

## THE USE OF PAIR COMPOSITION METHOD ON STUDENTS' DESCRIPTIVE WRITING SKILL

Maya Nurmayanti  
*Galileo English Course, Indonesia*  
E-mail: [nurmaumarro@yahoo.com](mailto:nurmaumarro@yahoo.com)

APA Citation: Nurmayanti, M. (2014). The use of pair composition method on students' descriptive writing skill. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 2(2), 158-166

Received: 01-04-2014

Accepted: 27-04-2013

Published: 01-06-2014

**Abstract:** This research was aimed to find out roles of pair composition method on students' behaviour in learning processes and their writing assessment, and also to find out students' attitude toward learning process of pair composition method in writing descriptive text in the classroom. Descriptive qualitative method was used in this research. The participants were 33 students of X grade of Senior High School. The data were collected from observation, the result of analysis showed that 66% of the seriousness of students during learning process was high, 78% of enthusiasm of students in doing task was high, and 58% of students' participation was high. The increasing of students' assessment was 18,7 from the average score before. The data collected from interview and questionnaire indicated that pair composition method provided the opportunities for sharing ideas, developing text, correcting writing errors, motivating students being active, and 50% students strongly agreed that pair composition method on writing descriptive text was lively and enjoyable.

**Keywords:** *Active learning strategy, cooperative learning, pair composition method, descriptive writing, descriptive text.*

### INTRODUCTION

Teaching strategies that teachers apply in the classroom support students learning process emphasizing to be more responsive and active in the classroom by various methods. Also, to make teaching and learning aimed on the planning lesson in order to achieve the goal of teaching and learning. Brown (2000: 131) states that "teachers can benefit from an understanding of what makes learners successful and unsuccessful and establish in the classroom a milieu for the realization on successful strategies." Many teaching strategies have been applied in teaching process. Teachers choose various techniques of teaching strategies as specific 'attack' on given problem (Brown, 2000: 122).

One of teaching strategies is active learning strategy, where students do everything in learning process from

listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Those four skills are explored in the classroom activities using active learning strategy. From active learning strategy, teachers used various techniques and methods depends on the goal of teaching. One of active learning techniques is cooperative learning. However, the strategies used must give the effect and change for every language skill of students, and pair composition method as one of cooperative learning techniques focuses on the desired outcome for the participants group and individual as a result of learning activity, especially on students' writing assessment.

Writing as one of productive skills is a set of thinking, expressing the feeling, proposing idea and knowledge, creativity in words processing are included of writing development learning process. Brown (2001: 335) writes that "Written product is often the

result of thinking, drafting, and revising procedures that require specialized skill, skills that not every speakers develop naturally." In the process of writing some text at school, students may be get a little problem, it can be from theirselves or from the other factors out of them. The ability to write depends on the ability to think creatively and put it into written text.

This research focused on students' writing descriptive text which one of materials in English lesson for ten grade students at one of Senior High School in Kuningan. It is using pair composition method that part of cooperative learning techniques, where students doing exercises in pairs, giving idea each other, giving feedback, and correcting each other their text composition included of content, structure, error analysis, and completing the compotion of the text.

Students sometimes get difficulties when starting to write, they got stuck to develop their ideas in writing how to describe person, thing or place detailed, or writing something in particular structures such as orientation and description. Pair composition as a method of cooperative learning is used to solve the difficulties writing the text. In order to get good writing, pair composition method was important in the learning process of writing than independent learning.

Teaching and learning language process is not the simple sets, both of them have own characteristic and relationship each other. Communication, interaction and other activities built in this learning and teaching language, between teacher and students. Scarino and Liddicoat (2009: 41) states that "in planning for interaction, teachers plan the sorts of things that students will be able to say, whether in speaking or in writing." Learning and teaching language is the complex activities that influence on teacher and students' skills.

Many factors appearance guide teacher and students to be mastered in learning and teaching language, aspecialy English as the foreign laguage.

Two of language skills in learning English are speaking and writing. Both of the skills called productive skills. According to Bashrin (2013: 3), the productive skills consist of speaking and writing, because learners need to articulate words and write to produce language. Teaching writing means guiding the students to explore their idea, feel, and knowledge in written. Heaton (1990: 135) states that "the writing skills are complex and sometimes difficult to teach, requiring mastery not only grammatical and rethorical devices, but also of contextual and judgement element."

