

ENHANCING STUDENTS WRITING SKILL TO WRITE DESCRIPTIVE TEXT USING PEER REVIEW AND FREE WRITING TECHNIQUES

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to see whether the use of peer review and free writing techniques was effective in improving students' writing achievement in learning English as a Foreign Language. A non-randomized control-group pretest-posttest design was used. Out of the tenth graders SMA YPI Tunas Bangsa Palembang, 60 students were taken as the sample. There were three groups, each of which consisted of 20 students. The data were collected by asking students to write a composition that was evaluated by using Conventional Standard Written English rubric containing six aspects namely content, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. The data obtained were analyzed using one-way ANOVA. The findings showed that the two techniques were effective in improving the students' writing achievement because the students were guided to check their friends' work and were encouraged to elaborate more ideas that they wanted to write freely.

Keywords: writing, peer review, free writing

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Introduction

Writing is something that can help us to communicate in daily life. As stated by McNulty (2009), writing is the foundation of almost everything significant in life and to judge someone's intelligence. Besides, Soanti, Regina, and Bunau (2015, p.2), writing helps the student to express their opinions or ideas into writing form through writing. In brief, by mastering writing skills, the students can share information, thoughts, experiences, or ideas in the form written as communication with others.

However, students still have difficulty expressing their ideas in the written form. As stated by Huy (2015, p.54), students often have many basic mistakes in written works about spelling, grammar, punctuation, and organization.

Besides, based on the empirical study conducted by Abdullah (2005), he argued that the students are seldom given the practice of writing, the

exposure of writing skills is limited. It can be concluded that the students who learn English still have problems in writing, such as get trouble expressing their idea, are not self-confident, have inadequate linguistic competence (vocabulary, spelling, and grammar), and have limited time to practice writing in the classroom.

Due to the difficulty of writing face by the students, the teacher should use various techniques in teaching writing. The technique that can be used is peer review. Many researchers point to peer review as a good way to teach the process approach to write and help students learn how to use feedback and make continuous revision (Bell, 1991; Tang & Tithetchott, 1999 cited in Lundstrom, 2006). Frequently in peer review activities students are required to use negotiation strategies and must communicate either orally or in writing with their peers in a group discussion. It means that by using peer review the

teacher can encourage the students to check their friends' work so that they can get feedback after writing something.

Besides, peer review technique, the teacher can also use free writing to write something. Free writing is particularly helpful when a writer faces the feeling that he has nothing to say or when he finds difficulties to get started on a particular writing assignment. It is an effective technique to begin the writing process (Mann and Mann, 1990, p.7). Using free writing technique, students hopefully can write everything they want without stopping and editing. Free writing offers a student-centered activity that can benefit writing class students significantly by helping ease their expectations of themselves and their writing while at the same time increasing their sense of motivation to write in English.

Based on the elaboration ideas above, therefore, the writer tried to apply the techniques of peer review, and free writing to improve the students' skill to write descriptive text at SMA YPI Tunas Bangsa Palembang.

Concept of Writing

Writing is the combination of letters which are arranged to form sentences or paragraph (Byrne, 1993, p.1). Moreover, Prentiss and Wilkins (2016, p.8) explain that writing is honors the connection between the natural world and human experience, that understands them as parts of a whole, that reckons with the complex forces of place and landscape in human lives. In short, writing the correlation between real life and someone's experience can be read in the printed material.

Writing consists of paragraph(s). Canavan and Brandon (1990, p.12) state that a good paragraph should have the criteria, namely (1) topic sentence; a statement that summarizes the idea to be

developed in a paragraph, (2) unity; discuss only one main idea in a paragraph, (3) coherence and cohesive; easy to read and understand, (4) completeness; fulfills its function of developing the topic sentence, and (5) order; the way of organizing ideas in a paragraph so that the paragraph has coherence and direction.

