

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS: CASE OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

Nursidik Hidayatullah¹⁾, Achmad Azam Al Barqy²⁾ Hernina Dewi Lestari³⁾

University of Insan Budi Utomo Malang

Email: ¹⁾nsidik762@gmail.com, ²⁾azam.pandaan12@gmail.com,

³⁾herninadewilestari@gmail.com

Abstract (English)

This study aims to investigate the extent to which students' writing skills can be promoted through small group discussions. A quasi-experimental study design was used. The analysis took place over six sessions, including pre-test, treatment, and post-test. There were two classes: A Class and B Class, each with 21 understudies. A Class was the control gather that was intense by address strategy, while B Class was the exploratory bunch that was intense through little bunch discourse. The information instrument was utilized in both the pre-test and the post-test. Both bunches were given the pre-test pre-test some time recently treatment started, and the post-test took put after treatment. The results indicated that the students in the test group scored higher on average (66 compared to 54) than the students in the control group. The result of the t-test calculation for independent samples showed a significance level of 0.000 and a p-value of 0.05. It is assumed that (Ha), while (Ho) is rejected due to the significance level < the value of probability (0.000 < 0.05). Therefore, BeTe (Be A Trainer) students in Desa Ingggris Singosari who were taught writing in small group discussions experienced a significant improvement in their writing skills.

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INTRODUCTION

English is taught as a foreign language to students in Indonesian schools from kindergarten to university level. According to Indonesia's Minister of Education regulations (number 22 of 2006), English must be taught in Indonesian schools. The curriculum mandates that students acquire competence in four essential skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which students must succeed in. These are commonly divided into two types. Reading and listening are classified as receptive skills, allowing individuals to gain meaning from spoken language. Speaking and writing are productive abilities in which students must actively generate language independently. Mastering the skill of writing is the most challenging among these abilities, as it necessitates students to convey their ideas through written language effectively. Writing is a skill that involves active and productive abilities (Suita & Masrul, 2018). Undoubtedly, writing is the most complex skill for native language learners to develop. Besides formulating and structuring ideas, transforming these ideas into coherent and acceptable phrases can present an issue. Brown (2004) asserts that in developed societies, every educated child acquires the basic principles of writing in their native language. Nevertheless, individuals also acquire the ability to communicate proficiently through a coherent and structured approach that accomplishes a specific objective.

The mastery of writing is considered to be the most complex skill. The students must consider the substance and arrangement of a written work and the use of language, including structure, vocabulary, and mechanics. Sulisty and Heriyawati (2017) argue that writing is not just focused on the outcome but also involves a complex and time-consuming process that demands significant effort. The writing process is complicated, and it can be conceptualised as a sequence of five distinct processes that adjust to the requirements of students (Harmer, 2004, p. 258). The process consists of pre-writing, making the primary draft, changing, altering, and publication.

The start of the writing process is pre-writing, which occurs before the writer articulates their thoughts, ideas, or opinions. Preliminary tasks might be conducted before the students participate in writing. This practice encourages students to openly and confidently share and discuss any ideas that come to mind on a specific topic. Two approaches employed in pre-writing activities, as identified by Sulistyono and Ningsih (2013), are brainstorming and free-writing. Brainstorming is a collaborative exercise when students engage in open and unrestricted discussions about ideas about a specific subject. Meanwhile, free writing is an individual activity where students generate ideas on paper, similar to brainstorming.

Once the students have completed the pre-writing tasks and gathered thoughts and words, the students are prepared to commence the initial draft. The teacher exercises authority over the students' activities and is prepared to assist when necessary. Students should attempt writing using their language, disregarding vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation. The students should cease writing to contemplate grammar, they will miss some possible ideas. Students should be encouraged to participate in the revision process by their teachers. The students finish their first draft, which they then critically assess and edit. They could appear as the process of reorganising the draft's written material. The students incorporate or exclude certain concepts in this step to create a more refined and cohesive manuscript. Students should verify whether the composition includes an introduction, a body, and a concluding sentence.

