

APPLYING SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION COMBINED WITH PICTURE TO IMPROVE WRITING SKILL OF THE EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENTS OF SMP CIPTA DHARMA DENPASAR

Festa Rahmadonna

Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar
festarahmadonna@gmail.com

I Komang Budiarta

Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar
mrbudi@unmas.ac.id

I Gusti Agung Putri Wirastuti

Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar
putri.wirastuti@unmas.ac.id

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Abstract: Students with proficient writing skills can articulate their thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, emotions, and experiences. Students should be familiar with paragraph arrangement and general structure. However, they continued to struggle with writing paragraphs, particularly descriptive paragraphs. In addition, they were unable to organize it in terms of general structures, coherence, and unity. The primary purpose of this study was to examine whether the writing skills of the eighth-grade students of SMP Cipta Dharma Denpasar might be enhanced through small group discussion combined with picture. This research employed a two-cycle classroom action research design. The relevant data were obtained using instruments, including paragraph construction tests and a structured questionnaire. Following a cyclical research procedure, it was determined that small group discussion combined with picture was suitable for enhancing the writing skills of the subjects. It was evident from the findings of the pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2 that their writing skills had improved significantly. In addition, it was supported by the structured questionnaire, which revealed positive responses to the technique. It may be inferred that the writing skills of the eighth-grade students of SMP Cipta Dharma Denpasar could be improved by small group discussion combined with picture.

Keywords: picture, small group discussion, writing skill

INTRODUCTION

Writing is an essential language ability for language learners. Students can use written language to convey their thoughts, opinions, knowledge, feelings, and experiences (Rosalina et al., 2023). According to Zemach & Islam (2005), writing is an important method of communication in everyday life and is required in high school and college. Furthermore, Zemach & Rumisek (2005) argue that writing is an important element of a study because students will write assignments ranging from one paragraph to several pages as well as test and exam answers that may be a few phrases (Williyan et al., 2023). During the teaching and learning process, academic writing in English may differ not just from academic writing in their native language, but also from other writing in English.

Through writing, the students are expected to be able to convey the meaning of ideas and deliver those ideas in written forms, and writing is not easy for students. As stated by Taylor (2009), in writing, people bring knowledge into being and record and preserve it. Therefore, it is important to practice a lot when learning to write. This skill improves memory, ability to connect ideas, and skill to synthesize information in novel ways (Darma et al., 2023). Based on the curriculum for junior high school, especially the eighth-grade students, emphasizes them achieving a good score in composing a descriptive paragraph which consists of essential parts such as identification, description, and conclusion. In addition, students should develop their ideas when writing descriptive paragraph which is interesting to read.

Everyone should learn how to write a decent paragraph because writing is one of the most challenging skills that not everyone possesses. Writing is a talent that must be taught in the classroom and performed by the students (Patel & Jain, 2008). Writing is a crucial aspect of language acquisition since it is an effective method for acquiring vocabulary, spelling, and sentence structure (Nopiyadi et al., 2023). At a higher level, it becomes a necessary component of students' expressions. Writing is acquired most quickly when it is practiced concurrently with the other abilities (Williyan et al., 2023). In addition, writing is a wonderful activity for consolidation. Writing is also useful for assigning homework assignments and for a few course texts.

Writing is also both a process and a product (Nunan, 2003). The writing process is cyclical, and the end result is what can be seen and read, such as essays, books, letters, short tales, and research papers. Moreover, according to Oshima & Hogue (2007), writing is never a one-step process; it is an ongoing creative endeavor. Pre-writing, organizing, writing, and polishing are the steps one should do when writing. This means that a descriptive paragraph must adhere to these four steps. Because they are sometimes unsure of how to begin writing, they could follow these steps to eliminate their confusion, allowing them to generate engaging works that can amaze the readers.

A good descriptive paragraph should help readers understand what is being portrayed. Descriptive writing, according to Savage & Mayer (2005), employs words to create an image for the readers. This image could be influenced by sights, sounds, smells, tastes, or feelings. A descriptive paragraph paints a vivid picture of a person, place, thing, event, or concept (Fiderer, 2002). It is a paragraph that vividly depicts an object, person, or place, as well as how it looks and feels. Writing descriptive paragraphs with rich detail allowed readers to easily imagine the thing, person, or location. Furthermore, descriptive paragraph details are derived from the writer's senses of smell, taste, touch, hearing, and sight. Furthermore, a descriptive paragraph

necessitates that students describe a thing, person, or place in great detail so that readers may see the object.