In order to measure the students ability in any language skills, included writing skill, need to be examined and take the students assessment. Pinter (2006: 131) notes "Assessment refers to the process of data analysis that the teachers use to get evidence about their learners' performance and progress in English." Method of scoring composition included some components, those are; content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics (Heaton, 1990: 146).

Teacher needs some strategies in order to support teaching and learning process. Activities in the classroom must be planned as good as possible and being effective activities to achieve the goal of teaching and learning language. Brown (2000: 113) note "strategies are specific methods of approaching a problem or task, modes or operation for achieving a particular end, planned design for controlling and manipulating certain information."

Learning is an active process, when children are motivated to do something, they will try the new thing and doing the experiment of their ideas or discussing

with adults and teachers (Pinter, 2006: 5). According to Prince (2004: 1), active learning is generally one of instructional method that engages students in the learning process. In short, active learning requires students to do meaningful learning activities and think about what they are doing, learning by doing. One of active learning technique is cooperative learning.

Cooperative learning focuses on grouping study, but the target is comprehension of students in applying the assignment individually. One of cooperative learning methods is pair composition that guides students to be more active to make some composition in pair. According to Johnson, Johnson, & Smith (1998) in Felder and Brent (2004: 4), pair composition works when students work in pairs to complete individual writing assignments such as summary of article, research paper, position or reflection paper.

Using pair composition method, students can change their idea each other, analyzing and correcting in pair to get the good result in writing descriptive text. Descriptive text is defined as "domain writing that develops images through the use of precise sensory words and phrases and through devices such as metaphor and the sounds of words." Gerot and Wignell (1994: 208) notes "the social function of descriptive text is to describe particular person, place, or thing." There are some criteria for assessing the task of genre of text based on appropriate generic structure and grammatical features, those are: Genre based criteria deal with generic features of the text, textual criteria deal with the way that the text is held together, the way that the text is held, syntactical language criteria deal with the internal structure of the sentence used (Knapp and Watskin, 2005: 119). There will be several stages of pair composition method provided.

Firs, the teacher devided students into pair groups; one class consists of 34 students.

Second, the teacher doing review by giving some questions about descriptive text to the students, and ask them to making summary of descriptive text.

Third, the teacher explain what the students to do and how students must do their assignment in pairs but for individual descriptive writing assessment.

Fourth, Student A describes to Student B what he or she is planning to write related to descriptive text (describing person, thing or place). After asking probing and clarifying questions, Student B outlines Student A's composition and gives it to Student A. Then the procedure is reversed. Each student researches the topic.

Fifth, the two students together write the first paragraph of each composition. Then each student writes his or her composition individually.

Sixth, when completed, the students read each other's compositions and make suggestions for revision included generic structure (identification and description) and language features (using specific participant, using noun phare, using relational process, using adjectives, using simple present tense).

Seventh, after individual revision, students proofread both compositions and sign them to indicate there are no errors.

This process of learning using pair composition is important to investigate in order to know about the roles of the method in students behaviour during learning processes, and then finding out the good outcomes from the learning process in writing skill, especially in descriptive writing assessment, and also to know the students' attitude toward learning processes of pair composition method.

## METHOD

The research conducted was descriptive qualitative research design. Qualitative method investigated the quality of relationships, activities, situations, or materials (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2009: 422). In this descriptive qualitative method, data analyzed was described and explained in detail. Creswell (2009: 175) states that, "description involves a detailed rendering of information about people, places, or events in a setting." This research was conducted in a class that consists of 33 students at one of Senior High School in Kuningan in the academic year 2013/2014 from April until May.

This research used some techniques to collect the data to be analyzed then, those are documentation, observation, interview, and questionare. Creswell (2009: 164) write, "Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants."

Using documentation in collecting data was private document to obtain result of participants' language and words (Creswell, 2009: 168-169), in this research was students' descriptive writing. Students' descriptive writing was taken before and after implementing pair composition method (pre-test and post-test), in order to get data would be investigated to know students' descriptive writing assessment.

