

Improving English Writing Skills Using Text-Based Learning Methods and Group Work

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v9i1.534>

Nurmayana¹, Puji Hariati², Desta Gloria Siahaan³ 

^{1,2}Universitas Pembinaan Masyarakat Indonesia, Indonesia

³Universitas Timor, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: nurmayana@upmi.ac.id

ABSTRACT

students are required to master several skills. One of the skills that students must master in English subjects is text writing skills. It's just that the fact is that not all students are able to write well because of the lack of training provided by lecturers. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the use of text-based learning methods and group work on writing skills in UPMI students. This research uses a classroom action research method which is carried out in two cycles. The subjects of this research were Management Students at the Indonesian Community Development University (UPMI), totaling 35 students. Data collection in research was carried out using test methods and questionnaire methods. The research results show that the use of text-based learning methods and group work can improve students' writing skills. The average value of descriptive text writing skills in cycle I was 70.43 with a success of 34.28%. There was an increase in cycle II with an average student score of 78.86 with success of 77.14%. Student responses in cycle I were 40.11 in the positive category, while in cycle II it increased to 43.74 in cycle II in the positive category. So, the results of this research indicate an increase in students' descriptive text writing skills after learning using text-based learning methods and group work.

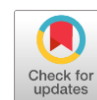
Keywords: Improving, Writing, Descriptive Text

Article History:

Submitted 24th June 2024

Accepted 30th July 2024

Published 31st July 2024



INTRODUCTION

Learning English requires mastering four key skills - listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Writing is considered one of the most challenging language skills for students to develop (Rass, 2001). This is because effective writing demands attention to various linguistic components like content, grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation. However, writing skills are viewed as a critical competency in English language learning (Syarofi, Kushwahono, & Rizky, 2018). Students must be able to communicate and express their ideas clearly and coherently in writing. Mastering writing is not a quick process - it necessitates continuous practice and training over time, as well as a strong grasp of grammar and vocabulary. One specific type of writing is descriptive text, which is used to explain or describe real-world objects, people, places, or events in detail to readers (Knapp & Watkins, 2005).

Descriptive texts consist of two main elements: identification (describing the subject) and description (the process of describing it). The ability to write effective descriptive texts is essential, as it can help readers better understand the actual object or phenomenon being described. However, many students struggle with this writing skill. Descriptive text is a type of writing used to explain or describe a thing, person, animal, location, or event to readers or listeners (Knapp & Watkins, 2005). The purpose of descriptive text is to depict real-world objects, whether they are people, places, or things, in detail. By using descriptive text, writers can help readers develop a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of the actual subject being described. Descriptive text consists of two key elements: Identification - This is the process of describing the object or subject, Description - This involves the process of how

the writer describes the object or subject in detail. Using identification and detailed description, descriptive text enables readers to visualize and comprehend the true nature of the person, place, thing, or event being portrayed. This makes descriptive text a valuable tool for effectively communicating concrete details about the real world.

The reality is that most students are still unable to achieve high grades or an "A" in English writing skills. This observation is consistent with the results from the Semester 1 Management class at the University of Pembinaan Masyarakat Indonesia (UPMI). The observation findings show that students' descriptive text writing ability is very low, with an average score of only 22.31. The students demonstrated difficulties in generating and organizing ideas to effectively describe the characteristics of the subject they were writing about. From the initial data collected, only 1 student scored 75 or above, while the rest scored below 75. The low writing ability of students can be attributed to their lack of interest in writing, as noted by Hermansyah (2012). The text highlights the significant challenges students face in developing competent descriptive text writing skills, with the majority struggling to produce high-quality written work. This underscores the need to address the root causes, such as students' lack of engagement and interest in the writing process. The continued struggle of students with writing skills, especially descriptive text writing, will negatively impact their overall ability and competence in English courses. To address this problem, an appropriate learning method needs to be implemented to support the student learning process. One potential method is a text-based learning approach grounded in Functional Systemic Linguistic (LSF) theory.

