
IMPROVING STUDENTS' DESCRIPTIVE WRITING SKILL BY USING PEER RESPONSE TECHNIQUE

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Abstract

The objectives of this study were to find out (1) whether or not peer response technique significantly improved the descriptive writing achievement of first-year students of Tarbiyah Faculty of IAIN Raden Fatah Palembang, (2) to find out the variable that had the largest contribution to the improvement of descriptive writing skill after peer response technique was implemented, (3) to find out what students' opinions were on the implementation of peer response technique. Thirty two first-year students year 2009/2010 were involved in the study. They were chosen on the basis of their Writing I score as this study used purposive sampling. This study concerned with the quantitative data in the form of students' writing test scores and the descriptive data of the questionnaire. The scores were analyzed to know whether there was a significant difference of students' descriptive writing achievement between the two groups and significant improvement shown by the experimental group after the treatment was given in ten meetings. The result showed that there was a significant difference between descriptive writing skill of experimental group and control group since $t_{count}2.265$ was higher than $t_{table}2.042$. Based on the result of paired samples t-test, it is concluded that there was a significant improvement before the treatment and after the treatment given to the experimental group since $t_{count}4.402$ was higher than $t_{table}2.131$. The regression analysis showed that the largest beta coefficient was 0.385 which was for organization, which means that this variable made the strongest unique contribution to explain the dependent variable to the prediction of descriptive writing skill. In general, the students gave a positive response to the value of peer response technique in teaching descriptive writing. They agreed that peer response technique enriched the content of their writing, improved the organization of their writing, improved the language (including grammar) of their writing, helped them play a more active role in class activity. They also agreed that peer response technique was beneficial to improve their writing and they would keep using peer response technique in the future.

Key words: descriptive writing achievement, peer response technique.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Though communication today increases the significance of writing skills, the way writing is taught and learnt does not seem to enable students, particularly in ESL and EFL countries, to become skilled and proficient writers. One of the problems is that many teachers pay little or no attention on content; instead, they mainly look at grammar and the mechanics of writing (punctuation and spelling) and correct errors from the first drafts (Torwong, 2003).

Another important problem is that the teacher-centered approach is still applied in some writing classrooms. The approach is totally against the concept of learners' autonomy, which is "the ability to take charge of one's learning" (Holec, 1981:3).

Ferris (2003) mentions that as L2 writing specialists began to embrace the process approach, the implementation of peer response technique in ESL writing classes was rapid and widespread. This technique is a particularly beneficial writing process (Okada, 2006). This type of response allows

learners to look at their writing from a different perspective and improve it in the rewriting stage (Dyer & Friedrich, 2002). The peer response technique, one of the cooperative learning activities, which may be the primary stage to enhance autonomous learning, is included in the process writing approach.

When students are learning a foreign language together, learners share their strengths and weaknesses with others (Okada, 2009). Peer interaction results in effective learning, as learners complete a task that they may not be able to do individually but may be able to do with assistance. While students may not be able to understand how and what to change by themselves, their readers can show this from a different perspective. Thus, peer response technique provides a powerful learning tool for students to develop their ideas and writing skills, along with increasing their awareness of the audience they are writing for.

Based on the advantages of peer response technique mentioned, the writer had implemented that technique in her study.

The Problems of The Study

The problems of the study were formulated as follows:

1. Did peer response technique significantly improve the descriptive writing achievement of first-year students of Tarbiyah Faculty of IAIN Raden Fatah Palembang?
2. What was the criterion in descriptive writing skill that made the largest contribution to the improvement of descriptive writing skill after peer response technique was used?
3. What were the students' opinions on the implementation of peer response technique?

The Objectives of The Study

The objectives of the study were (1) to find out whether or not peer response technique significantly improved the descriptive writing achievement of first-year students of Tarbiyah Faculty of IAIN Raden Fatah Palembang, (2) to find out the variable that had the largest contribution to the improvement of descriptive writing skill after peer response technique was implemented, and (3) to find out what students' opinions were on the implementation of peer response technique.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Approaches to Teaching Writing

Earliest work in the teaching of writing was based on the notion of controlled, or guided, composition. This was the predominant approach from the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s. In the mid-1960s, however, teachers began to feel that controlled composition was not enough. This led to a focus on 'rhetorical functions' which took textual manipulation beyond the sentence level to the discourse level and focused on teaching types of texts such as descriptions, narratives, definitions, exemplification, classification, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, and generalizations (Paltridge, 2004).