In learning processes, the actions of the students are the important thing to be observed, it could be their behaviour or their productive skill. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2009: 440), "certain kinds of research question can best be answered by observing how people act or how things look." During the observation, this research used an observation sheet for taking the data during learning processes.

The observation sheet applied was checklist table of students' behavior in the learning processes (Sa'diah, Vol. XL : 171-172).

The following step to collect data in this research was interviewing. Fraenkel and Wallen (2009: 446) state "the purpose of interviewing people is to find out what is on their mind- what they think or how they feel about something." The interview conducted in order to get more information about students' attitude toward the use of pair composition method that the teacher used in the classroom. Not only using interview, but also questionnaire for students was used in this research to know students attitude toward the use of pair composition method. According to Oskamp and Schultz (2005: 9), there are three components of person's attitude about something. Those components are affective, behavioral, and cognitive component.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research were about roles of pair composition method on students' behaviour in learning processes and their writing assessment, and about the students' attitude toward learning process of pair composition method on writing descriptive text in the classroom.

### *The roles of pair composition method on students' behaviour in learning processes*

The data analyzed showed that pair composition method had roles on increasing students' behaviour in learning processes, included of seriousness of students, enthusiasm students in doing task, and their participation in the classroom during learning processes. It was drawn by the seriousness of students that can be observed from the data analyzed that 50% in the second and third meeting was high, and in the fourth meeting was 100%

Table 1. The observation result of students' behaviour in learning processes

Learning Process	2 <sup>nd</sup> Meeting			3 <sup>rd</sup> Meeting			4 <sup>th</sup> Meeting		
	H	M	L	H	M	L	H	M	L
<b>1. The seriousness of students during learning process:</b>									
a. Giving attention to the teacher explanation and instruction	√			√			√		
b. Making comments or asking question about explanation and instruction			√		√		√		
c. *Giving attention to the material, examining them seriously	√			√			√		
d. *Making comments or asking questions about the material (to the teacher or their friends)			√		√		√		
	50%	0%	50%	50%	50%	0%	100%	0%	0%
<b>2. The Anthusiasm of the students in doing the task</b>									
a. Trying to understand the instruction by using various learning aids (dictionary, text book, etc., asking the teacher or their friends whenever they do not understand)		√		√			√		
b. Moving to form small group			√	√			√		
c. Taking notes on whatever they think important	√			√			√		
d. Using various aids to accomplish their task, for examples: dictionary, text book, work-sheet, etc.	√			√			√		
e. Actively observing the material to elicit idea			√		√		√		
f. Actively having discussion with the teacher and friends	√			√			√		
	50%	20%	30%	83%	17%	0%	100%	0%	0%
<b>Students' Participation</b>									
1. The students' participation in asking question			√			√		√	
2. The students' participation in suggesting idea			√		√		√		
3. The students' participation in group work									
a. Taking the initiative to do the task	√			√			√		
b. Helping their friends to understand the instruction	√			√			√		
c. Helping their friends in examining the material	√			√			√		
d. Helping their friends to generate idea and to find the vocabulary needed to do the task			√		√		√		
e. Actively involved in group discussion	√			√			√		
f. Helping motivate their friends			√		√			√	
	50%	0%	50%	50%	38%	13%	75%	25%	0%

Note: H = High M = Medium L = Low

high. It meant that almost all students gave attention to the teacher's explanation and instruction, and gave attention to the material, examining them seriously, or at least not more than five students who were reluctant to pay attention.

The enthusiasm of students increased when the pair composition method was implemented; second meeting was 50%, third meeting was 83%, and in the fourth meeting was 100%. It was indicated by the observation data showing that the enthusiasm of students was in the high level. Almost students tried to understand the instruction by asking the teacher or their friends whenever they did not understand, and using some learning aids such as dictionary, text book, etc. Also, there were some students actively having discussion with the teacher and friends, and observing the material to elicit their ideas.

Implementing pair composition method in writing descriptive text also could activate the students' participation. From the data analyzed showed that in the second meeting the students' participation was 50% high and 50% low, there were half students being high participation, and half students were less of their participation. Then in the fourth meeting the students' participation was getting increased to be 75% high. The observation data showed that there were several students participate in giving ideas, and in group working there were many students who participated in taking initiative to do the task, helping their friends to understand the instruction, to generate idea in pair to make good descriptive writing, to find vocabulary needed to write descriptive text, and actively having pair discussion.