Folse et al. (2010) go on to say that a descriptive paragraph is one that depicts how something or someone appears or feels and creates an impression of something. As a result, the writer should offer a full description of how something looks and feels to convey an impression of how something is portrayed in a descriptive paragraph. When creating a descriptive paragraph, it offers the impression of something. A descriptive paragraph's description should be stated clearly. The writer employs words in a descriptive paragraph to build an image and assist the reader see, touch, feel, smell, or taste the issue being described (Savage & Shafiei, 2007). Their understanding of the paragraph will aid them in writing.

Based on the observation carried out in the present research on the eighth-grade students of SMP Cipta Dharma Denpasar, it could be identified that the problem was caused by the teaching technique implemented during the teaching-learning process in the class. The teachers only explained and gave descriptive paragraph examples in the English class. After that, the teacher asked the students to do pre-writing by themselves without giving any media like pictures. The English teacher did not facilitate them to discuss with their friends to share their ideas. The students should follow the long steps in writing paragraphs. On the other side, if students got stuck in drafting and imagining the object they should describe, they would become lazy to write and could not continue to the next step of writing a descriptive paragraph.

The conventional teaching technique that the English teacher applied only gave the students an explanation of descriptive paragraphs as the learning material. After that, the English teacher gave the students an example of a descriptive paragraph, and then the English teacher asked them to create a descriptive paragraph without giving any media like a picture. The English teacher also did not facilitate the students discussing their ideas with their friends. The conventional teaching technique that was applied was individual. The students cannot share their ideas with their friends, and the English teacher did not give clear directions to the students about how to write a good descriptive paragraph. Besides, the English teacher did not use media like a picture to help the students write descriptive paragraphs. In this research, the researcher applied a teaching technique to facilitate the students discussing their ideas in writing a descriptive paragraph with their friends and giving the students media like a picture. The teaching technique the researcher applied gave a clear direction to write a good descriptive paragraph.

Small group discussion combined with picture is a technique that can help students make a good descriptive paragraph. Media like pictures implementing this technique are appropriate for cooperative teaching and learning. The small group discussion combined with picture is started by making a group of four and five students. The teacher gives a picture as media and then introduces the material to the students. The teacher then asks the students to discuss the topic and picture. After discussing the topic and the picture, the teacher asks the students to write a descriptive paragraph individually. At the end of the study, the teacher and the students summarize the topic that has already been discussed.

Kendall & Khoun (2006) define a small group as five or fewer students. Small group events provide an emphasis on learning (rather than teaching), a specified purpose or focus, and active involvement by group members. Small group discussion, often known as cooperative learning, is highly interactive. Furthermore, small group discussions allow students to feel like

they are part of a team because they are working for the same goals as the other students (Serravallo, 2010). Small group conversations make learning more enjoyable and fascinating. They must understand how to share resources fairly, take turns, and make democratic decisions. A small group is formed when a large group is divided into subgroups based on aptitude, interest, project, or other criteria (Ornstein et al., 2000). According to those beliefs, small group discussion combined with picture is the exchange of information, opinions, and ideas among all group members that comprises of at least three or five individuals to solve problems.

For this study, the researcher combines small-group discussion and pictures as a medium to pique the students' interest in learning. Images are frequently incorporated into language instruction and the learning process. Teachers utilize images to develop a variety of activities and capture students' interest. Harmer (2001) notes that teachers have always utilized images or visuals to help learning, whether they were drawn or borrowed from books, newspapers, magazines, or photographs. Using images to teach new words makes the process entertaining and memorable since images capture students' attention and enhance their vocabulary comprehension. Moreover, an intriguing writing assignment engages students not only intellectually but also emotionally (Harmer, 2004). To create an engaging writing assignment, the teacher must present a motivating factor to inspire them to write. For those who are excited by visual input, images might serve as a stimulus. It indicates that pictures are also relevant for the students, particularly when writing descriptive paragraphs.

Small group discussion permits teachers to propose a topic or concept for group discussion among students. Consequently, a small group discussion adheres to democratic principles and permits everyone to give numerous ideas for others to discuss and reflect on. The debate in this study permits an exchange of ideas within the setting of a group in response to the reaction of the presenter. Brewer (1997) asserts that a number of actions must be done while facilitating a small group conversation. There were three procedural steps involved in having a small group conversation with a picture: introduction, directing, and summarizing discussion. The teacher introduces and provides the descriptive paragraph in the introduction. The teacher then directs conversation by asking them to discuss their composition based on the provided picture. Finally, while concluding discussion, the teacher requires them to revise their paragraphs and share it to their classmates.