So far, a variety of approaches to the teaching of writing has flourished such as the controlled-to-free approach, the free writing approach, the paragraph pattern approach, the grammar syntax-organization approach, the communicative approach and the process approach, which emphasizes the process of writing rather than the end product (Raimes, 1983). According to such an approach, what students learn and how they manage their learning throughout their learning and writing processes should be the core of their strategies for learning to write.

Writing is not a skill that can be learned or developed in isolation (Rivers, 1981), but it should be taught and developed in cooperation with other skills and aspects of the language studied. Previous research in Turkey, for example, has shown that academic input received through reading information on how to develop writing skills causes improvement in students' essays (Tütüniş, 2000).

Apart from the importance of making use of other skills in the teaching of writing, the nature of activities through which the learners develop their writing has changed significantly, among which cooperative learning and journal keeping are two of the newest applications.

Cooperative Learning Method

Cooperative learning refers to a method of instruction whereby students work together in groups to reach common goals (Chafe, 1998). Within cooperative learning, students benefit from sharing ideas rather than working alone. Students help one another so that all can reach some measure of success (Slavin, 1995). This is in contrast with the traditional method where students work individually or competitively. In the traditional method, students are generally concerned with improving their own grade, and goals are individualistic rather than group-wide (Chafe, 1998).

In the field of language, cooperative learning values the interactive view of language, which is known as developed combination of structural and functional views of language (Mandal, 2009). It considers knowledge of appropriate use of language and the ability to structure discourse interactions. Like any other approach, as Richards and Rodgers (2001) argued, it possesses its own theory of language and theory of learning. In its theory of language, cooperative learning sees language as a tool of social relations. Students are provided with authentic context for negotiation of meaning through using the language. Cooperative learning facilitates and deepens learning. It results in higher levels of understanding and reasoning, the development of critical thinking, and the increase in accuracy of long – term retention.

In cooperative learning method when the teacher gives a writing task, the members of the groups work together towards certain shared learning goals. They help each other during the process of drafting the writing. They plan, translate and review the work together. They monitor and evaluate their writing. They try to gain appreciation for their group. In such class activities team members try to make sure that each member has mastered the assigned task because the teacher randomly calls upon the students to answer for the team. The teacher should reward the best team and the most challenging individual. This kind of grading will serve as an incentive to harness competition for further cooperation amongst teams' members (Mandal, 2009).

Peer Response Technique

Peer response technique refers to a technique in which student readers provide other student writers comments on their writing drafts so that those student writers can improve their own written work (Nelson and Murphy, 1993). The activity can be viewed as cooperative learning which increases students' achievement through collaborative learning rather than competitive (Johnson and Johnson, 1991) and individual learning (Bruffee, 1984). Peer response refers to a technique in which student readers provide other student writers comments on their writing drafts so that those student writers can improve their own written work (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996).

Peer response activities normally appear in the form of pairs and small groups. In peer response activity, two students, on a voluntary basis or as assigned by the teacher, give comments on each other's written work. Similarly, in the peer response group activity, student writers form or are

assigned to small groups to exchange written drafts in order to read and offer comments, in written or oral forms, and receive feedback from one another in return (Nelson and Murphy, 1993).

A peer response group activity enhances students' 'learning together,' as Grabe and Kaplan (1996: 379) state, "Responding to peer work will also involve students in each other's writing; in that process, students can learn the language of and uses for responding to texts".

In a writing classroom, students give response and comment on each other's writing as peers who collaborate in order to give insight and knowledge to each other. Peer response, thus, can be seen as powerful learning tools incorporating reading and writing practice and such a view encapsulates the contemporary social constructivist theory of learning (Gousseva, 1998). Peer response can also be considered as cooperative writing in which, in Harmer's (2001) words "response and evaluation are greatly enhanced by having more than one person working on it, and the generation of ideas frequently more lively with two or more people involved than it is when writers work on their own" (p. 260). Thus, especially when the profiles of the students are similar, learners can learn from each other during this writing process.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Peer Response Technique

