Mean difference of experimental group;

$$\bar{X}_1 = \frac{\sum X_1}{N_1}$$

Where:

- \bar{X}_1 = the mean of experimental group
 $\sum X_1$ = the sum scores of experimental group
 N_1 = total number of students in experimental group

- b. Mean difference of control group;

$$\bar{X}_2 = \frac{\sum X_2}{N_2}$$

Where:

- \bar{X}_2 = the mean of control group
 $\sum X_2$ = the sum scores of control group
 N_2 = total number of students in control group

4. Looking the significant using t-test formula:

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{\left[\sum X_1^2 - \frac{(\sum X_1)^2}{N_1} \right]}{(N_1 - 1)} + \frac{\left[\sum X_2^2 - \frac{(\sum X_2)^2}{N_2} \right]}{(N_2 - 1)} \left(\frac{1}{N_1} + \frac{1}{N_2} \right)}}$$

(Fraenkel et al., 2012, p. 199)

where:

- \bar{X}_1 = mean of experimental group
- \bar{X}_2 = mean of control group
- ΣX_1 = sum scores of experimental group
- ΣX_2 = sum scores of control group
- N_1 = total number of students in experimental group
- N_2 = total number of students in control group

5. Calculating degree of freedom (df)

$$df = (N_1 + N_2) - 2$$

(Fraenkel, et al. 2012, p. 235)

where:

- df = degree of freedom
- N_1 = the total number of student in experimental group
- N_2 = the total number of student in control group

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data result from the test, observation and the questionnaires was analyzed. Each of result was analyzed to answer the research questions as follows:

1. Whether there is any significant difference in writing descriptive text between students who are taught by using peer group collaboration and the students who are not

The test was distributed to answer the first research question. The sum of the difference between pre-test and post-test of the experimental group was displayed in table 1.

Table 1 Sum of the difference of the experimental group

The result of Pre-test and Post-test of Experiment Group					
No	Code of the Students	Pre-test score	Post-test score	Difference (X_1)	Squared Difference (X_1) ²
1	EG 001	60	80	20	400
2	EG 002	60	80	20	400
3	EG 003	50	75	25	625
4	EG 004	70	85	15	225
5	EG 005	50	65	15	225
6	EG 006	60	70	10	100
7	EG 007	60	75	15	225
8	EG 008	50	80	30	900
9	EG 009	60	80	20	400
10	EG 010	60	75	15	225

11	EG 011	70	85	15	225
12	EG 012	60	70	10	100
13	EG 013	70	90	20	400
14	EG 014	60	75	15	225
15	EG 015	60	75	15	225
16	EG 016	50	75	25	625
17	EG 017	50	75	25	625
18	EG 018	60	80	20	400
19	EG 019	50	70	20	400
20	EG 020	60	75	15	225
21	EG 021	50	80	30	900
22	EG 022	60	75	15	225
23	EG 023	70	90	20	400
24	EG 024	60	85	25	625
25	EG 025	70	85	15	225
26	EG 026	50	75	25	625
27	EG 027	60	75	15	225
28	EG 028	50	80	30	900
29	EG 029	70	90	20	400
30	EG 030	70	85	15	225
Total Score of X₁		1780	2355	$\Sigma X_1 = 575$	$\Sigma X_1^2 = 11925$

The result of pre-test and post-test of the experiment group showed that ΣX_1 was 575, ΣX_1^2 was 11925. In addition, the finding also found that the total scores of pre-test were 1780 and the total scores of post-test were 2355. It means that there is a significant effect of improved writing skills between the students who are taught by using peer group collaboration and those who are not.

The sum of the difference between pre-test and post-test of control group was presented in table 2.

Table 2 *Sum of the difference of the control group*

The result of Pre-test and Post-test of Control Group					
No	Code of the Students	Pre-test score	Post-test score	Difference (X₂)	Squared Difference (X₂)²
1	CG 001	60	65	5	25
2	CG 002	50	60	10	100
3	CG 003	50	65	15	225
4	CG 004	70	70	0	0
5	CG 005	60	65	5	25
6	CG 005	60	55	-5	25
7	CG 007	60	60	0	0
8	CG 008	70	70	0	0
9	CG 009	60	65	5	25
10	CG 010	70	75	5	25
11	CG 011	60	70	10	100
12	CG 012	70	75	5	25
13	CG 013	50	55	5	25
14	CG 014	50	65	15	225

15	CG 015	60	60	0	0
16	CG 016	70	70	0	0
17	CG 017	60	60	0	0
18	CG 018	70	70	0	0
19	CG 019	50	65	15	225
20	CG 020	60	65	5	25
21	CG 021	70	75	5	25
22	CG 022	50	60	10	100
23	CG 023	60	65	5	25
24	CG 024	50	75	25	625
25	CG 025	50	60	10	100
26	CG 026	70	75	5	25
27	CG 027	70	75	5	25
28	CG 028	60	65	5	25
29	CG 029	60	55	-5	25
30	CG 030	70	65	-5	25
31	CG 031	60	70	10	100
Total Score of X₂		1880	2045	$\Sigma X_2 = 165$	$\Sigma X_2^2 = 2175$

The calculation of the difference between the pre-test and post-test of the control group in table 2 showed that ΣX_2 was 165, ΣX_2^2 was 2175. Besides, it also found that the total scores of pre-test were 1880, and the total scores of post-test were 2045. The result of pre-test post-test control group ΣX_2 was 165 which means lower than experiment group which $\Sigma X_1 = 575$. It showed that the students at the control group have less progress in writing skills. It means that there is no significant improvement in group control which was not treated with the treatment using peer group collaboration technique. It can be said also that the students with no treatment using peer group collaboration technique did not show improvement in their writing skills.