Small group discussion combined with picture is an engaging and demanding technique for teaching writing to the students. Academic and social skills are addressed through the teaching technique. The teaching technique encourages students to gain knowledge and exchange views, particularly when writing descriptive paragraphs. In addition to being able to share their views, the students would demonstrate greater cooperation and teamwork in resolving the challenge they meet while completing the assignment. In addition, the type of small group discussion combined with picture is simple to comprehend because employing media such as a picture can assist students in visualizing the object they must describe in a descriptive paragraph. This instructional technique was intended to assist the students in producing well-written paragraphs.

Considering the fact above, the researcher is interested to know whether or not small group discussion combined with picture could be used as an appropriate technique. The researcher chose small group discussion combined with picture as the teaching technique in this study. Small group discussion combined with picture was the appropriate teaching technique to solve their problems in paragraph writing. Thus, the research problem could be formulated as

a question: can writing skill of the eighth-grade students of SMP Cipta Dharma Denpasar be improved through small group discussion combined with picture? In other words, the research objective was to determine whether writing skill of the eighth-grade students of SMP Cipta Dharma Denpasar could be improved through the technique.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design and Subjects

This investigation utilized classroom action research. A classroom action research approach was utilized to enhance the quality of the classroom teaching and learning process. According to Kemmis and McTaggart in Burns (2010), an action research cycle typically includes five phases. The first cycle may become a recurring spiral of cycles until the action research reaches a suitable conclusion. The process of action research includes planning, action, observation, and reflection (Ary et al., 2010). The present study was conducted in two cycles using classroom action research as the research design.

The present study was conducted on the eighth-grade students of SMP Cipta Dharma Denpasar. The students of the VIII D class were selected as the present classroom action research subjects. The VIII D class consisted of 29 students. They were chosen as the subjects of the present study because most of the students of the VIII D class still needed to improve their writing skills, especially descriptive paragraph writing skills. These were based on the interview with the English teacher and a preliminary observation. In addition, the pre-test results showed that the students in the VIII D class still needed to improve their skills in writing, especially writing interesting descriptive paragraphs.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher used two types of tools to collect the relevant data: tests (pre-test and post-test) and a questionnaire. The pre-test was given to the subjects before to using the technique to determine their prior writing ability. The pre-test results would reveal whether they had writing issues. The researcher then devised a lesson plan and put the technique into action. Furthermore, the post-test was given at the end of each cycle. The post-test was designed to assess their progress following the implementation of small group discussion combined with picture. The questionnaire was completed at the end of the current classroom action research cycle to measure their responses toward the technique using the supplied options.

The data needed to address the study question was gathered by the administration of a pre-test, post-test, and questionnaire. The researcher utilized the scoring criteria established by (Oshima & Hogue, 2007) to rate the subjects' work, which consisted of five aspects: format, punctuation and mechanics, content, organization, and grammar and sentence structure. The data collected by using the researcher instruments must be examined. The data collected during the administration of the tests was evaluated using the mean score formula. This was necessary to assess the subjects' writing abilities. Furthermore, a questionnaire was distributed to quantify their comments on the execution of small group discussion combined with picture that was examined using the percentage formula.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

In the present study, the researcher used the VIII D class of SMP Cipta Dharma Denpasar as the subjects of the study. Based on an interview with the English teacher. The researcher found that the class struggled with writing, especially descriptive paragraphs. They had difficulty imagining what they must describe in writing descriptive paragraphs. The situation made the students feel difficult to start writing a good descriptive paragraph. Furthermore, the teacher did not explain and give clear instructions for a good descriptive paragraph. Besides, the teacher only focused on the teacher-centered teaching-learning process. Thus, a conventional teaching technique needed to be changed to make the subjects more active and creative in constructing their descriptive paragraphs.

Two tests were used to collect data: a pre-test and a post-test. A questionnaire was also used to determine their responses to adopting a small group discussion combined with picture. To determine the subjects' pre-existing capacity to write a descriptive paragraph about an object, a pre-test was provided prior to applying the teaching technique. The post-test was given at the end of each cycle after the researcher taught how to write a good descriptive paragraph utilizing small group discussion combined with picture as the teaching technique. In addition, at the end of the last cycle, a questionnaire was distributed to determine their attitudes toward applying small group discussion combined with picture.

The present study was successfully carried out through classroom action research by implementing small group discussion combined with picture. The data were collected using instruments and scored using the scoring rubric adapted from Oshima and Hogue (2007). Classroom action research was also proceeded by a pre-cycle and two cycles. In addition, there were three set scores; they were the subjects' achievements as the results of the pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2. Their scores from each cycle were determined to improve after the researcher taught them how to write a good descriptive paragraph using small group discussion combined with picture. The results of administering the pre-test, post-test 1, and 2 as the research instruments could be tabulated in the following table.