The peer response technique is praised for many reasons. According to Forman and Cazden (1985) the peer response technique gives students opportunities to play a more active role, which is necessary for becoming autonomous learners, in their learning. They also state that peer response also allows more students' cooperation by giving them additional roles of a reader and advisor. It raises writers' awareness. Since the readers read the draft and try to judge the meaning of the writing from their own perspectives, the writers have to try to write comprehensibly so that their readers understand accordingly (Torwong, 2003)

In addition, Allaei and Connor (1990) believe that through making choices, expressing purposes, reading and rereading their own and peers' written drafts, students are gradually able to identify errors in their own writing in terms of content, grammar and mechanics. This improved learning capability is in accordance with the goal of learner empowerment in English writing, and the peer response technique may be a possible way to achieve this goal.

Keh (1990), another researcher supporting the use of peer response groups, argues that student writers can understand comments from friends better than those from the teacher because they are at a same stage of maturity. In short, the peer response is an activity which allows students to learn from one another. In the activity, students may work in pairs or in groups, but peer pairs may foster the 'tutor-tutee' pattern. Some researchers focus more on the peer response group activity. In the peer response group activity, students exchange their written drafts and give comments to one another. Then, they revise their drafts accordingly. The peer response activity is said to be useful to students' writing.

Rollinson (2005) adds other affective advantage of peer response over teacher response including the perceptions that the peers are less threatening, less authoritarian, friendlier and more supportive than the teacher.

Despite many advantages of the peer response technique in English writing classes, a good number of researchers are critical of it. They argue that students prefer to follow their teacher's responses because they might not always trust their peers in their revision (Mendonca and Johnson, 1994). Some of them are concerned with students' insufficient ability to evaluate and identify errors in their peers' written work, which may lead to the disheartening situation of the blind leading the blind.

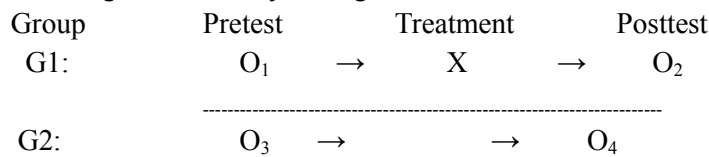
However to anticipate the problems meet in the application of peer revision, Teo (2007) has suggested to modify the technique by allowing the students to use their mother tongue, simplifying the steps of the writing process by making them more concrete to the students, and providing teacher intervention.

From strengths and weaknesses above, the peer response technique is still applicable especially for ESL students.

METHOD

Research Design

In this study, the writer grouped the sample into two groups; experimental and control groups. The design of this study is diagrammed as follows:



(Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993)

Where;

- : dash line presents that the experimental and control groups that have not been equated by randomization
- X : Treatments for the experimental group which refers to the application of peer response technique.
- G1 : Experimental group
- G2 : Control group
- O₁ : The pre-test in the experimental group
- O₂ : The post-test in the experimental group
- O₃ : The pre-test in the control group
- O₄ : The post-test in the control group

This study was concerned with the quantitative data in the form of students' writing test scores and the descriptive data of the questionnaire. The scores were analyzed to know whether there was a significant difference of students' descriptive writing achievement between the two groups.

Population and Sample

Population for this study was 72 first-year students of English Language Education Study Program of Tarbiyah Faculty of IAIN Raden Fatah Palembang. They were grouped into two classes. Unfortunately, not all of them could pass Writing I subject. The description of the total number of the students is shown below.

Table 1 The Population of First-Year Students of English Language Education Study Program of Tarbiyah Faculty of IAIN Raden Fatah Palembang

Class	Passed	Failed	Total
A	22	14	36
B	24	12	36
Total	46	26	72

Source: English Language Education Study of Tarbiyah Faculty of IAIN Raden Fatah Palembang Year 2009/2010

Meanwhile, purposive sampling was used to choose the samples. According to McMillan (1992: 76), in purposive sampling the researcher selects particular elements from the population that will be representative or informative about the topic. Based on the researcher's knowledge of the population, a judgment was made about which cases should be selected to provide the best information to address the purpose of the research.

