

## HOW DO STUDENTS LEARN WRITING EASILY

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### *Abstract*

*This CAR intends to improve students' writing ability. The data were collected through questionnaire, observation, and documents. Assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building meanings and interpretations, and reporting the outcomes were the steps to analyze the data. The result showed that there was improvement on students' writing ability, that was in cycle 1, the mean score was 63.28, and 70.97 in cycle 2. The questionnaire data was also showed that 47% students strongly agreed and 33% of them agreed that Collaborative Writing Technique could encourage them to write and help them to improve their writing ability.*

**Keywords:** *Collaborative Writing Technique, Teaching Writing.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This study is about classroom action research which intends to improve students' writing ability. This study was intended to improve students' writing ability because writing is considered as the most difficult skill among others. Besides, students who sit at the fifth semester are those who will start to write their thesis as their final task. So, it is true that improving their writing ability is very important.

Talking about writing, Harmer, (2009) says that writing skills are specific abilities which help writers put their thoughts into words in a meaningful form and to mentally interact with the message. It means that writing (as one of the four skills of listening: speaking, reading, and writing is a channel that helps people to convey their ideas and opinions. Farahidatul (2017) says that writing skill is a productive skill and it is considered as an important constituent of second

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language learning.

According to Hyland (2003), learning how to write in a second language is one of the most challenging aspects of second language learning. Writing is an intricate structure that can only be learned through developing the ability to manipulate lexis and grammar. Then, Johnson (2008) classifies five steps of process writing : prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, then publishing and sharing.

For many years the teaching of writing focused on the written product rather than on the writing process. In other words, the students' attention was directed to the what rather than the how of text construction (Harmer, 2004). Brown (2001) argues that writing is playing words. It is complicated skill requiring both systemic knowledge the knowledge of the target language which include vocabulary, grammar/ structure, spelling, orthography, and non-systemic knowledge (the knowledge of non-language which includes the knowledge of the field, the cultural context, and the like.

Brown (2001) adds that written products are often the results of thinking, drafting, and revising procedures that require specialized skills; skills that not every speaker develops naturally. This study aims to improve students' writing ability using Collaborative Writing Technique to the fifth semester students of STKIP-MPL in academic year 2018/ 2019.

### *Writing Ability*

There is no perfect writer. However, students should know the characteristics of which one is good writing and which one is not. According to Wallace (2004), to become better writers, students may need to read good—even great literature that can serve as a model for their own efforts. Muschla (2011) argues that good writing begins with a good idea. Without an interesting idea, even the most skillful writer will end with a weak piece. Well-written paragraph has three separate parts: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. In addition to organization, writing in English must also have the characteristics of coherence, cohesion, and unity (Boardman & Frydenberg, 2008).

To make good writing, Sova (2004) suggests that the writers should do a role-play and pretend to be their readers when putting words on paper. If they find the explanation unclear, so will their readers. Inquiry and discovery also inspire great writing. Having topics that a person cares deeply about, as a consequence of personal interest and investigation, may prove decisive for a fine writing and even lead to a life devoted to writing.

Richard (2003) says that writing is a controlled activity where students are given short texts and asked to fill in gaps, complete sentences, change the form of nouns or pronouns, and complete other exercises that focus on students' accuracy and avoiding mistakes. So, in teaching writing according to Harmer (2009), the teachers need to help such students build the writing habit so they recognize writing as being a normal part of classroom practice and they come to writing tasks with as much enthusiasm as they do other activities.

Barkley (2005) adds that writing can enhance critical thinking by allowing students organize, summarize, and integrate and synthesize diverse elements into a coherent whole. Writing can also make students to be aware of their own learning processes. Reinking (2010) stresses that writers have to do more; however, they should decide what they should write rather than how they should write it.