An introduction articulates the primary concept of the paragraph. Next, the body of the text contains corroborating information, precise instances, and elucidations. Lastly, a conclusion mirrors the substance of the opening.

The students engage in the editing process as the final stage of revising. Emphasis is placed on grammar, punctuation, and spelling. In addition, they detect, analyze, and rectify their errors. The teacher may prompt the pupils to disclose specific items and ascertain the quantity of items they need to distribute among themselves. To complete a final, refined version, The students can either utilise a word processing programme or write in legible handwriting to produce a polished final version of their work.

The students are prepared to present their completed work to the teacher at this stage. Furthermore, they may be granted permission to showcase their written works in class compilations, school publications, or even an academic periodical. An introduction states the main idea of the paragraph. Then, the body has supporting details, specific examples, and explanations. Lastly, the introduction's content is reflected in the conclusion.

As the last stage of revision, the students edit. Grammar, punctuation, and spelling are given particular attention. They also recognise, evaluate, and fix their errors. The teacher may decide how many pieces the pupils must share and may even encourage them to contribute some. The students can use a word processing programme or write in legible handwriting to complete a polished final draft of their assignment.

At this point, the students are prepared to turn in their finished work to the teacher. Furthermore, they can be permitted to publish their written works in school newspapers, class booklets, or even journals.

The researcher observed Desa Inggris Singosari from March 18th to March 22nd, 2024. It was found that BeTe (Be a Trainer) students in the 2023/2024 academic year frequently needed more inspiration for writing. Nevertheless, they had a blank mind when tasked with writing a text. Furthermore, the issues may arise due to other circumstances, including motivation, interest, intelligence, or the quality of learning materials. Nevertheless, the educational methodology is the root cause of the ongoing writing issues. Thus, it was necessary to employ a small group discussion approach to address the issue.

Ary (2010) defines a group as a collection of two or more persons who exhibit interaction and possess a distinct sense of unity. The term "group" can be applied when more than two

persons interact with, influence, and are impacted by each other inside the group. According to Djamarah (2006), small group discussions promote student participation in teaching and learning by facilitating peer communication. Groups are created to achieve the learning objectives and improve students' performance. Moreover, it imparts students the skills of problem-solving, effective communication, re-establishing collaboration, and developing involvement by students in decision-making.

Conversely, small group discussions can be defined as a pedagogical approach for instructing writing abilities when students are divided into smaller groups. Furthermore, students can enhance their collaboration and friendship by overcoming the challenges they face during the processing job and discussing suggestions. Students can enhance their understanding and problem-solving skills by participating in small group discussions to exchange knowledge and experiences. Small group discussions encourage active participation by students in the learning process and improve the efficacy of writing instruction. Small-group discussions are beneficial for developing students' writing skills.

Several students carry out small group discussions, which are attractive due to the shared learning experience and the opportunity to address issues together. When individuals are placed in a group, they can gain knowledge and face challenges collectively. People must take responsibility for enhancing the performance of their group when they receive instruction in small groups. It suggests that individuals will have a mutual influence when they discuss the lesson, they will learn in a group setting. They will participate in dialogue and exchange knowledge regarding their learning topic. Peer teaching in this group is advantageous because individuals can openly discuss their challenges, allowing for mutual learning opportunities (Hardiansyah et al., 2014).

The teacher should demonstrate creativity and initiative in devising successful methods that attract the students. Furthermore, the methods must be appropriate for their specific needs. If the learning atmosphere is conducive, they will persist in deriving enjoyment from the teacher's teaching and consider it adorable. Not all teachers can accurately identify and effectively utilise the most optimal tactics students' desire.