Descriptive Text

According to Widiati, Romlah, and Furaidah (2017, p.55), a descriptive text describes a particular object like a place, thing, or person. The purpose is to describe the particular object by describing its or his/her specific features to help readers visualize what a person, an animal, a park, or a thing is like. The descriptive text constructed by an opening paragraph that introduces the object going to be described and a series of paragraphs follow the opening to describe the parts or the features or the specific characteristics of the subject.

Moreover, Susanti and Amri (2013, p. 463) describe that descriptive text is a kind of text which is aimed to describe a particular person, place or thing and it can be from the physical appearance, the smell, the sound of the voice and the texture of something or someone. Whereas, Abbas and Dwita (2019, p. 99) explain that descriptive text is a kind of the text which is used to define a specific person, place, activity, idea or thing that is drawn in words. From the explanation, it can be concluded that descriptive text is the text that describes someone or something such as person, place, and thing. Therefore, the people who hear can imagine in their mind about someone or something that have been described.

There are some language features of descriptive text such as; using attributive and identifying process, using adjectives and classifiers in the nominal group, and using the simple present

tense. The descriptive text also has two components, such as identification (identify the phenomenon to be described) and description (describe the phenomenon in parts, qualities, or/and characteristics)

Peer Review Technique

Mendonca and Johnson (1994) state that during peer review learners focused on both local and global issues of their writing and that after negotiation they appeared to have a better understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. In this case, learners developed audience awareness through Peer review activities. In brief, Peer review is the process in which students share their writing and offer feedback.

Peer review used with guidance can help ESL learners to improve their writing (Berg, 1999 cited in Ho & Savignon, 2007). However, the teacher should also give feedback to the students who did the Peer review. Since students have to give comments on their peer's writing during Peer review, some students might not feel comfortable doing it face to face. Then since the students are still developing their writing proficiency, ESL students may not trust their peers' responses. Besides, peer review is experienced as a threat to the learners' concept of a positive face or their positive self-esteem (Ho and Savignon, 2007). In this case, the students will do the Peer review. They will check their friends' work based on the rubric given.

Guilford (2001) mentions that the procedure that can be used in Peer review: (1) papers will be numbered serially as they will receive, and that number will be recorded by the friend's names on the grading sheet. (2) the papers will be sorted into categories according to the subject matter. (3) for a given student, two papers will be selected at random from within the

category of the paper they have written. Thus each student reviews papers with roughly similar topics to their own. All of the students received only a single manuscript to review. (4) the numbers of the manuscripts reviewed by a given student will be recorded on the grading sheet. Each student will receive the paper(s), review sheets, and guidelines for review.

The Advantages of Peer Review Technique

Some researchers argued that another great benefit of peer review is that it teaches students to think more critically because they are required to critically review their peers' writing. Moreover, peer review also helps students to critically evaluate their writing and become effective self-editors (Min, 2005; Rollinson, 2005).

Peer review for second language learners also provides students with the opportunity to use language in the classroom in a meaningful way. In-class peer review sessions can be particularly useful because they provide the opportunity for students to receive comprehensible input from their peers, or input to a learner that is understandable but slightly his or her proficiency level (Krashen, 1993). It also allows them to use language, which is inherently social, in an interactive, natural manner, thus improving not only their writing but also allowing them to practice their listening and speaking abilities (Lockhart & Ng, 1995; Tang & Tithecott, 1999 cited in Mendonca & Johnson, 1994).

Free Writing Technique

Free-writing is an effective method for generating ideas that form an initial working text. As in all free association techniques, free-writing asks one to suspend one's judgments and preferences and records all ideas as

potentially significant: a determination is made later during revision (Gould, and Smith, 1989, p.110). Free writing is particularly helpful when a writer faces the feeling that he has nothing to say or when he finds it hard to get started on a particular writing assignment. It is an effective technique for beginning the writing process (Mann and Mann, 1990, p.7). Free writing broadly defined as writing without stopping and editing, has been viewed and used as a powerful technique for developing students' writing.