The sample was chosen on the basis of their score in Writing I subject. The students who were chosen as the control group and the experimental group had the same score on Writing I. They got A, B, and C from Writing I. In this study, thirty two students were taken. They were grouped equally into control group and experimental group. To choose which classes became the experimental group and the control group, a toss of a coin was used. The results were class A became experimental group and class B was the control group. The total number of the students was shown in the following table:

Scoring Method and Rater

Analytic scoring described by Brown and Bailey (1984) cited in Brown (2004, 244-245) was used to score writing pretest and posttest. There are five criteria for scoring writing. They are organization, grammar, logical, punctuation, and style and quality. To have confidence in the ratings, we need information on inter-rater reliability where several judges are asked to rate compositions of language learners (Wang, 2009). This study used two raters to give marks to the students' work of paragraph writing. The raters were the lecturers who teach Writing subjects at TarbiyahFaculty. The raters agreed to reach a desired level of reliability. They were well-informed about the test and scoring system. After each test, the students' descriptive writing result was rated or marked by two raters separately in turn. To compute inter-rater reliability,

The scores used in this study were from the average scores of these two raters. In other words, the final scores of pre-test and post-test were taken from the average of the scores from the first and the second rater. The score interval and category can be seen on the table below:

Table 2 Score Interval and Category

5-29	Very Poor
30-59	Poor
60-74	Fair
75-89	Good
90-100	Excellent

The Validity and Reliability of the Research Instrument

The Validity of The Research Instrument

Validity refers to the degree to which a study accurately reflects or assesses the specific concept that the researcher is attempting to measure (Hughes, 1989). In this study, content validity was applied. Moreover, Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) state validity refers to the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the specific inferences researchers make based on the data they collect.

In this research, content-related evidence of validity was used. According to Hatch and Lazaraton (1991), to assure ourselves of content validity of a test, the content of whatever we wish to measure must be carefully defined. If the test was covering course content, the test items should correspond to materials covered in the course.

By referring to the statement, the content validity of the test being administered to the sample students obtained on the basis the materials given to the experimental group and control group students which were a compilation from many sources.

The Reliability of The Research Instrument

Reliability is the degree to which the scores assign to students' work accurately and consistently indicate their levels of performance or proficiency (Hughes, 1989). Since the tests given were in the form of writing instructions in which students had to write short story and poetry, the reliability was measured by using interrater reliability. The analysis in this study explored the relationship between the scores obtained by two raters to the same samples tested at the same time using the same scoring method to check the interrater reliability

There are some ways to find interrater reliability, such as percent agreement, Cohen's kappa coefficient, correlation between different raters, intraclass correlation, and measures of rank correlations, namely Kendalls's tau and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (Pallant, 2003). In this study, Spearman's rho and Kendall's tau were used.

Before carrying out statistical analysis, the reliability of the rater was found out first. Kendall's tau and Spearman rho were used to correlate the scores gained by two raters. The Kendall's tau correlation coefficient for rater1-rater2 for the pre-test of experimental group was 0.465, while the Spearman rho correlation coefficient for rater1-rater2 for the pre-test of experimental group was 0.626. The Kendall's tau correlation coefficient for rater1-rater2 for the pre-test of control group was 0.783, while the Spearman rho correlation coefficient for rater1-rater2 for the pre-test of control group was 0.894. The Kendall's tau correlation coefficient for rater1-rater2 for the post-test of experimental group was 0.638, while the Spearman rho correlation coefficient for rater1-rater2 for the post-test of experimental group was 0.796. The Kendall's tau correlation coefficient for rater1-rater2 for the post-test of control group was 0.502, while the Spearman rho correlation coefficient for rater1-rater2 for the post-test of control group was 0.634.

The thing to consider is the direction of the relationship between the variables. If there is a negative sign in front of the t value, this means there is negative correlation between the two variables. The correlation coefficients are positive, indicating a positive correlation between rater 1 and rater 2.

Techniques for Collecting The Data

The data were collected through testing the sample and asking their opinions. These techniques required a test and a questionnaire respectively.

Test

In collecting the data, the writer used a writing test. The test was used for pre-test and post-test. The time allocation for the test was 40 minutes.

The pre-test was given to the students before the implementation of peerresponse technique. The students were asked to write a descriptive paragraph from the topics or titles given.

After the treatment, the students were given the post-test. In post-test, the students were also asked to write a paragraph with the same topic or title as the one given in the pretest.

