

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LEARNING COMMUNITY TECHNIQUES ON ENGLISH ESSAY WRITING SKILLS

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**Abstract:** This research is designed to measure the effectiveness of learning community techniques on English Essay Writing skills based on the result of preliminary observation, which shows that students had some problems related to the result of their writing skills which still need to achieve the expected aims. This research used a classroom action research method involving 30 students as a research sample. This research used quantitative and qualitative data for the data collecting technique. Quantitative data was taken from the pre-test and post-test results, while qualitative data was taken during observation and action. Then the results of the research showed that the percentage value of student activity in attending lectures had increased. The result of the percentage increase in student activity seen from the percentage of students who were very active and active in cycle 1 was only 36.7%, then increased in cycle 2 to 63.3%. Then the results of learning to write English essays for students also increased, with an average score in cycle 1 of 60.17, and in cycle 2, there was an increase in the average score of 9.96 to 70.13. Using the learning community technique to improve students' English abilities has a favourable effect, particularly on the growth of student's ability to write English essays.

**Keywords:** *action research; essay; learning community technique; writing skills.*

### INTRODUCTION

Language education in the university environment always emphasizes understanding writing skills for every student, especially in English language education. Based on the Operational Curriculum of English Education at Universitas Panca Sakti Bekasi, which is used in the learning process, it requires students to take writing courses that are divided into several levels according to the semester level of the students, the purpose that they can improve their understanding and writing skills. In addition, writing skills cannot be separated from any teaching and learning process activities in the classroom. This can be seen from the activities of providing exercises, assignments, and final assignments, in line with Hyland's opinion (in Wale & Bishaw, 2020), which states that writing is an important skill to be mastered by learners of English as a second language. On the other hand, the facts on the ground illustrate the opposite, where there is a gap between expectations and reality.

Based on the results of the initial observations made, the researcher examined the writing assignments of the students of the English

Education Study Program. The students' writing was still inadequate when viewed from both the content and linguistic aspects. Various reasons can cause this difficulty, for example, a lack of knowledge about writing English, which includes understanding vocabulary, language structure, and sentence organization in each paragraph (Alisha *et al.*, 2019). This is very important because an article must reflect substantive information or idea that attracts the reader's interest (Yoo *et al.*, 2020). This is in line with Richards and Renandy's (in Nurfadila, 2021) opinion, which states that writing skills are the most difficult for second language learners to master. The difficulty lies in how to generate and organize ideas and how to put ideas into text form. So that writing is considered the most difficult talent for students to master because it not only generates thoughts but also allows the conversion of these ideas into perceptual texts (Toba *et al.*, 2019). In addition, in writing, students must have prior knowledge of what topics will be developed in an essay or writing in English. Because writing supports all other language skills, writing is one of the English skills that must be taught and practiced at various levels of education.

In addition, writing supports student learning. This statement is supported by Purnomowati *et al.* (2018).

Richards and Schmidt (2013) argue that an essay is a type of writing that is relatively long and, more specifically, written by students, which contains the author's expression or view on a particular topic. The most crucial ability in learning a language is writing. Students can convey their ideas through writing, yet the majority of them still make serious errors in their spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation (Fahmi & Rachmijati, 2021). From this definition, we can see that essays are mostly associated with academic assignments (students). The essay in question is the author's thoughts or opinions on a topic to show his position on the issue to be conveyed to others (Haidir, 2021). From the aspect of the text, the essay is said to be relatively longer.

Another opinion states that an essay is a writing consisting of a combination of several paragraphs containing a topic and one main idea. Essays consist of at least three paragraphs, and essays generally consist of five (Wei *et al.*, 2019). This opinion specifically states that the length of an essay usually consists of a minimum of three paragraphs and generally consists of five paragraphs and contains a topic and main idea which is composed of three main parts, namely: 1) an introduction which contains two things, namely a general statement to attract attention. Reader and the thesis statement section to express the primary purpose of an essay. 2) The body consists of one or more paragraphs. Each paragraph develops a subtopic. Furthermore, 3) a conclusion containing a summary of the main ideas presented in the essay's body (Wale & Bishaw, 2020).