The researchers decided to explore the impact of small group discussions in Desa Inggri Singosari to support students' interest in learning writing skills. In addition, the new teaching methods stimulate students' interest in writing and foster a stronger bond with the English language. Considering the study's background information, the research question is formulated: "Is small group discussion effective in improving students' writing skills?". So, this study's objective is to focus on addressing the specified problem. Here is a possible way to examine the efficacy of small group discussion in improving students' writing skills. Small group discussion is expected to be more effective in helping students improve their writing skills. Hence, the alternate hypothesis for this study is as follows: The students given small group discussions can effectively improve their writing skills.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study analyses how small group discussions affect students' writing skills in Desa Inggri Singosari. The paper employs experimental research with a quantitative methodology by applying a quasi-experimental design. The researcher focuses on the test scores (pre-test and post-test). The variables in this paper will be divided into independent and dependent variables. Small group discussion is considered an independent variable, while students' writing ability is a dependent variable. In this study, students' writing ability refers to writing descriptive text.

The study was conducted in the 2023-2024 academic year at Desa Inggri Singosari with students in the BeTe (Be a Trainer) class. Two groups were formed within the BeTe class to

compare the results. One group acted as a control group, while the other served as experimental groups. Each class consisted of 21 students. A "simple cluster random sample" was used to select the experimental and control groups to avoid subjective selection. Two groups were used for the study, one as the experimental group and the other as the control group. A small group discussion took place in the experimental group (group B), while a lecture was given during the writing lesson in the control group (group A).

Six meetings were necessary to conduct this experiment. The first meeting (Meeting 1) was used as a pre-test to check the homogeneity of the group, and participants had to submit a descriptive text before the treatment began. In the following three meetings (meetings 2-5), the group discussion's effect was examined to prepare the participants for writing a descriptive text for the experimental group. In the sixth and final meeting, a post-test took place. Two evaluators, the researcher and the classroom teacher, scored all texts using a rubric. The outcomes of the various formats were then examined using SPSS version 22's statistical analysis and the t-test for independent samples, given that the participants were divided into two groups: the experimental group and the control group.

Data Collection

The researcher used a test to collect the information for this study. It would be advisable to administer the test as a writing exam to compare the writing skills of students taught with or without small group discussions. The researcher gave the experimental and control groups a pre-test and a post-test. The researcher administered the pre-test and scheduled 90 minutes for it. The experimental class (class B) and the control class (class A) participate in a pre-test. The researcher showed the students a picture of a tourist place during the test and asked them to describe it. After the treatment, the post-test was placed in the experimental group (class B) and the control group (class A). The aim was to check whether small group discussions were effective for the student's writing skills.

Data Analysis

The researcher used the Pearson product-moment formula to analyse the student test results by adding each point to the total of the scores. The method of analysis that the researcher used is quantitative. The statistical method was used to analyse the quantitative data of this study. The data before and after the test were compared to analyse the data obtained. This technique was used to examine whether there was a significant difference in students' academic performance after using peer feedback as a teaching method. The researcher used IBM SPSS version 22.0 to determine the relevant differences.

RESEARCH FINDING

Before the treatment, the student's writing skills were assessed using a pre-test for both experimental and control groups, which were tested before the experiment. Class A was the control group, while Class B was the experimental group. The pre-test data was analysed using IBM SPSS version 22.0. The following table shows the results of the pre-test for both groups.

Table 1 The pre-test results of the experimental group and the control group

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experimental Group	21	46	56	52.67	3.120
Control Group	21	36	64	51.24	6.557

Table 1 shows that the experimental group's mean pre-test score was 52.67, and the standard deviation was 3.120. The control group's mean score was 51.24, and the standard deviation was 6.557. Although the experimental group's mean score was higher than the control

group's mean score ($52.67 > 51.24$), the difference was insignificant. This illustrates that the students had similar abilities before the treatment. Furthermore, the highest score in the experimental group was 56, while in the control group was 64. The lowest score in the experimental group was 46 compared to 36 in the control group.

After the experimental group had applied a small group discussion in writing class and the control group had been taught using the lecture method, the researcher conducted a post-test for both groups. The test aimed to determine whether small group discussion in writing instruction was effective or ineffective for the experimental group. The following table shows the results of the post-test for both groups.