Writing is a skill that can be learned and improved through practice, rather than just a natural talent. It is a misconception that some people are simply born with the ability to write well, while others cannot. Writing is a skill that anyone can develop and master through dedicated effort and practice (Herman et al., 2024). The text challenges the notion that writing is an innate talent, and instead posits that it is a learnable skill that requires hard work to become proficient at. The passage highlights the need for an effective instructional approach, such as text-based learning informed by LSF, to help students overcome their struggles with descriptive writing and improve their overall English language competency. It also emphasizes the importance of viewing writing as a skill that can be cultivated through practice, rather than an inborn talent (Miller, 2006). Genre is a social process oriented towards achieving goals through a series of stages. Language learning can be effectively facilitated using authentic texts (Sinurat et al., 2024). Texts embody social situations and cultural values, which are reflected in the language forms used. The learning process in a text-based approach typically consists of four key stages building knowledge of the text, modelling the text, deconstructing the text, joint construction of the text. This approach, as described by Estrini (2021), leverages the inherent social and cultural aspects of language use within texts to guide students through the learning process.

Text-based learning methods can be combined with group work techniques to support student learning. In this approach, the lecturer initially provides a high level of scaffolding and guidance to help students produce text (Hyejeong, 2012). This scaffolding is gradually reduced as students' progress. At the "joint construction of the text" stage, students work collaboratively in groups, with the lecturer providing feedback on their group work (Estrini, 2021). Group work techniques are beneficial because they allow students of varying abilities and motivations to learn from each other (Zainuddin, 2015). By applying the principles of text-based learning, students not only learn how to write effectively, but also gain language skills through the context provided in the texts (Setyawati, 2016). Overall, this combined approach leverages both direct instruction from the lecturer and collaborative peer learning to help students develop strong writing and language abilities. The gradual release of responsibility from the lecturer to the students is a key part of the learning process.

Past studies have shown that text-based learning models lead to increased student engagement and learning outcomes in English subjects and text-based learning methods are

effective in helping students understand and produce written work effectively (Rusmawan, 2017). Research has also demonstrated that group work methods can increase student motivation and create a more enjoyable, less boring learning environment (Noprianto, 2017). However, there is a gap in the existing research - no studies have yet looked at the combined impact of using both text-based learning and group work techniques to specifically improve students' text writing skills. This current research you described aims to address that gap by analysing the effects of integrating text-based learning and group work approaches to enhance students' abilities in text writing (Siagian, 2016). The combination of the positive findings on the individual benefits of these two instructional approaches suggests there is potential for a synergistic effect when they are used together. Examining this integrated model is a worthwhile area of study that could yield important insights for improving writing instruction. I'm interested to see the results of this research and how it builds on the prior work in this field. Please let me know if you have any other details to share.

Literature Review

Writing

Writing involves the use of symbolic graphic representations (letters, numbers) to convey language. There are rules and conventions that must be followed when arranging these symbols into words, sentences, paragraphs, and ultimately complete texts (Herman et al., 2023). The act of writing goes beyond just mechanics - it requires generating and organizing ideas, which can be mentally taxing for students (Ferry 2017). Writing is described as a tiring activity for students, as it demands multiple skills - from letter recognition to constructing coherent, meaningful text (Herizal 2015).

Text and Genres

Genre represents the structural framework or schema of a text that helps students develop understanding through studying different text types. Texts convey different levels of understanding based on their genre, and students' learning styles can also impact their ability to achieve learning goals, leading to variations in language use (Hulu et al., 2023). Texts are also shaped by the specific situation or context in which they are used. Effective genre-based instruction follows three core stages: modelling, co-construction, and independent construction. Learning to write involves mastering control over genre conventions, as genre represents the flow of ideas and information conveyed by the author. While genre focuses on structure, the emphasis should also be placed on understanding the meaning conveyed through the text. The language used in a text is determined by three key factors: the relationship between participants (tenor), the subject matter (field), and the communication channel (mode). These tenor, field, and mode factors combine to establish the overall register of the text. Ultimately, genre determines the overarching structure of the text, while register shapes the specific linguistic patterns and features within that structure (Derewianka, 1995; Simare mare et al., 2022). This integrated understanding of genre and register is crucial for designing effective text-based writing instruction that supports students in developing their compositional skills across different text types and contexts. The emphasis on both structure and meaning is a key strength of this approach.