The above problems require a solution or a problem-solving path. One of the solutions to these problems is selecting material delivery techniques in the teaching and learning process. In this case, teachers or lecturers are required to not only be able to master conventional learning approaches but also be able to master modern (up-to-date) learning approaches (Almelhi, 2021). The application of modern learning techniques in English writing skills will encourage students in the classroom to be more active and productive in practice so that they not only focus on understanding theory, but students can also practice it directly (Nurharjanto *et al.*, 2020).

Related to the modern learning approach, the contextual learning approach is a learning concept that helps educators or lecturers to relate the material being taught to students' real-world

situations and encourages them to make connections between their knowledge and its application in their lives as a family and community members (Afnita & Farida, 2021).

Contextual Teaching Learning is a learning concept that helps lecturers in linking the material they learn to students' real-world situations and encourages students to make connections between their knowledge and its application in everyday life. This opinion is supported by Wamubi *et al.* (2015) that the CTL approach is a learning approach that helps teachers connect learning materials with situations that exist in the real world. Contextual is a comprehensive system consisting of interrelated parts. If these parts are intertwined, there will be an effect that exceeds the results of the separate parts (Hanafsiyah, 2007).

In the contextual learning approach, students know the benefits derived from their learning activities and experience the learning process. Because students are the subject of learning, the lecturer is only a facilitator and motivator who directs and motivates students in the learning process (Vangrieken *et al.*, 2017). The contextual learning approach has seven main components of effective learning. The seven components used in Indonesia are constructivism, inquiry, questioning, learning community, modeling, reflection, and authentic assessment (Fadhilah, 2017). In implementing contextual learning, lecturers or teachers can choose and use several techniques in a contextual learning approach which include; (1) constructivism, (2) inquiry, (3) questioning, (4) learning community, (5) modeling, (6) reflection, and (7) authentic assessment (Afnita & Farida, 2021; Johnson, 2002; Lorenza & Muhammadiyah, 2021; Ruto *et al.*, 2021)

From the several contextual learning techniques, the researcher only uses the learning community technique. The selection of the learning technique was based on several considerations concerning the problems faced in learning students' writing skills (Haryani, 2019). In addition, this learning technique is student-oriented. Where its application emphasizes collaboration with study group colleagues and always encourages a multi-way communication process so that everyone can be a source of learning (Ismawarni, 2021), and the most important thing is that truth does not only come from one, namely the lecturer. So, it is hoped that with this technique, students can gain more knowledge and skills in writing English essays. A learning community can effective occur if learning outcomes are obtained from the collaboration,

discussion and sharing with other people (Dana, 2021; Medina, 2018). Learning outcomes can be obtained by sharing between friends, between groups, and between those who know and those who do not know, both inside and outside the classroom (Garcia-Ponce & Tagg, 2020)

Learning community can occur if between lecturers and students or between students and other students have active, effective, and communicative interactions (Williams & Beam, 2019). The learning process will run significantly if it is carried out in study groups, both homogeneous and heterogeneous so that in it, there will be sharing problems (sharing problems), sharing information (sharing information), sharing experiences (sharing experience), and sharing problem-solving (sharing). Problem-solving allows more knowledge and skills to be acquired (Syatriana & Sakkir, 2020).

The learning community technique is a learning process involving communication and interaction involving cognitive processes between lecturers and students or students with other students in sharing ideas and experiences to solve a problem in the learning process (Siregar & Anwar, 2018). The learning community technique teaches students by giving them communication-based homework. The objectives of communication are what the learning is focused on in order to achieve them (Syatriana & Sakkir, 2020).