#### *Collaborative Writing Technique*

Teachers are required to be able to choose the technique or strategy that can help students learn more easily to improve their writing skill. Research that uses the right strategies, techniques, methods, or media will cause things to be comfortable, efficient, and promise satisfying results. So, teachers are required to have a capability to teach with the best strategy or technique for the student, and one of the supporting techniques for the success of learning process is Collaborative Writing Technique : a technique in which students work in pairs or triads writing an official paper together

In this technique, Barkley (2005) says that each students can contribute at each stage of the writing process: brainstorming ideas, gathering and organizing information, drafting, revising, and editing the writing.

As a teacher who teaches writing for English as Foreign language or English as the second language, the main activities involve conceptualization, planning, and delivery of the course. All the methods and materials they adopt, the teaching styles they assume, the tasks they assign, are guided by practical and theoretical knowledge so the decisions can be more effective since the knowledge is explicit (Richard: 2003). He adds that one way to look at an article is to see whether the words, clauses, and coherent sentences are structured according to the rule system or not. In this view, learning to write in a foreign or second language mainly involves linguistic knowledge and vocabulary choices, syntactic patterns, and cohesive devices consisting of important building blocks of the text.

In few cases, some students are extremely unconfident and unenthusiastic writers. There may be many things that cause this: perhaps they have never written much in their first language, they think that they do not have anything to say, and cannot catch up with their ideas (Harmer, 2009). The cause according to Barkley (2005), teachers need to help students understand that it is very important for them to learn how to find and develop ideas for writing.

In preparation, students are assigned in writing project. The teacher should divide the assignment into manageable chunks and establish interim due dates to help teams structure the writing process and learn from each step. Here some procedures to teach writing through Collaborative Writing Technique, according to Barkley (2005):

1. Students form pairs or triads by following the teacher's direction or by choosing partners themselves and then generate ideas by brainstorming together or conducting pre-liminary research.
2. Together, students organize their ideas and create an outline.
3. Students divide up the outline into sections, selecting or assigning sections for each student to write initial drafts individually.
4. Teams read first drafts, discuss and resolve any significant disparities in voice, content, and style.
5. Teams combine individual sections into a single document.
6. Teams revise and edit their work, checking for content and clarity as well as grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

7. After the final editing teams submit their papers to the teacher for assessment and evaluation

Based on the statements above, it is assumed that Collaborative Writing Technique can be used to teach writing. Through this technique, students can work together. Working together can help students to learn and perform the stage of writing more effectively. It enables students to comprehend the subject matter or what they have discussed.

Through Collaborative Writing Technique, furthermore, students not only know the characteristics of good writing, but also understand the meaning, the content, the lacks of that writing, and how to revise it. In addition, students typically write better and have more pride in their writing when they are writing for an audience. Finally, this technique can help prepare students for tasks they will have in their careers.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study is an action research which is intended to improve students' writing skill through Collaborative Writing Technique. According to Burns (2010), Action Research (AR) can be a very valuable way to extend our teaching skills and gain more understanding of ourselves as teachers, our classrooms, and our students.

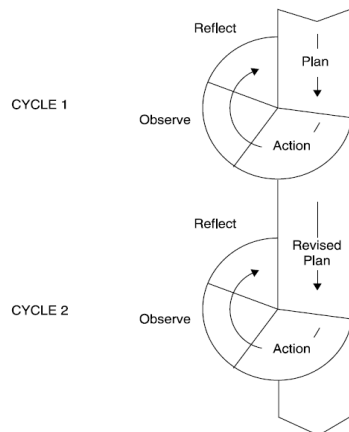
Creswell (2008) states that action research designs are systematic procedures done by teachers (or other individuals in an educational setting) to gather information about, and subsequently improve the ways their particular educational setting operates, their teaching, and their students' learning. Then, Fraenkel (2012) says that action research is conducted by one or more individuals or groups for the purpose of solving a problem or obtaining information in order to inform local practice.

Educators aim to improve the practice of education by studying issues or problems they face (Mills in Creswell, 2008). He adds that educators reflect about these problems, collect and analyse data, and implement changes based on their findings.

## How do Students...

The participants of this study were the fifth semester students of STKIP Muhammadiyah Pringsewu in academic year 2018/2019 which consisting of 39 students whom most of them had the difficulties in writing.