Descriptive Text

Descriptive text provides a detailed description of an object, whether a living creature, thing, place, or event, to enable the reader to vividly imagine or experience what is being described (Lumbangaol, Silalahi and Herman, 2024). The purpose of descriptive writing is to evoke sensory experiences in the reader, making them feel like they can see, hear, feel, or experience the object being described. Descriptive text utilizes adjectives, verbs, and comparative language to effectively convey the details and qualities of the object. Effective descriptive writing is important for clear and impactful communication, as it helps the reader develop a deeper understanding of what is being described. Descriptive text contains specific word groups, including nouns to identify the object, adjectives to describe conditions or atmosphere, numerical words to indicate quantity, and verbs to explain the object's actions (Herizal 2015). There are three main types of descriptive text: a. Description of a place, b.

Insider description of a person (without providing a full biography), c. Description of a person's appearance, character, or personality (Ferry 2017).

Text-Based Approach

The Text-Based Approach is an EFL teaching and learning approach rooted in Halliday's Functional Linguistics (Cahyono & Widiati, 2011). The goal is to enable students to produce and use texts effectively to achieve their social goals and functions. English is taught not just as linguistic knowledge, but as a text that facilitates self-actualization in academic and socio-cultural contexts. The Text-Based Approach combines genre understanding and genre teaching simultaneously in the EFL classroom (Hammond & Derewianka in Tangpermpoon, 2008). It is considered the most effective methodology for implementing a text-based syllabus. Text-based learning is oriented towards developing students' abilities to comprehend and compose both spoken and written texts in various contexts (Nugroho & Hafrizon (2009). This approach requires students to understand the function, structure, and language features of different text types. At its core, the Text-Based Approach emphasizes that communication involves the effective use of diverse spoken and written texts within their specific contextual applications.

METHOD

This was a classroom action research study, where treatment is given to something, and its reactions were closely observed. The research was conducted over two cycles - Cycle I and Cycle II. The research was carried out at the Indonesian Community Development University, with the participants being 35 first-semester Management students. The focus of the research was to improve students' ability to write procedural texts by applying text-based learning methods and group work, as well as evaluating the students' responses to these approaches. Data was collected using two methods: A test given at the end of the lesson to assess students' procedural text writing abilities using the text-based and group work methods. A questionnaire to gather students' responses to learning descriptive text writing through the text-based and group work approaches. The data collected was analysed using both descriptive qualitative and descriptive quantitative methods. This summary outlines the key elements of the research methodology, including the action.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this research analysis showed that there was an increase in students' writing skills in cycles I and II after learning was carried out using text-based methods and group work methods. Improving students' writing skills was related to the stages carried out in the text-based learning method. The first stage carried out by lecturers in improving students' writing skills is building students' knowledge of the text (Mukaromah, 2013). Building knowledge about the text could be done by inviting students to discuss with their group of friends or it could also be done by providing a little explanation of material about the text, text elements, and the language styles that should be used in the text. In learning to write English texts, students had to pay attention to the various elements that make up the text and the procedures for writing sentences in English, so that at this stage the lecturer must really be able to provide good understanding for students (Wahyudin et al., 2020).

The second learning stage was modeling the text or giving text examples to students. At this stage students are given an example of a text in English and identify the text. This was done with the aim of making students able to understand the structure of a good text and the procedure for writing the text. At the modeling the text stage, the lecturer could start forming students into several groups, so that students can exchange ideas with each other in identifying the text that has been given. The third learning stage was deconstructing the text

or reconstructing the text. The text deconstruction process was carried out by improving the text, completing, or adding to existing text content. The final stage in learning using a text-based learning model was the joint construction of the text stage. At this stage, students have started to work in groups and the lecturer's guidance has begun to decrease, but they still provide feedback on students' work in groups.