According to Putri & Ahmad (2022), students' writing inadequacies are caused by a variety of factors, as indicated by their viewpoint notes. Writing essays always results in grammatical errors. In writing class, kids continue to be passive. Students also lack the knowledge necessary to write well, especially essays.

Additionally, argumentative writing is a challenging activity in which the author adopts a stance on a contentious subject and then supports it with arguments and facts. It is difficult for an inexperienced writer to write an essay that requires content integration, rhetorical argumentation patterns, and critical thinking on their part (Marni *et al.*, 2019). Argumentative essays are difficult because of the conflict between the need for self-expression and the need to comply with a set of external constraints; in trying to meet external constraints, writers tend to lose sight of what they want to say (Tasya, 2022). It is hoped that with this technique, students can gain more knowledge and skills in language, especially English argumentative writing skills.

## METHOD

This research uses the classroom action research method. The researcher started the research by collecting qualitative data first to explore more deeply the research problem being studied in the third semester students of the English Education Study Program, Universitas Panca Sakti Bekasi, then continued with the process of collecting quantitative data to support the qualitative data. Quantitative data was taken from the results of the pre-test and post-test, while qualitative data was taken during the process of observation and action. This research is participatory collaborative, meaning that research activities are carried out by the researcher themselves with the process of observation and collaborators.

The sequence of research activities from the chairperson and members of the researcher in January-March was conducting Field Survey Preparation conducting interview observations on the problem of English essay writing skills. Then, we conducted a literature study on the variables of English essay writing skills and learning community techniques. The results of these activities were in April-June. Next, we made a grid of English essay writing skill test instruments, made observation assessment tables, and made questions for interviews.

This research was conducted at Universitas Panca Sakti Bekasi, Jl. Raya Hankam No. 54, Jatirahayu, Pondok Gede, Bekasi City, West Java 17414. The subjects in this research were the third semester students of the English Education Study Program, Universitas Panca Sakti Bekasi, totaling 30 students. The data collection process in this research consisted of five stages: observation, interviews, questionnaires, diaries, and tests.

The data analysis process is carried out inductively, and the researcher carries out special observation activities, notes the structure of each data finding, makes hypotheses by formulating data, and concludes. Parson and Brown (in Mertler, 2014) mention that there are three stages in analyzing data: organization, description, and interpretation. The first stage is an organization, which is making a narrative of data taken from the results of observations, interviews, and documentation that has been collected. The second stage describes the characteristics of each data that has undergone the reduction process and is coded. The last stage is interpreting the data that has been reduced and organized.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

At this stage, the description of the research results is divided into three discussions which include; the results of the pre-cycle, cycle 1, and cycle 2. The results obtained at each stage were calculated as the average value to see the level of English essay writing skills that the respondents (students) had achieved.

*Pre-cycle results*

The researcher carried out pre-cycle activities by giving a pre-test at the second meeting to 30 students in the fourth semester of the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Education, Universitas Panca Sakti Bekasi. The pre-test was given before the researcher applied the learning community technique. The purpose of giving the pre-test was to find out and compare the initial abilities of the respondents before and after the application of the treatment using the learning community technique in the classroom. The results of the pre-test showed that 30% of respondents' English writing skills were at the Less level and 43.3% of the respondents were at the Enough level. Based on these data, the pre-test respondents' average score was 53.57.

*Cycle action results 1*

*Application of learning community technique in essay writing courses*

The data presented in this research is not only data based on the results of the English essay writing skills test but is also supported by data from observations, and observations made by the researcher during the application of learning community technique in the classroom. Data on the activeness of respondents (students) in the essay writing course was obtained through observations and observations made at the 4th and 6th meetings, where in these meetings there were group discussion activities and continued with the presentation/exposure of the results of discussions both individually and in groups. The results of the data acquisition of respondents (students) in these activities can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. *Student activity data in essay writing course cycle 1 at meetings 4 and 6*