There were two cycles in this study which had the same procedure for each cycle; they were *plan, act, observe, and reflect*.



*Figure 1 Cyclical AR model based on Kemmis in Burns( 2010)*

In planning the action, researcher was considering the resources and materials that researcher needed such as access to literature the researcher wanted to read or participants the researcher wanted to include.

In doing the action, then, the researcher was looking at the ways of collecting information (data). Burns (2010) says that in teaching aspects of writing, the action research data collection is collection of the students' texts over a set period of time that is used for monitoring the improvements and gaps in their writing.

Observing the results of the plan means, the researcher looked at what was involved in collecting data, like assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building meanings and interpretations, and reporting the outcomes.

Finally, in reflecting and planning for further action, the researcher drew out the overall conclusions and interpretations, and made statements about the research as a whole.

The instruments used to collect the data in this study were observation sheets, questionnaires and classroom documents.

Observation was conducted to find out what was really happening in the class, how is the condition when the discussion activity was taking place. Questionnaires were used to find out the students' perception towards Collaborative Writing Technique for teaching them writing, while classroom documents were used to get students' written texts.

Then, to identify the main improvements that students made, this study used scoring system quoted from Hughes (2003):

Content	: 13-30
Organization	: 7-20
Vocabulary	: 7-20
Language use	: 5-25
Mechanics	: 2- 5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>: 100</b>

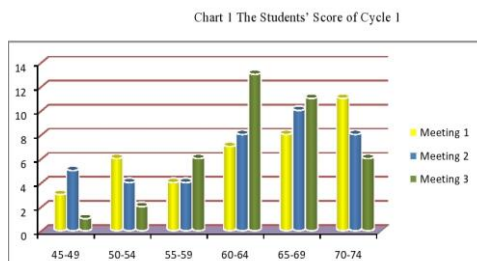
### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### Cycle 1

The finding of the study showed that in cycle 1, most of the students still made errors in writing, especially in language use (grammar) and organization. The following is one the example of the errors made by students in writing:

*I shall to wish entirely make success people, can give happiness for my parents, and make they pride if i can success.*

The example shows that students still make non-fluent expression and even cannot communicate well in written English. The following chart shows the students' scores of writing ability.



The chart displays the number of students on every range of scores; the lowest score is 45 and the highest score is 74 for three meetings. There were some mistakes made by students standing on the first range, such as they used too limited amounts vocabulary, frequently made mistakes on language use and

## How do Students...

mechanics, and consequently, their writing was dominated by hesitation, pausing and non verbal expression.

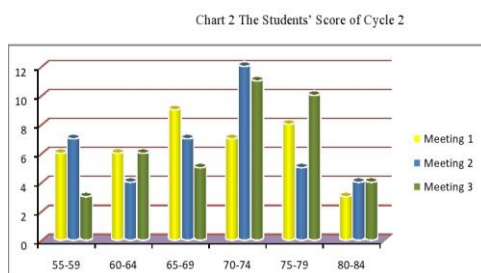
On the second range, the mistakes made by students were almost the same as those of students who got score in the first range score of 45-50. They had also poor handwriting. They wrote hardly because they lacked vocabulary, but they tried to construct their writing well.

The mistakes made by students who stood at the third range were that they had limited knowledge of language use (grammar), often made mistakes on mechanics especially on capital letter and punctuation; full stop. They sometimes used inaccurate vocabulary, but after all, their writing content were good.

In the fourth range, the students could use accurate vocabularies to express their ideas. They made error occasionally in capitalization. Nevertheless, frequent errors in grammar were still found in their writing, but they had some knowledge of their subject.

Then in the fifth and the sixth range, the major problems faced by students were that they still confused in using tense constantly for their writing. They also made occasional errors of punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, but the intended meaning was not obscured. Then, their writing was loosely organized but main ideas stood out, and they had fluent expression.

## Cycle 2



The chart shows that there is improvement on students' writing ability. In this cycle, the lowest score was 55 and the highest score was 84.

