

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF STUDENT GROUPINGS IN ENDORSING ENGLISH WRITING SKILL MASTERY

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Abstract: *Student grouping* atau pengelompokan siswa memiliki peran penting dalam menunjang keberhasilan siswa mempelajari skil produktif bahasa Inggris. Esai ini ditulis dengan tujuan untuk mengungkapkan pemilihan dan penerapan ketepatan *student grouping* yang diperlukan seorang pengajar untuk lebih menjamin keberhasilan siswa dalam mempelajari ketrampilan menulis (*writing*) bahasa Inggris. Tiga jenis *student grouping* yang terefektif dalam pembelajaran ketrampilan menulis bahasa Inggris siswa di kelas adalah *pair work*, *group work*, dan *individual study*. Ketiga jenis *student grouping* tersebut akan membuahkan hasil yang maksimal apabila seorang pengajar menerapkannya secara intensif dan berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: *penguasaan ketrampilan menulis, pengelompokan siswa, pair work, group work, individual study.*

Introduction

Student success in learning language is the primary target and duty the teacher would really like to achieve. There are various factors which more or less affect student success in English language learning mastery, one of which is

student groupings applied in the class room by the teacher. The existence of teacher either as controller, assessor, organiser, prompter, participant or resource in the class has a significant role in handling the class to determine which student groupings are well-suited for students to be put into practice. Referring to writing skill learning, the effectiveness of student groupings is so much demanded to achieve the goal of supporting students to acquire the productive skill mastery, in this respect, writing skill.

Student groupings, as a matter of fact, direct students to learn effectively. A teacher, who is just capable of teaching the whole class and is not using any student groupings such as pair work or group work, is actually wasting lots of valuable opportunities for the students to get maximum practice. It is, however, important for English teachers to effectively and efficiently maximize student groupings which are one of the aspects of class management. With student groupings, English writing skill can more hopefully be mastered by students in certain points of time. The points as elaborated above attract the writer's interest to discuss the subject matter further.

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The purposes of writing this paper are firstly to discover the kinds of student groupings which effectively affect student success in learning English writing skill. Secondly, it is intended to reveal what kinds of activities which can be performed by students within student groupings to reinforce their writing ability.

The Effectiveness of Student Groupings

A number of student groupings which are necessary to find out, among other things are lockstep, pair work, group work and individual study. At this point, the writer would merely like to highlight the kinds of student groupings which can effectively endorse writing skill learning namely **pair work**, **group work** and **individual study**. The writer does not incorporate lockstep activity, because from the writer's viewpoint, lockstep does not indeed support language learning particularly writing skill. Lockstep is not designed for English communicative activities. It involves too much teaching and too little learning. This activity is not completely supporting the students to learn writing.

Pair Work, Group Work, and Individual Study Activity

Pair Work Activity

The first student grouping which is communicatively supporting writing skill mastery is pair work. In pair work activity students can be put in pairs comprising two students for a great variety of work, in this case, including writing skill learning (Harmer, 1990:207). Due to the fact that pair work can immediately increase the amount of student practice, so student success in learning writing is obviously more guaranteed. Pair work allows the students to maximally use language based on the task set by the teacher. In addition to that, through pair work activity students can thoroughly be encouraged to have cooperation with others which constitute the important aspect for the conducive atmosphere of the class. Students can also be motivated to learn with others with the purpose of learning writing skill, since the teacher as controller is not fully giving the lecture or lesson any longer. With pair work students can optimally practice language usage especially writing and joint learning. In relation to writing skill learning, students in this activity can work together in pairs to reinforce their written practice. The way of encouraging written practice can be performed through sentence writing, parallel writing, cohesion and coherence. Sentence writing is aimed at giving student practice in specific written language such as completing sentences, writing several compound-complex sentences, writing certain sentences based on the picture students have already seen as well as writing sentences by using time clauses in English.

Next, parallel writing is central to the teaching of connected discourse since it suggests the students should have a model from which to work. Students would see at first a piece of writing and then use it as the basis for

their own work. The original piece of writing the students look at will show them how English is written and guides them toward their own ability to express themselves in written English. Students with this parallel writing in this pair work activity can write description of something based on the guide book after seeing how the symbols are used in a written model. Students can ask and share opinion to each other when they are doing this activity exercise. Cohesion and coherence, another example of written practice within pair work, are intended to combine sentences together. Writing should be accurate and clear to understand by readers, thus writing needs coherent organization and logical thought. Students, in this case, are trained to order sentences and use cohesive devices for instance; how students use “and” or “but” and “in spite of” or “although” and so forth.