Questionnaire

A closed-question questionnaire was given to the students in experimental group after the

post-test was done. They were asked to answer six questions on the questionnaire. The questionnaire was intended to know students' opinions about the peer response technique that had been implemented earlier.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This section describes and analyzes the results of the tests that were distributed to the sample before and after the treatment and questionnaire distributed to the sample after treatment.

The Difference Analysis

The score difference between the groups was analyzed using independent samples t-test both for pre-test and post-test.

The first section of the independent samples test output box for pre-test (see Appendix 9) showed the result of Levene's test for equality of variances. H_0 equals to both samples having the same variant. H_a equals to both samples having the different variant. If the probability is higher than 0.05, the H_0 is accepted. But if the probability is lower than 0.05, the H_0 is rejected.

In the pre-test, the significance $0.281 > 0.05$ (see Appendix 9) means H_0 was accepted, the variance (variation) of scores for the two groups was the same (equal variances assumed).

The second section of pre-test independent samples t-test is to find out whether there was significant difference between groups. If t_{count} is lower than t_{table} , then there is no significant difference. There were no significant difference between experimental group and control group in the pre-test since $t_{count} 0.374 < t_{table} 2.042$.

In the output for post-test scores the significance level for Levene's test is 0.081. This means that the assumptions of equal variances has not been violated, therefore the t-value used is the one provided with equal variances assumed. There was a significant difference between experimental group and control group since $t_{count} 2.265$ (with associated degrees of freedom 30 and the mean difference between groups was 6.84 with and the 95% confidence interval for the difference in means) was higher than $t_{table} 2.042$.

To find out if there was a significant difference between the two groups, we also refer to the column labeled Sig. (2-tail) which appears under the section labeled t-test for equality of means. If the value in the Sig. (2-tailed) column is equal or less than .05, then there is a significant difference in the mean scores on the dependent variable for each of the two groups. In the output the Sig. (2-tailed) value was 0.031. As this value was below the required 0.05, it is concluded that there was a statistically significant difference in the mean scores for the two groups.

The Progress Analysis

To find out the distribution amount related between descriptive writing before the treatment and after the treatment, paired samples correlation table was used.

Firstly, the statistical output for paired samples test of experimental group is shown. In the table labeled Paired Samples test, the final column labeled Sig. (2-tailed) – the probability value – was verified. If this value is less than 0.05, then it is concluded that there is a significant difference between the two scores. In the output, the probability was 0.001. This value is smaller than the specified alpha value of 0.05. Therefore we can conclude that there was a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores.

Having established that there was a significant difference, the next step is to find out which set of scores was higher (pre-test or post-test). To do this, look in the mean scores for each of the two sets of scores. In this case, the mean of pre-test score was 69.649 and the mean of post-test score was 76.375. Therefore, it is concluded that there was a significant increase in the pre-test score to post-test score.

The third table reports the mean and standard deviation of the difference in value between the pairs. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference is shown. The t count for the test was 4.402 with 15 degrees of freedom. This is significant because it was higher than 2.131.

Finally, the paired samples t-test analysis for control group is shown. To find out whether there was a significant improvement between pre-test and post-test. For the control group, the mean of pre-test was 68.25 and the mean of post-test was 69.43.

To find out the distribution amount related between pre-test and post-test, paired samples correlation table is used. The correlation was 0.853. In the output, the probability value Sig. (2-tailed) was 0.391. This value was smaller than the specified alpha value of 0.05. And the t count for the test was 0.884 which was smaller than the t table 2.131. Therefore, we can conclude that there was not a significant improvement between the pre-test and post-test scores of the control group.

Based on the result of paired samples t-test, we can conclude that there was a significant improvement before the treatment and after the treatment given to the experimental group (4.402). For the control group, there was not a significant difference (0.884) even though there was an increased in the post test score mean.

The Stepwise Regression Analysis

Stepwise regression is technique that can be used to explore the relationship between one continuous dependent variable and a number of independent variables or predictors. In this case, five of the scales correlated substantially with peer response technique (0.902 for logical, 0.943 for punctuation, 0.946 for organization, 0.947 for style and quality, and 0.976 for grammar).

