

# Collaborative Writing Strategy for Teaching Writing Descriptive Text

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## Abstract

Writing is a complex process that allows students to explore thoughts and ideas and make them visible and concrete. Teaching writing is a process of giving skills to students on how to communicate and express their thought, feelings, and opinions in a written language. Writing skill is a skill rarely taught to learners either at SMP or SMA level since it is considered difficult, not tested in semester or final examination, teacher is more often preoccupied with explaining the parts (generic structure) of a text than by applying it in a student's writing, and learning writing skills is very time consuming in the process and also in providing feedback. This article is derived from the study conducted on finding the effect of collaborative writing strategy and writing interest toward students' writing ability of descriptive text at tenth grade of SMA INS Kayutanam. The aim of the research was finding out whether or not collaborative writing strategy could give a better result of students' achievement in writing descriptive text. This was a quasi experimental study taking 44 students as the participant. The data were collected by giving writing test. The students were asked to a write a descriptive text based on the picture given. The result of the test shows that the students had better achievement in writing descriptive text when they were taught by using collaborative writing strategy.

**Keywords:** *teaching strategy, collaborative writing strategy, descriptive text*

## Introduction

Writing is a complex process that allows students to explore thoughts and ideas and make them visible and concrete. When thought is written down, ideas can be examined, reconsidered, added to, rearranged and changed. Students who are able to make their thought process concrete thought writing enhances their learning process.

The aim of teaching writing is to develop students' ability in oral and written language fluently and accurately in the form of transactional and interpersonal, functional text and short message monologues especially in descriptive, recount, report, and narrative texts.

Descriptive texts is one of text types that is learnt by the tenth grade students of Senior High School. Marsika (2013) conducted an experimental research at X grade of SMA level about student's ability in writing descriptive text. She describes that descriptive text is difficult to be mastered by the students. It might be caused by the text construction that requires the students to be able to describe about a specific thing, person, or place. Eventhough it looks simple to write a text that describes about something or someone, students still need more guidelines to write this kind of text. They also have to concern about the characteristic and generic structure of this text. Briefly, they know the topic, but can not practice in written form. It is indicated that many students still have low achievement in writing skill.

Moreover, Alwasilah (2004) in his research found that in Indonesian culture literacy has not been interpreted as "the ability to read and write" but is still interpreted as limited to "the ability to read". In addition, teachers spend more time allocated that they have to explain grammar than to teach the writing skills themselves. Another reason he found was that teachers often complained with the great classes they taught. These make it impossible for teachers to correct student's work effectively.

Since the studies on cooperative learning strategies show improvement at some practices of English learning and there is a little research on applying this technique especially on teaching writing in the classroom, a research on it was done. The focus of the research was tenth grade students at Senior high school in a school in Padang Pariaman Regency. This article provides some review of related literatures, methodology of the study, and the result of the students' writing achievement after being taught by using Collaborative Writing strategy.

There are several factors that cause the general problem above. The first factor is lack of teaching portion of writing skills in class compared with other skills such as reading and discussing grammar. Second, in providing teacher writing assignment sometimes does not provide examples and guidance on how to express ideas and develop students in their writing process. It leads to the learning of writing skills based only on the results (product oriented) rather than on the process (process oriented).

Regarding to the problem above, there should be an appropriate strategy to solve the problem. One way that is considered to support the process approach in writing activity is Collaborative Writing strategy. Gokhale (1995) defines collaborative writing as a teaching strategy that involves students in a small group (at least 2 people) each having a level of ability are not the same to increase their adoption of the lesson. Each member of the group is not only responsible for learning what they have learn but also responsible for helping their group friends to learn and understand the lesson to reach a certain academic aim. Through discussion, change of idea, the students get more portions to directly involve in the process of studying and students are responsible for the smoothes of studying process.

This article would discuss the use of this strategy in teaching writing skill descriptive text in the classroom.

### **Concept of Writing**

Writing is an activity of expressing someone's ideas which are arranged properly into words and sentences. Nunan (2003: 88) suggests that writing is the process of thinking to invent ideas and express them into statement and paragraph clearly. In writing process, a writer should be able to think and find ideas related to the topic she is going to write. She also has to be able to organize the ideas to create a good product of writing. In addition, according to Brown (2001: 348), "writing is a thinking process". He then explains that writing is a process of putting ideas down on paper to transform thought into words and give them structure and coherent organization. It can be inferred that writing cannot be done instantaneously. A writer should think about what she is going to write, have some ideas in their mind, think about how to put the ideas in correct orders, in order to produce a text which can attract people who read it.

Lyons and Heasley (2006: 13) mention, "Writing is a clearly complex process". Thus, it needs a careful attention. There are some complicated steps need to be done when someone does writing. Brown (2001: 335) then says that written products are the result of thinking, drafting, and revising procedures that require specialized skill. It can be said that people who write needs to be able to think, express ideas, and evaluate the result of their writing.

Related to the explanation above, it is understood that writing is a way to express and explain ideas from the writer to the reader. In the process of writing, the writer should be able to organize their ideas or thinking into good paragraph organization to be able to create a good product of writing so that the reader is able to understand it easily.

### **Descriptive Text**

Writing can be defined as an activity to transfer ideas and to express someone's thinking through written form. It is claimed that different writer have different definition or perception toward definition of writing. Good writing skills are essential for effective communication. The better you write, the more easily readers will understand you. Learning to write well takes time and practice.

In the following paragraph , there are some of definitions and perceptions of writing will be described, such as: Lvons (1993:3) states that, writing is a personal act in which writers take ideas or prompts and transform them into topics. In this case ,the students think some ideas to develop a topic. After they get topic,they can continue to write topic be a sentence or paragraph that have their own set.