Group Work Activity

Another kind of student grouping which has a significant role in endorsing writing skill learning is group work. At this point, students are gathered into groups of four or five to complete certain tasks. This activity is so much attractive for a number of reasons. Group work gives students opportunities to use language optimally to communicate and discuss the task with each other (Harmer, 1990:207). While they are working together, they will cooperate among themselves. Students will be teaching as well as learning in the group exhibiting a degree of self-reliance that is not possible when teacher acts as controller. Group work is in some ways more dynamic than pair work. This is owing to the fact that there are more students to react with and against in a group, and therefore there is a greater possibility of discussion. This is the reason why group work is also effective to endorse student success toward writing skill learning.

There is a great chance that at least one member of the group will be able to solve a problem when it arises. Besides that, working in a group is potentially more relaxing than working in pair work, since pair work demands students ability to cooperate closely with only one other person. Hence, a student can share difficult tasks of writing, in this case, with another or other students with whom he or she gets along well and feels much pleasant. They can correct their task together without having to have awkward feeling with a friend he chooses. Group work offers a great potential in which students can use cooperative writing maximally. It also has the great advantage of allowing different groups of students to be doing different things of writing aspects in the same class room. Through group work activity, writing skill can be reinforced gradually with a teacher as organiser.

In line with this writing learning, practice of written communicative activities which can be done to reinforce students' writing skill encompasses relaying instruction, exchanging letters, and story construction. Relaying instruction means one group of students has information for the performance of the task and another group must perform the same task by giving them written instructions for instances; making model, giving directions, and writing commands. Meanwhile, in type of exchanging letters, students write each other

letters and then receive a reply such as; inviting the agony column of the job application. Story construction gives individual students partial information which they have to match with other students to construct a narrative and add to the story having been so far created.

Individual Study Activity

One another kind of student grouping which also has an effective role in endorsing English writing skill mastery is individual study. Individual study is some kind of activity in which students can do and complete the task by themselves (Harmer, 1990:209). It is a good model precisely because students can relax from outside pressure and rely on themselves rather than other people. Writing work is the focus of individual study of this activity. Students sometimes need on their own to strength their written communicative activities such as writing games, fluency writing, writing reports and advertisements.

In writing games activity, students are trained to write description of people or places, whereas the rest of the class has to guess who the people are or what the places are. Students are also asked to describe a famous event in history without saying what it was. They have to give as much information background as possible. Subsequently, fluency writing is aimed at getting students to write as much as possible in a definite periode of time. If this activity can be done frequently, students are not merely able to write greater activities, but the quality can improve as well. This activity can be done with topics rather than picture stories.

Another example of written communicative activities related to the betterment of writing skill in individual study activity is writing reports and advertisements. Students are asked to write items for certain cases which they can organize for transmission. This activity is very much attractive since it involves the ability to order and organize ideas and also involves current events and is thus interesting and motivating. Besides that, students are trained to write and design a successful advertisement.

Conclusion

Based on the explanation above, it can be drawn a conclusion that student success in learning English writing skill relies mostly on how the teacher uses and maximizes student groupings in the class room. The teacher who does not use any student groupings is neglecting and wasting precious opportunities for the students to obtain maximum practice. The kinds of student groupings which are closely related to writing skill learning mastery cover pair work, group work and individual study. Each of them has particular characteristics and certain contributions in endorsing student success to master writing skill learning. The three student groupings as stated above have much effectiveness for students to get writing skill mastery in a given time if such activities are well-implemented and well-applied by the teacher. This is due to the fact that student groupings train and direct how students learn

writing aspects optimally, so that student ability in learning writing can earnestly be guaranteed.

Pair work is some kind of student grouping which puts students in a pair consisting of two students. In pair work, a number of activities which can be performed by students including written practice such as sentence writing, parallel writing, cohesion and coherence. Group work then is student grouping in which students are gathered into four or five to complete the task. At this point, student writing skill can be reinforced through written communicative activities such as relaying instructions, exchanging letters and story construction. In the meantime individual study is some kind of activity in which students learn and complete the task by themselves. In brief, students do the writing exercises by themselves.

In line with this, students can do exercises of written communicative activities in supporting their writing skill mastery through writing games, writing reports and advertisements, and having fluency writing. By applying those student groupings activities, students will have more time to get involved in effective, maximum practice to master English writing skill.

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