In the model summary table, the R Square variable gives the proportion of variance that can be predicted by the regression model using the data provided from the independent variables. It is commonly reported as a percentage. This value indicates that a particular percentage of the variance in descriptive writing scores could be predicted from the variables organization, grammar, punctuation, and style and quality. Note that this is an overall measure of the strength of association, and does not reflect the extent to which any particular independent variable is associated with the dependent variable. R-Square is also called the coefficient of determination.

In this case, the value of grammar was 0.952. Expressed as a percentage (multiply by 100), this means that peer response technique explains 95.2% percent of the variance in grammar. The same explanation for other dependent variables as follow: organization (98.8%), style and quality (99.5%), and punctuation (99.9%).

The largest beta coefficient was 0.365 which is for organization. The beta value for other variables made less of a contribution. They are 0.257 for grammar, 0.208 for punctuation, and 0.171 for style and quality. If the Sig. value is less than .05, then the variable is making a significant unique contribution to the prediction of the dependent variable. In this case, all variables made statistically significant contribution to the prediction of descriptive writing as the Sig. value were all 0.000. The regression equation is as follows:

$$\text{Post-test score} = -0.023 + 0.365 \text{ organization} + 0.257 \text{ grammar} + 0.171 \text{ style and quality.}$$

The Questionnaire Analysis

To find out students' opinions on the implementation of peer response technique they have learned in descriptive writing, questionnaire constructed by the researcher herself was presented by using closed questions.

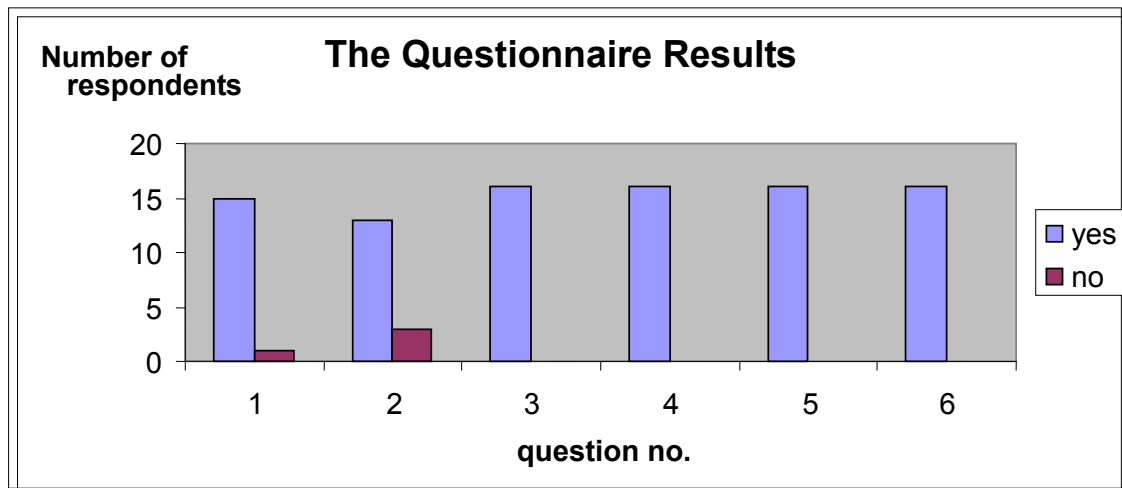


Figure1: The Questionnaire Results

Based on the graph shown above, 93.75% students answered “yes” and 6.25% students answered “no” that their friends’ response enriched the content of their writing.

Based on the result of the questionnaire for question number two, 81.25% students agreed and 18.75% disagreed that peer response technique improved the organization of their writing.

Based on the result of the questionnaire for question number three, 100% students agreed that their friends’ responses improved the language (including grammar) of their writing

Based on the result of the questionnaire for question number four, 100% students admitted that peer response technique helped them play a more active role in class activity.

Based on the result of the questionnaire for question number five, 100% students agree that peer response technique is beneficial to improve their writing.

Based on the result of the questionnaire for question number six, all students (100%) said that they would keep using the peer response technique.

From the result of the questionnaire, it can be concluded that:

1. Most of the students felt that their friends’ response enriched the content of their writing.
2. Thirteen students believed that peer response technique improved the organization of their writing.
3. All students agreed that their friends’ responses improved the language (including grammar) of their writing.
4. All students agreed that peer response technique helped them play a more active role in class activity.
5. All of them agreed that peer response technique is beneficial to improve their writing.
6. All of them also answered that they would keep using the peer response technique after the research finished.