The text-based learning model implemented in conjunction with the group work learning model could certainly increase student learning effectiveness. This was because in the group work learning model students can share information with their group members (Prakoso, 2021). Learning using group work methods could develop cooperative and democratic behavior. Group work could encourage students to actively learn, group work did not bore students doing learning activities (Rusmawan, 2017). Several studies that had been conducted previously stated that there was an increase in student activity and learning outcomes in English courses through the application of a text-based learning model (Rustini, 2021). Other research results also stated that text-based learning methods were very effective in learning Indonesian. Through text-based learning methods, students could easily understand and design written work. Further research revealed that the group work method was able to increase students' learning motivation, this was because the learning process using the group work method was able to create a pleasant learning atmosphere and did not make students bored (Zainuddin, 2015). These results show that basically the use of text-based learning models and group work could improve students' language skills and learning motivation, so it is very suitable for use in the learning process. However, this text-based and group work learning model has a drawback, namely that its implementation takes a long time. It is hoped that the implications of this research can help lecturers improve students' cognitive abilities by using text-based learning models and group work.

CONCLUSIONS

The average scores of students improved steadily from the pre-test through the two implementation cycles. This indicates that the combination of text-based learning models and group work was effective in enhancing students' text writing skills. Student responses to the learning process also showed a positive trend, with increasing levels of satisfaction and engagement across the cycles when the instructional approach integrating text-based learning and group work was used. The qualitative data from student questionnaires demonstrated that learners responded favorably to this instructional model, further supporting its benefits for improving text writing abilities.

REFERENCES

- Ahn, H. (2012). Teaching Writing Skills based on a Genre Approach to L2 Primary School Students: An Action Research. Retrieved on May, 1st 2012 from <http://www.ccsnet.org/elt>
- Cahyono, B.Y. & Widiati, U. 2011. The Teaching of English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia. Malang: University of Malang Press.
- Derewianka, Beverly. 1995. Exploring How Texts Work. Australia: Primarily English Teaching Association.
- Estrini, D. (2021). Penerapan Genre Based Approach (Gba) dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris SMPN 1 Panimbang. *Teacher : Jurnal Inovasi Karya Ilmiah Guru*, 1(1), 96–101. <https://doi.org/10.51878/teacher.v1i1.544>.