| Indicator   | Cycle Activity 1 |                |           |                |
|-------------|------------------|----------------|-----------|----------------|
|             | Meeting 4        |                | Meeting 6 |                |
|             | Frequency        | Percentage (%) | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| Very active | 3                | 10.00          | 5         | 16.67          |
| Active      | 6                | 20.00          | 8         | 26.67          |

|               |                                                                             |       |    |       |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|----|-------|
| Active Enough | 15                                                                          | 50.00 | 12 | 40.00 |
| Less Active   | 6                                                                           | 20.00 | 5  | 16.67 |
| Conclusion    | 36.7% (Highly Active & Active)<br>63.3% (Sufficiently Active & Less Active) |       |    |       |

The results of the research findings above show that the activeness of respondents (students) in classroom activities at the 4th and 6th meetings of cycle 1, which is in the very active and active indicator, is 36.7%. This is evidenced by the number of respondents' frequency at the fourth meeting, as many as 9 and at the sixth meeting, as many as 13. This percentage is lower compared to the percentage in the moderately active and less active indicators, which amounted to 63.3%, with the number of respondents at the fourth meeting as many as 21 and the sixth meeting as many as 17. These findings can provide an illustration that the activeness of respondents in the essay writing class in cycle 1 has not been seen as optimal as expected.

Based on the results of the post-test given to respondents (students) to measure English essay writing skills in cycle 1 in the essay writing course, the results of the analysis are as follows:

Table 2. *Student learning test results in essay writing course by using learning community technique*

| Level Ability | Value Range | Total students | Percentage |
|---------------|-------------|----------------|------------|
| Very good     | 80-100      | 5              | 16.67      |
| Well          | 60-79       | 8              | 26.67      |
| Enough        | 50-59       | 13             | 43.33      |
| Not enough    | 0-49        | 4              | 13.33      |
| Total         |             | 30             | 100        |

The application of the learning community technique in essay writing courses was carried out for 6 meetings and ended with giving post-tests to research respondents. Based on the data above, the score in the category of very good and good ability level in English essay writing skills only amounted to 13 students while at the level of sufficient and poor ability there were 17 students. When viewed from the comparison of these numbers, more than 50% of the students as the sample in this research still did not meet the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM) with the average value of cycle 1 being 60.17 while what was determined in this research was above 70. Based on the findings Therefore, the researcher continued the implementation of the action in the second cycle.

*Action results cycle 2*

*Application of learning community technique in essay writing courses*

Data on the activity of respondents (students) in the Essay writing course were obtained through observations and observations made at the 4th and 6th meetings, where in these meetings, there were group discussion activities and continued with the presentation/exposure of the discussion results both individually and in groups. The results of the data acquisition of respondents (students) in these activities can be seen in the following table:

Table 3. *Student activity data in essay writing course cycle 2 at meetings 4 and 6*

| Indicator   | Cycle Activity 2                                                        |                |           |                |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------|----------------|
|             | Meeting 4                                                               |                | Meeting 6 |                |
|             | Frequency                                                               | Percentage (%) | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
| Very active | 4                                                                       | 13.33          | 6         | 20.00          |
| Active      | 13                                                                      | 43.33          | 16        | 53.33          |
| Enough      | 10                                                                      | 33.33          | 8         | 26.67          |
| Less Active | 3                                                                       | 10.00          | 0         | 0.00           |
| Conclusion  | 65% (Highly Active & Active)<br>35% (Sufficiently Active & Less Active) |                |           |                |

The results of the research findings above show that the activeness of respondents (students) in classroom activities at the 4th and 6th meetings of cycle 2, which is in the very active and active indicator, is 65%. This is evidenced by the number of respondents frequency at the fourth meeting, as many as 17 and at the sixth meeting as many as 22. This percentage is higher when compared to the percentage of moderately active and less active indicators which amounted to 35% with the number of respondents at the fourth meeting as many as 13 and the sixth meeting as many as 8. The findings show that there is a very significant difference when compared to cycle 1. Of course, this can provide an illustration that the activity of respondents in the essay writing class in cycle 2 is very good, as previously expected.