Byrne (1993, p.117-121) mentions the steps in free writing that the students should do:

- (a) list possible ideas; make an idea in a chart
- (b) Select and expand one idea; decide the idea, for example, to write *a hotel based on* personal experience, then draws the idea in chart form.
- (c) Outline; number the ideas in the chart in the order and incorporate it into the text.
- (d) Write a draft; write the outline to provide a scaffolding for the draft version. Drafts should be written quite quickly because they will be reworked and corrected afterward.
- (e) Correct and improve the draft; check for mistakes through a careful reading of what they have written.
- (f) Write the final version; write the final version after correcting and improving the draft.

The Advantages of Free Writing Technique

Free writing has been tried and adopted in a wide spectrum of educational contexts. Previous research has reported the use of free writing as a useful learning and instructional tool for varied purposes, both in writing classes and in the disciplines. For example, free writing has been reported to be used as a writing technique for writing practice in

the composition class, a vehicle for students' self-expression and discovery, a method for developing metacognitive awareness, a strategy for improving lecture comprehension, an assessment tool for reading comprehension and a disciplinary technique for developing student learning and writing in the disciplines. (Li, 2005)

Carino (1991, p. 23) states that the advantages of free writing are: (1) the act of writing tends to generate more ideas and occasionally produces details that develop the ideas more than a list does, (2) it can be used for all kinds of paragraphs, no certain specification.

Procedure of Peer Review and Free Writing Techniques

The writer taught the writing skill especially descriptive text by using peer review and free writing techniques. The teaching and learning process was conducted in twelve meetings. Each meeting was 2 X 30 minutes. The stages of teaching writing descriptive text using peer review technique are as follow:

- (1) Pre-activities (2 minutes)
 - a) The teacher motivates the students by asking some questions related to the topic.
- (2) Whilst-activities (55 minutes)
 - a) The teacher explains how to make a good descriptive text, the generic structure and language features of descriptive text.
 - b) The teacher explains the rubric of writing.
 - c) The teacher asks the students to write a descriptive text
 - d) The teacher asks the students to review their partner work (writing descriptive text)
 - e) The teacher and students discuss the students' work.
- (3) Post-activities (3 minutes)
 - a) The teacher concludes the material.

- b) The teacher gives the follow up by giving homework in the form of writing about another example of the text.

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- (1) Pre-activities (2 minutes)
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- (2) Whilst-activities (55 minutes)
 - a) The teacher explains how to make a good descriptive text, the generic structure and features of descriptive text.
 - b) The teacher asks the students to think the title for their descriptive text.
 - c) The teachers asks the students to write as many as ideas they have in mind for fifteen minutes.
 - d) The teacher asks the students to write a draft of descriptive text, correct, and improve their draft.
 - e) The teacher asks the students to write final version of the draft.
 - f) The teacher and students discuss the students' work.
- (3) Post-activities (3 minutes)
 - a) The teacher concludes the material.
 - b) The teacher gives follow up by giving homework in the form of writing about another example of the text.

Methodology

A quasi-experimental method was used: nonrandomized control-group pretest-posttest design. The study involved experimental and control groups. In the experimental and control groups, the students were given a pretest and posttest.

In this study, the writer took the sample by using a purposive sampling method. There were three groups involved consisted of 20 students in each

group. The first experimental group was taught writing using a peer review technique, the second experimental group was taught writing using free writing, and the control group was taught writing using a conventional method.

To obtain the data, a written test was applied. The test contained a list of topics and the sample students are instructed to choose one of the topics and write a descriptive text based on the topic he/she chose. The written test was valid in terms of content validity and concurrent validity and reliable. The reliability coefficient of the writing test was 0.806.

The writing test was measured by using a CSWE (Conventional Standard Written English) rubric proposed by Karl and Stevens (2001). The results from the pretests and posttests were scored by the two raters.

Before analyzing the data, the tests were measured in terms of normality and homogeneity. Then the writer used one-way ANOVA to find out the differences between the means and decide whether those differences were likely to happen by chance or by treatment effect. The one-way ANOVA was calculated using SPSS version 16.0.