- Ferry, F. K. (2017). Improving The Students' speaking Skill by Using Mind Mapping Technique At Universitas Bina Darma. *ELTE Journal (Journal of English Language teaching & Education)*, 5(1).
- Herizal, A. N. (2015). Improving Students' Descriptive Writing Text Through Picture Word Inductive Model (Pwim) Strategy for Seventh. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Untan* 2(1): 25-34.
- Hermansyah. (2012). Teaching Descriptive Writing Using Clustering Technique at Second Grade Students of MAN Cimahi. *The Academic Journal of STKIP Siliwangi*. 1. 2012.
- Herman, H., Rafiek, M., Agustina, T., Saddhono, K., Malabar, S., Saputra, N., and Purba, R. (2023). Exploring the metafunctions to improve EFL learners' writing ability in the perspective of systemic functional linguistics. *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities*, 4(2), 87-100. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.58256/rjah.v4i2.1195>
- Herman, H., Shaumiwaty, S., Sipayung, R. W., Solissa, E. M., Fatmawati, E., Girsang, S. E. E., & Saputra, N. (2024). A Systemic Functional Linguistic Approach To Improve Students' Ability In Writing English Text. *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(4), 1822-1830. <https://doi.org/10.53555/kuely.v30i4.1759>
- Hulu, P. G. D., Herman, H., Sinaga, Y. K., Syathroh, I. L., Sari, H. N., Saputra, N., & Purba, R. (2023). Teaching English to Local Vernacular Students in Indonesia: Effects of Using Picture Word Inductive Model (PWIM) on Writing Skills. *ISVS e-journal*, 10(9), 187-197. <https://doi.org/10.61275/ISVSej-2023-10-09-13>
- Knapp, P., & Watkins, M. (2005). *Genre, text, grammar: Technologies for teaching and assessing writing*. UNSW Press.
- Lumbangaol, A. W. D., Silalahi, D. E., & Herman, H. (2024). Implementing the use of group discussion in writing descriptive text: A case on teaching method. *Journal of Education, Linguistics, Literature, and Art*, 2(1), 35-44. <https://doi.org/10.62568/ella.v2i1.124>
- Miller, Robert Keith. (2006). *Motives for Writing*. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies.
- Mukaromah, N. (2013). The Use of "Writing in the Here and Now" Strategy To Improve Students' writing Ability (A Classroom Action Research of the First Grade Students of SMP Nusantara Tuntang Semarang in the Academic Year of 2012/2013). Skripsi.
- Nugroho, Taufik & Hafrizon. 2009. *Introduction to Genre Based Approach*. Jakarta: Ministry of National Education.
- Noprianto, E. (2017). Student's Descriptive Text Writing InSFL Perspectives. *IJELTAL (Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics)*, 2(1), 65-81. doi: 10.21093/ijeltal.v2i1.53
- Prakoso, A. R., Seriardana, P., & Adnyani, L. D. S. (2021). Implementasi Genre Based Approach untuk Meningkatkan Keterampilan Menulis Explanation Text. *Indonesian Gender and Society Journal*, 2(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.23887/igsj.v2i1.39206>.
- Rass, R. A. (2001). Integrating reading and writing for effective language teaching. *English Teaching Forum*, 39, 1-5.
- Rusmawan, P. N. (2017). Genre based Approach to Teach Writing Descriptive Text. *JEES (Journal of English Educators Society)*, 2(2), 119-134. doi: 10.21070/jees.v2i2.875
- Setyawati, H. (2016). The Use Of Writing "In The Here And Now" Strategy To Improve Students' Writing Ability At The Tenth Grade Of Smk Darul Fikri Bringin

- Kauman Ponorogo In The Academic Year Of 2015/2016 (Skripsi, Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo). Retrieved from <https://library.umpo.ac.id>
- Siagian, S. (2016). The Use of “Writing in the Here and Now” Strategy in Improving Students’ Writing Skills to the Tenth Grade Students of SMK S Kampus Padangsidempuan in 2015 - 2016 Academic Year. *Jurnal Estupro*, 1(1), 10–19.
- Simare mare, R. M., Herman, H., Purba, C. N., Sinurat, B., and Saputra, N. (2022). Students’ difficulties in writing recount and narrative text. *Jurnal Scientia*, 11(1), 592-597. DOI: [10.35337/scientia.Vol11.pp560-565](https://doi.org/10.35337/scientia.Vol11.pp560-565)
- Sinurat, B., Herman, H., Pardede, F. O. I., and Saragih, R. (2024). Application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Assisting and Improving Writing Ability For Students of Computer Science Department. *Journal of Adaptive Learning Technologies*, 1(1), 34-40. Retrieved from: <https://scientificbulletin.com/index.php/JALT/article/view/75>
- Syarofi, A., Kuswahono, D., & Rizky, H. (2018). Implementing Process Writing Strategy Using Weblogs to Improve Students’ Ability in Writing Descriptive Text. *Lingua Cultura*, 12(4), 351–355. doi:10.21512/lc.v12i4.4142
- Wahyudin, A. Y., Jepri, D., Simamora, M. W., Pratiwi, I. W., & Rina, A. (2020). Penggunaan Komik Digital Toondoo dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris Tingkat Sekolah Menengah. *Journal of Social Sciences and Technology for Community Service (JSSTCS)*, 1(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.33365/jta.v1i1.673>.
- Zainuddin, Z. (2015). The Effect of Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition Technique on Students’ Reading Descriptive Text Achievement. *English Language Teaching*, 8(5), p11. doi:10.5539/elt.v8n5p11