The students were supported to find help of their friends each other to complete their writing, share idea, and correct errors analysis each other. They tried to understand how to write

descriptive text well, construct the text by good identification and description. The students tried to find out the difficult words to translate from bahasa Indonesia into English using dictionary, or asking teacher or friends. It was caused pair composition method was done to build the cooperation between two students (pair) in form of cooperative learning that members held accountable for doing their share of the work and mastering all materials (Felder and Brent, 2004: 2).

*The role of pair composition method on students' descriptive writing assessment*

Pair composition method had the role as a method that can be applied to improve students' descriptive writing skill. It was showed by the data analyzed of students' assessment before implementing (pre-test) pair composition method and after implementing (post-test) pair composition method. The data clearly could be seen as below:

Table 2. Result of students' descriptive writing assessment

Stage	Average of total score
Pre-test	63,8
Post-test	82,5
Increase in score	18,7

From the above table, the average of students' score in pre-test or before implementing pair composition method is 63,8 and the students' score after implementing pair composition method was getting increased with the average score was 82,5. The increasing of students' assessment was 18,7 from the score before (pre-test).

The result of students' score before implementing pair composition method was classified into four categories. There were 6% students' score that was categorized as excellent, 24% students' score categorized as good, 12% students' score categorized as fair, and students' score dominated 58% as poor category.

Before implementing pair composition method, almost students' assessment were poor, because there were some students who have not known the construction of descriptive text detail, especially description part on generic structure, and there were some errors on their language features. There were still several students using simple past, and incorrect in using simple present tense.

The students' descriptive writing skill improved after implementing pair composition method. It could be described from the students' descriptive writing post-test assessment. The score of students were increased. There were 17 students (more than a half of students in the class) got score more than 85, 12 students got score for about 71-84, 2 students got 68 and 70, and 2 students got score less than 65.

The students' score after implementing pair composition method was classified into four categories. There were 52% (more than a half of students in the class) students' score that was categorized as excellent, 36% students' score categorized as good, 6% students' score categorized as fair, and 6% students' score categorized as poor. Here, excellent category was dominated than in the result of students' score before implementing pair composition method.

Then, when they tried to make good descriptive writing using pair composition method, they also tried to understand what the descriptive text is and how to write it well by implementing generic structure and language feature of descriptive text that they have learnt, it regarded doing by learning in active learning, such as Prince (2004) said that active learning requires students to do meaningful learning activities and think about what they were doing, learning by doing. So, after implementing pair composition method in writing descriptive text, they were getting more understand how generic structure and language feature construct the descriptive writing.

*The students' attitude toward learning process of pair composition method*

This research found that the students gave positive attitude toward learning process using pair composition method in writing descriptive text. More than a half of students strongly agreed that they felt enjoy learning descriptive text using pair composition method and they were interested in implementing it. The students' attitude toward learning process was observed from the data collected using interview and questionnaire.

Table 3. Categories of students' score Before implementing pair composition method

No	Interpretation	Score	Student	%
1	Excellent (85-100)	86, 86.	2	6%
2	Good (71-84)	77, 77, 79, 78, 75, 76, 72, 83.	8	24%
3	Fair (66-70)	70, 69, 68, 70.	4	12%
4	Poor (0-65)	57, 52, 50, 52, 58, 52, 52, 51, 49, 56, 59, 58, 55, 58, 51, 62, 62, 61, 61.	19	58%

Table 4. Categories of students' score After implementing pair composition method

No	Interpretation	Score	Student	%
1	Excellent (85-100)	88, 89, 97, 98, 89, 95, 91, 87, 89, 89, 86, 87, 86, 89, 89, 96, 88.	17	52%
2	Good (71-84)	80, 83, 73, 84, 74, 76, 78, 73, 79, 84, 75, 77.	12	36%
3	Fair (66-70)	68, 70.	2	6%
4	Poor (0-65)	61, 63.	2	6%

Based on the interview, the students have never learn descriptive text using pair composition where they could write the descriptive text in pair, giving ideas, correcting, and evaluating each other to complete the writing. Pair composition method had several advantages for students in writing descriptive text; (1) Providing the opportunities for sharing ideas, developing the text, giving and asking the vocabulary (2) Correcting the writing errors each other (3) Increasing the knowledge in writing descriptive text, how to write the descriptive text well based on the generic structures and language features (4) To motivate students being active to write and understand about descriptive text (5) To make easy finding the difficult vocabulary because the students were able to ask and share each other. Almost all the students who were interviewed stated that pair composition method had no disadvantages, and only one student stated that sometimes it made the atmosphere of class noise.