It seems that the students got the benefits from the implementation of peer response technique

at early stage of their university-level education. The benefits are:

1. They had more practice to write
2. They became more actively involved in the class.
3. Peer response technique helped them create a friendly learning atmosphere.

DISCUSSION

This section discusses and interprets the statistical findings mentioned earlier. This discussion is presented in two perspectives: the effect of using peer response technique and the limitation of the study.

The research question as mentioned in Chapter 1 made an inquiry about the improvement of students' achievement after being treated by peer response technique. The descriptive statistic results showed that the experimental group made a greater improvement than the control group. It can be seen from the mean and also the highest and lowest score gained by the two groups. The results were also supported by the results of independent samples t-test and paired samples t-test which showed that experimental group improved more than control group. It means that the peer response technique significantly improved the students' achievement in descriptive writing because there was a significant difference of descriptive writing skill between experimental group and control group.

The largest beta coefficient was 0.365 which is for organization. The beta value for other variables made less of a contribution. They are 0.257 for grammar, 0.208 for punctuation, and 0.171 for style and quality.

The students gave a positive opinion to the technique implemented. It could be seen from the questionnaire result which stated that all of them agreed that peer response technique improved their descriptive writing ability. And they said that they would keep using the technique after the research finished.

There are some reasons to explain why peer response technique could develop the descriptive writing skills of the first-year students and significantly increased the post-test scores. Firstly, by using peer response technique students could have more practice to write. It seems that much practice led to possess additional knowledge and skills. Thus, it might be true to say that using peer response technique produced an added value to the students' prior knowledge. On their learning process, they were taught how to make a good organization and how to use an appropriate language for descriptive writing composition. It is expected that on the next level they can identify errors on their own writing. This was supported by Allaei and Connor (1990) who believe that through making choices, expressing purposes, reading and rereading their own and peers' written drafts, students are gradually able to identify errors in their own writing in terms of content, grammar and mechanics. This improved learning capability in accordance with the goal of learner empowerment in English writing, and the peer response technique might be a possible way to achieve this goal.

The second reason why peer response technique could enhance the students' achievement in descriptive writing is that peer response technique created a friendly learning atmosphere. The situation arose from the process that allowed the students to work with friends and without teachers' interference at an early stage. This statement is supported by Rollinson (2005) who mentions other affective advantage of peer response over teacher response including the perceptions that the peers are less threatening, less authoritarian, friendlier and more supportive than the teacher.

The third reason why peer response technique could enhance the students' achievement is that the peer response technique provided students with opportunities to play a more active role. The



friendly atmosphere facilitated them to obtain the appropriate affective filter consisting of motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. The appropriate affective filter is when the motivation and self confidence is high and anxiety is low. That the researcher and some students already knew each other, it was an advantage. Forman and Cazden (1985) state that the peer response technique gives students opportunities to play a more active role, which is necessary for becoming autonomous learners, in their learning. They also state that peer response also allows more students' cooperation by giving them additional roles of a reader and advisor which raise writers' awareness.

The duration of the present study was limited to 10 meetings (not including the pre-test, and post-test), which apparently was too short to allow students to improve their descriptive writing ability. Studies of this nature should be conducted to investigate the impact of peer response technique over a longer course of time.

Finally, peer response technique was beneficial and had to be involved as one of the techniques to be used in writing class, moreover of EFL setting.

CONCLUSION AND REMARK

Conclusions

To summarize, three conclusions can be drawn. First, based on the result of post-test, peer response technique significantly improves the descriptive writing achievement of first-year students at Tarbiyah Faculty of IAIN Raden Fatah Palembang. Second, organization had the largest contribution to the improvement of descriptive writing skill after peer response technique was implemented. Finally, students give a positive opinion to the implementation of peer response technique.

Remark

Three things are suggested. First, other researchers can use the peer response technique to teach other writing genres; narrative, expository, persuasive, journal and letters, and poetry writing. Second, other researchers who want to investigate the effect of peer response technique should take a longer time in doing the research. Due to limited time, the writer of the present study could not really let students to improve their descriptive writing ability. Last, other researchers can investigate the effect the peer response technique in other institutions, formal or informal, on higher level of education with a larger scope of students.

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