Cycles (Research Instrument)	Descriptive Statistic			
	Min.	Max.	Total	Mean
Pre-cycle (Pre-test)	18	75	1453	50.10
Cycle I (Post-test 1)	40	88	2157	74.38
Cycle II (Post-test 2)	75	92	2530	87.24

Table 1. The Data Tabulation Showing the Progressing Mean Scores

The table showed that the subjects' mean scores increased from pre-cycle to cycle II. The minimum scores increased from 18 in pre-cycle to 75 in cycle II. It indicated that all subjects could achieve the minimum passing grade in cycle II. Besides, the maximum scores also progressed significantly from a figure of 75 to 92. These were also in line with the mean score results which showed that there were significant improvements. The mean scores improved in a figure of 50.10, 74.38, and 87.24 respectively in the pre-cycle, cycle I and cycle II.

Furthermore, the structured questionnaire was administered at the end of the last cycle to collect additional data. The purpose was to know the subjects' responses after they had been

taught to write a descriptive paragraph using small group discussion combined with picture. The questionnaire was in the form of ten structured statements accessed on paper and written in Bahasa Indonesia to avoid misunderstanding. In addition, the questionnaire results were analyzed by using a Likert rating scale ranging from 5-1. Those five options were strongly agreed, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly agree. The subjects' responses from the structured questionnaire were tabulated in the following table.

Questionnaire Responses	Percentages
Strongly Agree	71.38%
Agree	27.06%
Undecided	1.56%
Disagree	0%
Strongly Disagree	0%

Table 2. The Data Tabulation Showing the Subjects' Responses

The percentage of the questionnaire above showed that the subjects' responses were positive during the implementation of small group discussion combined with picture. The effectiveness of the implementation of the teaching technique made the subjects enthusiastic in responding to the study. Moreover, the calculation showed that 71.38% of the responses were strongly agree with the implementation of small group discussion combined with picture; 27.06%, agree; 1.56%, undecided and there were no responses for disagree and strongly disagree. In addition, the questionnaire results were in line with post-test 1 and 2, and the findings significantly contributed as supporting data.

Discussion

The design of the current study was classroom action research. The purpose of the classroom action research was to address the writing ability issue of the eighth-grade students at SMP Cipta Dharma Denpasar, particularly in writing descriptive paragraphs. As a result, the researcher used small group discussion combined with picture, which is an appropriate teaching technique. The current investigation was divided into two cycles, each with two sessions. Additionally, it involved four related activities: planning, action, observation, and reflection. Cycle I and Cycle II continued the pre-cycle, which was established as the beginning reflection of the current investigation. Additionally, the researcher collected the data using a structured questionnaire and two types of tests (pre-test and post-test). The research findings were further discussed.

During the pre-cycle, the researcher interviewed one of the English teachers at SMP Cipta Dharma Denpasar to learn about the subject's issues. In addition, it involved observing how the teacher taught the subjects and gaining knowledge of the actual situation. After observing the subjects, the researcher conducted the pre-test to assess their prior knowledge and demonstrate that they had a writing difficulty. In addition, a grading system comprised of five criteria was employed to evaluate their writing: format, punctuation and mechanics, content, organization, and grammar and sentence structure. The scoring rubric was exhaustive for grading students' written work (Budiarta, 2021). According to the results of the pre-test, the individuals had

difficulty writing descriptive paragraphs. In writing descriptive paragraphs, individuals had trouble creating ideas and envisioning what they were required to write. In addition, they were unaware of the proper structure and substance. Consequently, the researcher determined that the mean score of the pre-test taken by 29 students was 50.10, and that just one student achieved the minimum passing grade. It revealed that the subjects struggled with writing, particularly descriptive paragraphs. Thus, the researcher opted to perform cycle I by employing a suitable teaching method, small-group discussion combined with picture. It was an appropriate instructional method for enhancing their writing ability.

In cycle I, the subjects improved significantly after the researcher taught them how to compose a descriptive paragraph through small group discussion combined with picture. It was evident from the mean score of the first post-test, which was 74.38. The results suggested that the subjects made significant strides in their descriptive paragraph writing. Based on the topic and five requirements of the paragraph, some subjects were able to appropriately compose the paragraph. In addition, they appeared engaged and enthusiastic during the teaching and learning process. However, the other subjects tended to be less attentive and more passive. In addition, they had not yet met the criteria for a strong paragraph, particularly in the component structure, and they struggled to construct descriptive paragraphs that were cohesive and logical. Furthermore, 17 of 29 subjects could pass the minimum passing grade. The average score was significantly higher than in the pre-cycle. However, it was unable to meet the predetermined success indicator. For improved outcomes, the researcher proceeded the current research to cycle II.