Based on the results of the post-test given to respondents to measure English essay writing skills in cycle 2 in the essay writing course, the results of the analysis are as follows:

Table 4. *Student learning outcomes test in essay writing course by using learning community technique*

| Level Ability | Value Range | Total students | Percentage |
|---------------|-------------|----------------|------------|
| Very good     | 80-100      | 8              | 26.67      |
| Well          | 60-79       | 14             | 46.67      |
| Enough        | 50-59       | 8              | 26.67      |
| Not enough    | 0-49        | 0              | 0          |
| Total         |             | 30             | 100        |

Based on the data above, the score in the category of very good and good ability level in English essay writing skills only amounted to 22 students, while at the level of sufficient and poor ability, there were 8 students. When viewed from the comparison of these numbers, 70% of students as samples in this research have met the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM) with an average value of cycle 2 is 70.13 while the limit value that has been determined in this research is 70.

Based on the research findings above, it can be concluded that the educators, in this case, the lecturers involved in this research, have implemented the procedures for learning community techniques well. This means that the stages in the procedure are applied in accordance with the learning plans that have been prepared and are able to reduce obstacles or problems that occur during the implementation of the actions in cycle 1, then carry out stabilization in cycle 2. During the process of actions taken starting from cycle 1 to cycle 2, educators or lecturers do not experience difficulties and feel more helped by the application of the learning community technique to increase the effectiveness of students' English essay writing skills.

The increase in the activeness of respondents (students) in the essay Writing course using the learning community technique can be seen from the average value of the percentage of student activity in cycle 1 and cycle 2. The increase can be seen in the following table:

Table 5. *Conclusion of student activity in essay writing courses by using learning community techniques*

| No | Indicator                         | Percentage | Information |
|----|-----------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| 1  | Very Active and Active            | 36.7%      | Cycle 1     |
|    | Moderately Active and Less Active | 63.3%      |             |
| 2  | Very Active and Active            | 65%        | Cycle 2     |
|    | Moderately Active and Less Active | 35%        |             |

The table above shows an increase in student activity from cycle 1 to cycle 2. The increase in student activity seen from the percentage of very

active students in cycle 1 was only 36.7%, then increased in cycle 2 to 63.3%. Increased student activity in learning by using the learning community technique can also be seen in the diagram below:

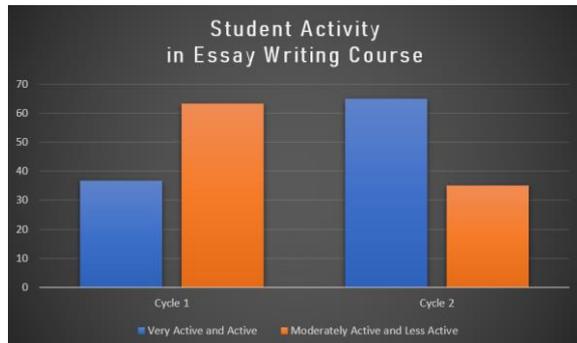


Figure 1. *Increasing student activity from cycle 1 to cycle 2*

The increase in activeness in learning also has a significant impact on student learning outcomes. Student learning outcomes in writing English essays have increased from cycle 1 to cycle 2. Here are the conclusions of student learning outcomes which can be seen in the table below:

Table 6. *Conclusion of student learning outcomes completeness in writing II course by using learning community technique*

| No          | Cycle   | Number of Students | Average value |
|-------------|---------|--------------------|---------------|
| 1           | Cycle 1 | 30                 | 60.17         |
| 2           | Cycle 2 | 30                 | 70.13         |
| Enhancement |         |                    | 9.96          |