Table 2 The post-test results of the experimental group and the control group

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experimental Group	21	58	72	66.00	3.899
Control Group	21	46	62	54.00	4.817

Table 2 shows that the experimental group's post-test mean score was 66.00, with a standard deviation of 3.899. The control group's mean score was 54.00, and the standard deviation was 4.817. Although the mean score of the experimental group was higher than that of the control group ($66.00 > 54.00$), the difference was significant. It illustrates that the students' abilities differed after the treatment. Furthermore, the highest score in the experimental group was 72, while in the control group was 62. The lowest score in the experimental group was 58, compared to 46 in the control group.

This paper presented the study's data and explained validity, reliability, normality, and homogeneity. The T-test formula was applied to compare the results with the research data, calculated using IBM SPSS version 22.0. The data was calculated using the Pearson correlation formula to check the validity of the written test questions using IBM SPSS version 22.0. The results are as follows:

Table 3 The Validity Result for the Experimental Group and Control Group

		Experimental	Control
Experimental	Pearson Correlation	1	.783
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.050
	N	21	21
Control	Pearson Correlation	.783	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.050	
	N	21	21

The validity instrument's result was 0.783, as determined by the manual r_{value} , compared to r_{table} is 0.413. Consequently, the $r_{value} > r_{table}$ ($0.783 > 0.413$) indicates that the test is valid.

Reliability was defined as the consistency of a person's score when retaking the same test at a different time or with equivalent sets of items. The assessment in this study is based on the available data from IBM SPSS version 22.0. The results are as follows:

Table 4 The Reliability Result for the Experimental Group and Control Group

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.900	2

The reliability test with IBM SPSS version 22.0 resulted in a score of 0.90. According to Ary et al. (2010), it is possible to interpret Cronbach's alpha value using Table 4. When comparing the reliability value with the value category, it is noticeable that the result of the

reliability calculation is between 0.81 and 1.00, which is consistent with the categories for very reliable values.

Before starting the treatment, a pre-test was conducted to ensure that the test and control groups were homogeneous. The pre-test results of both groups were analyzed using IBM SPSS version 22.0. If the significant score of the data was above 0.05, the test was considered homogeneous. The results of the homogeneity test are presented using one-way ANOVA analysis as follows:

Table 5 Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
3.619	1	40	.064

Table 5 shows that the significance score is 0.064. The finding that the significance score was above 0.05 ($0.064 > 0.05$) indicated that the experimental and control groups were homogeneous.

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was calculated with IBM SPSS version 22.0 to check whether the data in the sample corresponded to a normal distribution. The following table shows the results of the test for normal distribution.

Table 6 Test Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

		Unstandardized Residual
N		21
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	.0000000
	Std. Deviation	2.96730126
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.165
	Positive	.165
	Negative	-.118
Test Statistic		.165
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.037c

Table 6 shows that after comparing the calculation results for the normality test with a significance level of 0.000, the result was found to be $0.037 > 0.000$. This study can use the instrument as this value is considered normal.

An independent t-test was used to analyze whether or not different methods significantly affected students' writing skills in the experimental and control groups. The data analysis generally rejects the null hypothesis (H0) if the probability (p) is less than 0.05. The null hypothesis is rejected if the probability (p) is more significant than 0.05. If the probability (p) is more significant than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H0) is accepted, while the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is rejected.

Table 7 Independent Sample T-test for Experimental Group and Control Group

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
Pre-Test	Equal variances assumed	.564	.457	8.874	40	.000	12.000	1.352	9.267	14.733

Equal variances not assumed	8.874	38.336	.000	12.000	1.352	9.263	14.737
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Table 7 shows the mean difference is 12.000, with a standard error of 1.352. If the significance level is < 0.05 , the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted, while the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted if the significance level is > 0.05 . The significance level was $<$ the value of 0.05 ($0.00 < 0.05$), whereby the alternative hypothesis was accepted. The probability (p) was less than 0.05, which was 0.000. This significantly differs between small group discussions and students' writing skills. The researcher has concluded that small group discussions are an effective method that should be implemented.