From ten statements of questionnaire presented by researcher, the students' attitude toward learning processes using pair composition method was dominated strongly agree and agree. It meant the students gave positive attitude toward pair composition method. 70% students strongly agreed that learning English increase the knowledge in learning foreign language, 64% students strongly agreed that learning English especially in writing descriptive text using pair composition method made students more active in pair group work, so that could help students to develop their descriptive writing. 55% students strongly agreed that pair composition method made students understand how to write descriptive text well, and agreed that students felt enjoy learning English and they could focus to the material given by teacher. And only 6% students stated that they disagreed that

pair composition method can make them brave to write descriptive text in English.

These happened because pair composition method creates alive and enjoyable condition and increases participation among the students demanded to be more active in learning, moreover having discussion with their partner, Felder and Brent (2009: 5) said "Instructors who switch to active learning and follow those recommendations almost always say that their classes are much more lively and enjoyable and the quality of learning goes up dramatically".

## CONCLUSION

The research objectives of this research were to find out and describe the roles of pair composition method on students' behaviour in learning processes and their descriptive writing assessment, and to know students' attitude toward learning processes of pair composition method. The data was collected from observation data of students' behaviour, students' descriptive writing assessment, interview and questionnaire for students.

Based on the data processing and discussion, the roles of pair composition method are increasing students' behaviour in learning processes and their descriptive writing assessment, as drawn on data that 66% the seriousness of students during learning process was high, 78% the enthusiasm of students in doing task was high, and 58% the students' participation was high. The increasing of students' assessment can be seen when before implementing pair composition method there were 58% students categorized poor and after implementing there were 52% students' score categorized as excellent.

From students' attitude along with interview and questionnaire found that more than 50% students gave positive attitude as strongly agreed that pair composition method on writing

descriptive text was lively and enjoyable, supporting the students to be more active and understand how to write descriptive text well.

#### REFERENCES

- Bashrin, S. D. (2013). Productive skills: Teaching beginners in English medium school. Unpublished report, BRAC university, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principle of language learning and teaching*. Fourth edition. New York: Addison Wasley Longman, Inc.
- Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by principle: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. Second edition. New York: Longman
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Design qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approach, third edition*. United States of America: Sage Publication Inc.
- Felder, R. M. and Brent, R. (2004). Cooperative learning. *National effective teaching institute*, 2004, pp. E-1 – E-22.
- Felder, R. M. and Brent, R. (2009). Active learning: An introduction. *ASQ Higher Education Brief*, 2(4), pp. 1-5.
- Fraenkel, J. R. and Wallen, N. E. (2009). *How to design and evaluate research in education, Seventh edition*. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.
- Gerot, L. and Wignell, P. (1994). *Making sense of functional grammar*. Sydney: Gerd Stabler.
- Heaton, J. B. (1990). *Writing English language tests*. England: Longman group (FE) Ltd.
- Johnson, D. W., Johnson, R. T., & Smith, K. A. (1998). *Active learning: Cooperation in the college classroom* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Edina, MN: Interaction Book Co.
- Knapp, P. and Watkins, M. (2005). *Genre, text, Grammar: Technologies for teaching and assessing writing*. Sydney: University of South Wales Press.
- Oskamp, S, and Schultz, W. P. (2005). *Attitudes and opinions* (Third Edition). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Pinter, A. (2006). *Teaching young language learners*. New York: Oxpor University Press.
- Prince, M. J. (2004). Does active learning work? A Review of the Research. *J. Engr. Education*, 93(3), 223-231.
- Sa'diah, H. Improving students' ability in writing descriptive text through a picture series-aided learning strategy. *The English Teacher*, vol. XL: 164-182.
- Scarino, A. and Liddicoat, A. J. (2009). *Teaching and learning languages: A guide*. Australia: GEON Impact Printing Pty Ltd.