Based on the data above shows an increase in the respondents' English essay-writing skills. This is evidenced by the number of average values in cycle 1 of 60.17, and in cycle 2 there is an increase in the average value of 9.96 to 70.13. The improvement of students' English essay writing skills is also presented in the form of a diagram as shown below:



Figure 2. *Improving English essay writing skills from cycle 1 to cycle 2*

The development carried out in cycle 2 in the application of the learning community technique has a significant impact, first seen from the average value of respondents' activeness in lectures. Second, from the test results, the average value has increased by 4.13%, in the first cycle of 60.17 to the second cycle to 70.13. The improvement that occurred in cycle 1 and cycle 2 illustrates that the results of the reflection carried out by the researcher and then implemented in cycle 2 gave more positive results for improving the English essay writing skills of the respondents (students). The results of this research are also in line with the results of research by Ismawarni (2021), which state that learning community techniques can improve students' writing abilities and skills.

The results of the reflection in the form of actions implemented in cycle 2 include; (1). Still following the stages of learning community technique that have been implemented in cycle 1, (2). Divide students into study groups by frequently exchanging members, with the aim of making learning outcomes more interactive, (3). More focus on providing guidance to each respondent who has problems in starting and developing ideas and ideas for writing English essays, (4) More often providing direction and guidance that motivates respondents to be more active in participating in activities in the implementation of actions.

Interview activities conducted by the researcher involving lecturers and students also illustrate that the application of the learning community technique positively impacts learning to write English essays. The first is the application of the learning community technique by forming study groups to foster and create more active learning situations, where each student is asked to collaborate, share knowledge and provide input to each other in each study group. In line with the opinion of Syatriana & Sakkir (2020), which states that, learning community is an effective technique in teaching English skills specially in teaching writing.

Second, optimizing the use of the learning community technique in the second cycle provided a significant change for English essay writing skills, where those who were initially accustomed to only studying with the same group, this time there was a difference, namely by combining several students into different groups. Vary. This application provides opportunities for students to be able to learn more in their new groups with the aim of wider collaborative interactions so that they can understand and enrich the material being

studied. Learning communities are best designed as 'on going' group who meet regularly for the purpose of their increasing their own learning and that of their students (Wilson & Lowe, 2019). Thus, the effectiveness of applying the learning community technique has a positive impact on students' English essay writing skills.

## CONCLUSION

The determination of learning techniques must be based on several considerations, one of which is an understanding of the problems faced by students in the process of learning to write. This is very important because by knowing the problems of students in learning, education will easily help them to be able to find solutions to these problems and can achieve learning goals.

Based on the findings, analysis and discussion, regarding the effectiveness of learning community technique on English essay writing skills, it showed significant results, where there was an increase related to student activity and learning outcomes to write English essays for English Education Study Program students. The increase in student activity can be seen during the learning process, during the learning process at the beginning students are asked to independently understand the tasks given by the lecturer, then after that the task is discussed in groups to be able to exchange ideas, ideas and ideas that can provide knowledge. more for each student in the group. This is in line with several previous studies, (Depari & Hasruddin, 2020; Rathakrishnan, 2018; Straßer & Arieli, 2019).

Then the results of the study showed that the percentage value of student activity in attending lectures had increased, the result of the percentage increase in student activity seen from the percentage of students who were very active and active in cycle 1 was only 36.7%, then increased in cycle 2 to 63.3%. Then the results of learning to write English essays for students also increased, with an average score in cycle 1 of 60.17 and cycle 2 there was an increase in the average score of 9.96 to 70.13.

The application of learning community technique to students' English skills has a positive impact, especially for the development of students in writing English essays. This is because these activities provide benefits in increasing student active participation in the learning process, facilitating students and lecturers to share information and discuss. The role of communication and interaction that often occurs involves cognitive processes between lecturers and

students or students with other students in sharing ideas, ideas and experiences to be able to solve a problem in the learning process. So that with this learning technique students can gain more knowledge and skills in language, especially English essay writing skills.

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