Errors made by students in this cycle were still dominantly in mechanic and language use, but the students' writing enough to be evaluated. Here is one of the errors made by students.



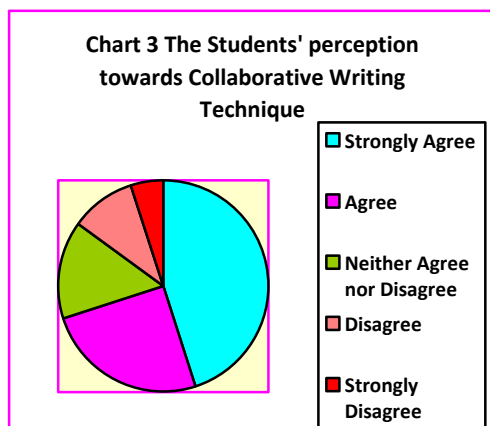
*When on Wednesday I had planned pick up my friend to halte I am going to Pringsewu 9.30 am to my friend dormitory and then.....*

The following table is the data analysis of students' writing ability improvement from cycle 1 to cycle 2.

**Table 1 The Data Analysis of Students' Writing Ability**

Data Description	Scores	
	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
Number of Subjects (N)	39	39
Mean (M)	63,28	70,97
Standard of Deviation	6,03	7,27

Then, the following chart is the students' perception of Collaborative Writing Technique to improve their writing.



The chart displays that there were 45% of the students who strongly agree that they enjoyed writing lesson by using Collaborative Writing Technique, 25% agree, 15% neither agree nor disagree, 10% disagree, and 5% strongly disagree. 35% of the students strongly agree that this technique is interesting, 25% agree, 20% neither agree nor disagree, 15% disagree, and 5% strongly disagree. Then, there are 47% of the students who strongly agree that this technique encouraged them to write, and helped them to improve their writing ability, 33% agree, 10% neither agree nor disagree, 5% disagree, and 5% strongly disagree. Finally, there

How do Students...

are 45% of the students who strongly agree that this technique was writing-assisting, 35% agree, 10% neither agree nor disagree, 5% disagree, and 5% strongly disagree.

### **3. Discussion**

The finding above proved that Collaborative Writing Technique is one of the supporters to achieve the success of learning process. Using this technique, lecturers could instruct students to work in pair or triads to make paper together, so, they could do the each stage of the writing process easily.

Students did some stages of the writing process: brainstorming ideas, gathering and organizing information, drafting, revising, and editing the writing (Barkley: 2005) when they learned writing with the procedures:

1. Students form pairs or triads at the teacher's direction or by choosing partners and then generate ideas by brainstorming together or conducting pre-liminary research.
2. Together, students organize their ideas and create an outline.
3. Students divide up the outline, selecting or assigning sections for each student to write initial drafts individually.
4. Teams read first drafts and discuss and resolve any significant disparities in voice, content, and style.
5. Teams combine individual sections into a single document.
6. Teams revise and edit their work, checking for content and clarity as well as grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
7. After the final edit, teams submit their papers to the teacher for assessment and evaluation

Then, the finding was also proved that some students are extremely unconfident and unenthusiastic writers (Harmer, 2009) because they do not have anything to say and cannot up with ideas. However, having taught using Collaborative Writing Technique, they knew what should they write rather than they thought abot how they should write (Reinking:2010).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Having given treatments by using Collaborative Writing Technique, students had writing ability improvement from mean 63,28 in cycle 1 to 70.97 in cycle 2, with standard deviation 6.03 for cycle 1, and 7.27 for cycle 2. 47% of the students strongly agree that Collaborative Writing Technique could encourage them to write and help them to improve their writing ability, 33% agree, 10% neither agree nor disagree, and 5% students disagree and also strongly disagree. It means that having taught by using Collaborative Writing Technique, the fifth semester students of STKIP Muhammadiyah Pringsewu Lampung in academic year 2018/ 2019 had significant improvement on writing ability.

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