In the second cycle, the researcher taught how to write an exceptional descriptive paragraph based on the criteria, making the teaching and learning process more enjoyable and focused, but also more enjoyable and fun. In addition, the researcher clarified again what had been omitted in the previous paragraph. Consequently, students could compose better paragraphs based on the taught criteria. In addition, the paragraph was well-organized, and they felt more comfortable expressing their ideas. During the teaching and learning process, students got more engaged than in the previous cycle, desiring to ask and be asked questions. Due to the researcher's efforts to make the teaching and learning process entertaining, the subjects appeared to be more engaged and enthusiastic. During the teaching and learning process, the usage of active teaching techniques could excite them (Pratiwi et al., 2021; Wahyuni et al., 2021). Consequently, after delivering post-test 2, the researcher assessed the mean score, which was 87.24, and determined that 29 participants met the minimum passing grade. It indicated that every subject in class VIII D might attain the minimum passing grade. Implementing small group discussion combined with picture and describing the criteria that must be met for a good score led to a considerable improvement in the subjects' performance over the previous cycle. The present investigation was able to meet the success indicator, and the researcher received superior outcomes in cycle II. In this cycle, the research was therefore concluded.

As part of the research instrument used to collect data for the present study, a questionnaire was also administered to determine the subjects' attitudes toward applying small group discussion combined with picture in the teaching and learning process to improve writing skills. The results of the questionnaire revealed that more than 98% of the responses showed that the teaching technique could improve their descriptive paragraph writing skills. It revealed that the subjects responded positively to the study because their writing skills might be enhanced through the technique. When given the opportunity to produce the language, the

subjects tended to become more productive (Kastawa et al., 2022; Maheswari et al., 2021). The application of the instructional method enabled them to compose significantly better descriptive paragraphs. In addition, they were able to effectively explain and generate their ideas in an engaging descriptive paragraph. In addition, they understood how to construct a decent paragraph based on the criteria and were more engaged in the teaching and learning process, particularly writing.

According to the data and the elaboration above, implementing small group discussion combined with picture was an appropriate teaching technique. It helped the subjects improve their writing skills, especially descriptive paragraphs. It could be seen from the pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2 results, which showed significant improvement in the subjects' writing skills, and the research was finally ended in cycle II. Furthermore, it was supported from the questionnaire as supporting data that showed positive responses to implementing small group discussion combined with picture. Therefore, based on the comprehensive explanation and the research findings, it can be clearly concluded that writing skill of the eighth-grade students of SMP Cipta Dharma Denpasar could be improved through small group discussion combined with picture as the teaching technique.

CONCLUSION

According to the findings of the study, the mean score on the pre-test was 50.10, indicating that the subjects had poor writing skills; only one subject achieved the minimum passing grade. The findings of post-test 1 in cycle I indicated that they had improved, with a mean score of 74.38. However, 17 of 29 topics were eligible for the passing grade. The researcher then ran cycle II to achieve a more favorable outcome. The results demonstrated a substantial improvement, with a mean score of 87.24, and all subjects finally achieved the passing grade. It showed that the study has met the success indicator, and it was thought that the current investigation could be concluded in cycle II.

The questionnaire was presented to determine the replies of the individuals to the study. Based on the results, more than 98% of the responses agreed that the application of small group discussion combined with picture improved their writing ability. It suggested that the responses were favorable and consistent with the outcomes of post-tests 1 and 2. The teaching technique could assist them in writing a well-organized and effective paragraph based on the scoring rubric and the generic structure. The results of the questionnaire could bolster the findings that small group discussion combined with picture was an engaging and effective technique.

In conclusion, applying small group discussion combined with picture was the solution for the eighth-grade students of SMP Cipta Dharma Denpasar who had writing skill problems. The results of the study demonstrated that the teaching technique improved the subjects' writing skills, particularly in descriptive paragraphs. It was evident from the pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2 data that the technique greatly increased their writing scores. Moreover, during the teaching and learning process, they were engaged and enthusiastic about employing the teaching technique. They appreciated it, and the instructional method was extremely straightforward. It could be concluded that the writing skill of the eighth-grade students of SMP Cipta Dharma Denpasar could be enhanced by small group discussion combined with picture.

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