Result

Based on the result of the pretest in the first experimental group, the lowest score of the pretest obtained by the students was 25.00 while the highest score was 54.17 and the average score was 39.37. In the second experimental group, the lowest score of the pretest obtained by the students was 29.17 while the highest score was 62.50 and the average score was 45.41. In the control group, the lowest score of the pretest obtained by the students was 29.17 while the highest score was 54.17 and the average score was 38.95.

Based on the result of the posttest in the first experimental group, the lowest score of the posttest obtained by the students was 41.67 while the highest score was 83.33 and the average score was 64.37. In the second experimental group, the lowest score of the posttest obtained by the students was 50.00 while the highest score was 87.50 and the average score was 68.97. In the control group, the lowest score of the pretest obtained by the students was 33.33 while the highest score was 58.33 and the average score was 45.20.

Based on the calculation of normality and homogeneity, it was found that the significance of the tests was higher than the alpha level of 0.05. It could be considered that the data obtained were normal and homogenous.

Based on the calculation used to find the students' writing achievement difference of each group, it was also identified that there was a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores in the first experimental group. Since p-value (0.00) was lower than α -value (0.05), so it confirmed that teaching writing through peer review technique effectively increased the students' writing achievement. Then it was inferred that there was a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores in the second experimental group. Since p-value (0.00) was lower than α -value (0.05), so it confirmed that teaching writing through free writing technique also effectively increased the students' writing achievement. Since the significant level of all groups was lower than α -value (0.05). It meant that the techniques of peer review and free writing were effective in improving students' writing achievement in English as a Foreign Language.

Finally, there was a difference in the control group. However, it was not significant. Since p-value (0.45) was higher than α -value (0.05), so it was

inferred that the students' in the control group did not increase the writing achievement significantly.

The results showed evidence that there was no significant difference from the total of posttests in the first and second experimental groups. It inferred that the techniques of peer review and free writing were effective in improving the students' writing achievement. The students' writing achievement improved because using peer review technique, the students had challenge to analyze their friend's composition. They also could check the sentences in the text made by their friends by using their grammar knowledge and checked the organization idea of their friend's work using their writing knowledge. In addition, using free writing, the students were free to write something so they could explore their ideas more.

The writer also had controlled the samples by doing her research. Since the sample of the two experimental groups consisted of twenty students in each group, the class was conducive enough and they were eager to study writing descriptive text using the techniques of peer review and free writing, therefore, their writing achievement improved.

In contrast, the finding showed evidence that there were differences among those groups. This might be because the students in the control group did not expose to write descriptive text through the techniques of peer review and free writing. Besides, the students could not write a descriptive text in a good way since they had limited time to check whether their works were right or not, were stuck on the idea to complete their writing draft, and were lack of vocabulary and information about the topic given.

In short, each technique had strengths so it could be said that those techniques: peer review and free writing were good in improving the students'

writing achievement. The students enjoyed using the techniques because so it could stimulate them to write. However, it needed a long process to make them love writing something. Although the students had difficulties to write it, they had a curiosity to learn it more and practice it. The students' writing achievement would be improved if the teacher used certain techniques to expose them to write. Therefore, it had better for the teachers to know some techniques to help the students to expose them to write using various techniques. The more exposure the students writing using various techniques, the better the writing achievement they got.

Conclusion

The exposure of writing by using the techniques of peer review and free writing was effective in improving the students' writing achievement. Since they had been given the treatments, they could improve their writing achievement. The students could improve their writing achievements because most of the students in the two experimental groups had better improvement and were active in writing descriptive texts using those techniques: peer review and free writing. Using peer review technique, the teacher forced the students to check their friend's composition so that they could check the sentences made by their friends by using their grammar knowledge and checked the organization's idea of their friend's work using their writing knowledge. In free writing technique, the students were free to write something so that they could explore their ideas more without afraid of making mistakes.

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