DISCUSSION

This study aims to determine the influence of group discussions on students' writing skills at Desa Inggris Singosari. For this study, the researcher selected two classes as a representative sample. The English trainer chose classes A and B. The researcher randomly divided the group of students into an experimental group and a control group. It was found that A was the control group and B was the experimental group. Furthermore, there were 21 students in each class. The experimental group received their education through group discussions, while the control group was taught through lectures.

This study shows that small group conversations help to improve students' writing skills. The findings align with the previous study's results, which show that small group conversations improve students' writing skills. The study by Efendi (2017) shows that the data is available according to a normal distribution, and the variance of the data is uniform. The author used a t-test for separate samples to analyze the data and identify the t-test result. In this study, the value of the homogeneity test was 0.064, indicating that the significance level was above 0.05. This test was performed to check the equality of the experimental and control groups in the pre-test. The researcher used SPSS version 22.0 to calculate the pre-test results for both groups in a one-way ANOVA.

The researcher conducted a pre-test to determine the student's writing abilities before the treatment began. The result revealed that the average pre-test score in the experimental group was 52.67, and no student scored more than 70 points. In the control group, the average score was 51.24, and the result was identical to that of the students in the experimental group.

At the end of the treatments, the researcher conducted a post-test to assess the students' descriptive writing skills after the treatments. The results show that the experimental group's mean score on the post-test was 66 points, with 5 students scoring more than 70 points and 16 students scoring less than 70 points. In the control group, the mean score was 54, and no student scored above 70.

This supports Harmer's theory that teachers should use a method, strategy, or technique to motivate students to participate more actively in the teaching-learning process. Based on the small group discussions, the students were highly engaged as they completed their descriptive writing assignment. They showed great interest in making and implementing comments and suggestions. The results of the data analysis also confirmed this finding. Small group discussions in class for writing descriptive texts were found to be appropriate for the BeTe student at Desa Inggris Singosari. The small group discussions encouraged students to participate more actively in descriptive writing lessons.

It was known that there was a difference in the students' results before and after they were taught in small groups. The students were more interested in the small discussion group technique than the researcher had expected. During the lessons, the students were motivated to record their thoughts in written descriptions and to be actively engaged in working together.

The researcher was convinced and was able to prove the supporting theory based on the student results after the small group discussions. Generally, the null hypothesis (H₀) is rejected in the data analysis if the probability (p) is less than 0.05. If the probability (p) is above 0.05, the null hypothesis (H₀) is accepted, while the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is rejected. If the significance level is below 0.05, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted, while the null hypothesis (H₀) is accepted if the significance level is above 0.05. The significance level was below the probability value 0.05 (0.00 < 0.05), and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. The probability (p) value was below 0.05 and was 0.000, indicating a significant difference in using small group discussions and students' writing ability.

According to the findings of this research, the previous study by Puspawati (2014) stated that her work aimed to promote students' writing skills through small group discussions to write spoofing texts. Small group discussions can be used to write about any topics the teacher wants to explain.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and the discussion, the small group discussion influences the students' writing ability. The post-test evaluation revealed a significant difference between the students taught through small group discussion and those who learned the lecture method of writing descriptive texts. The method used in classroom teaching created a new environment for the students to write descriptive texts. They actively participated and showed interest in taking part in the lessons.

After being supported by small group discussions, students improved their writing skills in content, structure, word choice, grammar, and spelling. By sharing in small groups, students can refine their thoughts or views in writing. Students find it easier to finalize their texts as the length of their texts also increases. This study rejects the importance of other methods in writing lessons. The results of the current study indicate that using small group discussions in the teaching-learning process, especially to promote students' writing skills, is beneficial.

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