According to Graham and Perin (2007:5) writing is a flexible tool that can be used to meet a variety of goals. Writing allows people to communicate with others removed in both distance and time. It can promote a sense aof heritage and purpose among larger groups of people. In conclusion, through writing people can communicate with other in long distance, express ideas, message, and also opinion.

Moreover, Nunan (2007:52) states that writing is the mental work of inventing ideas, thinking about how to express them, and organizing them into statements and paragraphs that will be clear to a reader. This sentence means the students can express something such as ideas or feeling by using their own word into written form. The ideas and feeling should develop in some topic sentence for each paragraph in a text. Next, each topic sentence also develop again become some supporting sentence, thus the text compose completely.

Furthermore Kuta (2008:200) mentions that writing is a complicated process that involves many steps and constant revision . It shows that, when the students want to write a text , they should use steps of writing such as choosing topics, making an outline, drafting, revising and editing. It will help them to

construct a text. The step is very useful to make their writing to a good text. It is important to make writing is clear and to be available to read for the others. Writing allows the students practicing more opportunity for language processing. It give the students to develope their ability, knowledge and thinking. It is way of communication.

It is also to provide the learning process which express idea by tag it in writing forms. Then ,it has three complex elements that are writer, text writing and the reader, there is significant role which has relation to convey the meaning and must be respected by the reader to comprehend the meaning. Therefore, writing is an activity that the students have to select the topic, analyze the topic and express the ideas in written form. The students should make the outline of the topic, the drafting, revising and editing about their topic and share it to the others. So that, every writing will be different with the others because every writer has different ideas and form about writing.

### **Collaborative Writing Strategy**

It is necessary for the teacher to evaluate students' writing by evaluating it, the teacher will know how far the ability of the students and the effectiveness of the technique that has been used. Give evaluation of writing helps students to examine their ideas, facts, and arguments. The purpose of it is to demonstrate the overall quality of their writing that is used to improve their ability in writing. According to McCrimmon (1996), there are some indicators of writing test. They are completeness (general statement and supporting details about the object), unity (relate to main idea of the texts), and coherence (relate to each other).

The purpose of writing is expressing ideas as well as transmitting the message from the writer to the readers. There are some aspects in writing that have a great influence of writing (Hughes, 2003:101). First, grammar, it is the pattern of form and arrangement of the knowledge. It has very important role in language. Second, vocabulary, it is means that appropriate vocabulary in writing text. Third, mechanic includes spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Fourth, fluency, it is a factor makes the sentences sound natural. Each sentence is clear and has an obvious emphasis.

Fluency can be stated as the use of correct structure and appropriate vocabulary to make the composition easy to understand. Last, organization is important for a paragraph to have good organization, which means that all of the sentences discuss only one topic. The paragraph only has one topic sentence and supporting sentences focus on the main idea.

In this research the researcher used scoring rubric that developed by Hughes (2003: 101). Next scoring profile proposed by Brown (2007), the researcher will used this scoring rubric to evaluate students' writing. He gives clearer separate component of development of sub skills in individuals, and do not have to spend more time to complete the scoring rubric because the order of five categories are organized appropriately.

### **Methodology**

This study used numerical data to see whether or not Collaborative Writing give significant effect on students' achievement in writing descriptive text. Therefore, quantitative research method was used. The population of this research was the students at grade X of a Senior High School in Kayutanam in the academic year 2018/ 2019. The total number of the population was 67 students who are divided into 3 classes, X A, X B, and X C. Cluster random sampling was used for practicality and time efficiency. There were two classes as the sample, one as the experiment class, and the other as a control class. The experimental class was taught by using collaborative writing strategy and the control class was taught by using Listing strategy. Before deciding the experimental and control class, normality and homogeneity testing of the population were done to make sure that the population was distributed normally and homogeny. The instrument used in this study was writing test. The test was discussed with the expert, and then tried out to the students out of the sample to see the validity of the test. In scoring the test, two scorers were used to see the reliability of the scoring. Then, the reliability was measured by using Alpha Cronbach formula.

### **Results and Discussion**

As general, the result can be seen as follow:

Table 1. The Summary of Students' Writing Ability in Experimental and Control Class

<b>Class</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Var.</b>
Experimental	23	76.33	93	60.50	8.57	73.47
Control	21	66.88	85.50	45.50	9.99	18.90

Based on the result on the table 6.1 , the students' minimum and maximum writing test from experimental class who were taught by using Collaborative Writing strategy is 60.50 and 93 respectively, and the students' minimum and maximum writing test from control class who were taught by using Listing strategy is 45.50 and 85.50 respectively. It means that the students in experimental class had higher score than the students in control class. Meanwhile, the mean score of experimental class was 76.33, and the mean score of control class was 66.88. Moreover, the continuing line which is in the right position shows that the experimental class had higher score than the control class. Therefore, it can be summarized that the students writing score which was taught by using Collaborative Writing strategy are better than students' writing score which was taught by using Listing strategy.

It means that the mean score of the students' writing who were taught by using Collaborative writing strategy in experimental class was higher than the mean score of the students writing who were taught by using Listing strategy in control class.

The use of Collaborative writing strategy gives students a good way to explore their writing skill. It engages the students actively in some activities during teaching writing. It started from the involvement of students in thinking or dialogue with himself after the process of reading, then talking and sharing ideas with his friend before writing by their own language about the text. By exposing the students to the topic, the students will be attracted that may encourage further writing.

## **Conclusion**

Collaborative writing strategy is effective to improve students' achievement in writing descriptive text at senior high school. Based on the observation, it shows that it can increase students' involvement and enthusiasm during the process of teaching and learning. It can be used as an alternative strategy in teaching writing descriptive text at senior high school.

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