2. The Students Participation in Peer Group Collaboration Technique in Writing Descriptive Text

The learning process was observed by monitoring the class situation and students' enthusiastic using observation checklist. Fraenkel et al. (2012, p. 445) stated that certain kinds of research can be best answered by observing, providing the study more accurate indication of sensitive issues, and the researcher obtained what needed by observing how people act or how things look. Observation is an activity that gives attention, time, to gaining the specific criteria of the highlighted sample. In this paper the type of observation was participant observation. Fraenkel et al. (2012, p. 446), declared "In participant observation studies, researchers always

participate in the situation or setting they are observing. It means the writer acted in learning process as a teacher and also as a class observer. The result of observation showed in following table;

Result of Observation

No	Indicator	None	A few	Half	Many	Majority	Score of Percentage
		0%	<20%	20-49%	50-69%	>70%	
		1	2	3	4	5	
1	Students participate toward teacher explanation about the material				√		4
2	Students are interested when they study English writing toward teacher explanation			√			3
3	Students ask question to the teacher clarify			√			3
4	The students are enthusiastic in responding teacher questions			√			3
5	The students answer the teacher questions				√		4
6	The students enthusiastic doing and complete the writing test.					√	5
Total Score							22

Based on the observation result, the students were getting more active and motivated in teaching learning process after the treatment. They showed enthusiasm in the class after treatment of peer group collaboration technique. They showed more interested and confident after treatment. The score reached 70%. It can be concluded that peer group collaboration could help the student more active and confident in the class during teaching learning process. Most students actively responded to the teacher explanation.

3. The Students Perception Toward Peer Group Collaboration Technique in Writing Descriptive Text

From the data analysis, the findings showed that the use of peer group collaboration could develop students' writing ability particularly in descriptive text. Thus, the writer wanted to access more information about the students' responses

toward the effect of using peer group collaboration technique in their teaching learning process.

The questionnaire adopted from Ju (2015, p. 677) consisted of 15 statements. Those statements were about the students' responses toward the effect of peer group collaboration technique in learning writing. The first to the tenth statements concerned about the benefits of using peer group collaboration technique, and the eleventh to the fifteenth statements concerned about the disadvantages of peer group collaboration technique. All statements in the questionnaires were included in closed-ended questionnaire. Furthermore, close-ended questions were distributed to limit the students' answers in responding to the questionnaires. In doing the questionnaires, the students should put the checklist (\surd) on every statement based on their opinions about the effect of using peer group collaboration technique. In addition, two responses of "YES" and "NO" were provided to limit the students' responses.

The qualitative data obtained from the questionnaires was proceeded using data analysis adopted from Cohen, et al. (2007, p. 507). In this analysis, each statement was written into the table. Then, each statement was displayed with its frequency. Besides, the percentage of each frequency was also calculated to find out the total number of each category. After that, the result of frequency and percentage analysis were organized.

Peer group collaboration could be used in learning writing because they were more liked to working together, easy to use and attractive technique. Besides, they gained the students' enthusiasm, motivation, enjoyment, and confidence. Other reasons showed that applying peer group collaboration was good be as alternative technique and instruction because they were not time consuming, impractical, and a boring activity. Therefore, the use of peer group collaboration was not only suitable for the students with poor achievement because it was easy to understand the material. Moreover, the students could develop their writing skills, and also increase their writing knowledge.

CONCLUSIONS

The previous data generated two conclusions. The first conclusion revealed that the value of t-test is higher than the value of t-table. It means that the null hypothesis (H_0) in this research was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. It

can be said that there was a significant effect on using peer group collaboration on students' writing ability who were taught by this technique and those who were not. Furthermore, the experimental class showed better achievement than those in the control class. It can be concluded that the practice of peer group collaboration technique could enhance students' writing ability particularly in the seventh grade.

The second conclusion also revealed that peer group collaboration technique can be applied in teaching and learning writing due to the fact that they were so much fun, motivated, excited, and confident. For the teacher, this technique could make the student more aware of their friend, collaborate in such a good way to solve their problem, they help each other to understand a new material and it could escalate the social value in the class. Additionally, it teaches the student to more respect of one another and get them a good attitude in collaborating under the teacher as the facilitator. It can also be concluded that the use of peer group collaboration technique was a good way in teaching learning process as an alternative style of teaching rather than traditional teaching method which were not time consuming, impractical, and not a boring activity. Thus, peer group collaboration was not only appropriate for the students with poor achievement because it was easy to follow how it works. Besides, the students could develop their writing skills by using peer group collaboration.

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