

**A COLLABORATIVE WRITING TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' SKILL IN WRITING  
ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY**  
(A Classroom Action Research at the Fourth Semester Students of English Education Department of  
IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro in the Academic Year of 2013/2014)

**M. Ali Ghufron**  
*IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro*  
[alghufron.87@gmail.com](mailto:alghufron.87@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** This research investigates whether Collaborative Writing Technique can improve students' skill in writing argumentative essay and how class situation is when Collaborative Writing Technique is implemented. This is a Classroom Action Research (CAR) which is conducted at the fourth semester students of English Education Department of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro in the academic year of 2013/2014. This Classroom Action Research is done in three cycles. Each cycle consists of four steps: Planning, Acting, Observing, and Reflecting. The qualitative data are collected through observation and interview. The quantitative data are collected through test. The research findings reveal that the implementation of Collaborative Writing Technique can improve students' skill in writing argumentative essay and build effective teaching and learning which can be seen from: automaticity, meaningful learning, the anticipation of reward, intrinsic motivation, strategic investment, language ego, self-confidence, risk-taking, the language culture connection, the native language effect, interlanguage, and communicative competence. Derived from the findings, it can be concluded that the implementation of Collaborative Writing Technique can improve students' skill in writing argumentative essay and class situation. Therefore, it is recommended for the lecturers to employ Collaborative Writing Technique as it can improve students' writing skill as well as class situation.

**Keywords:** *Writing, Collaborative Writing Technique, Argumentative Essay*

### **Introduction**

Farbairn and Winch (1996: 32) state that writing is about conveying meaning by using words that have been selected and put together in a written or printed form. Dvorak in Hadley (1993: 291) states that writing refers to all activities that involve transferring thought to paper.

Writing as a skill involves a number of complex rhetorical and linguistic operations which must be taught. The act of writing is deprived of an immediate context of communication. Thus, for effective writing, the writer has to use a large number of formal features in order to help his/her readers infer the intended meaning. Failure to use these features correctly causes vagueness, ellipsis and ambiguity in some writings.

There are so many kinds of essay writing, such as: descriptive, narrative, recount, report, argumentative, etc. Based on the syllabus of English Education Department of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro, the fourth semester students must be able to write argumentative essay with appropriate content, good organization, correct diction, grammar, and mechanics. Referring to the syllabus, this research was focused on teaching writing of argumentative essay.

Argumentative essay is an essay in which we agree or disagree toward a certain issue, using reasons to support our opinion. Our goal is to convince readers that our opinion is right (Oshima & Hogue, 2006: 142). This kind of essay forces the students to think on their own; they have to take a stand on an issue, support their stand with solid reasons, and support their reasons with solid evidence.

A good writing, including argumentative essay writing, must cover some aspects. Raimes (1983: 6) mentions those aspects are syntax, content, the writers' process, audience, purpose, word choice, organization, mechanics and grammar. While Byrne (1995: 3) mentions three aspects which make writing difficult. The first is the psychological problem. Writing is a solitary activity. The teachers cannot get direct feedback like in speaking activity. The second is linguistics problem. The writers have to ensure that the choice of words, sentence structure, and other cohesive devices are correct for conveying their message. The last is the cognitive problem. Writing is learned through a process of instruction. It is not a natural process like speaking.

Both Raimes (1983: 6) and Byrne (1995: 3) basically have the same idea, but Raimes (1983: 6) does not classify the problem. Audience and purpose of writing is included in Byrne's psychological problem. Byrne's linguistic problem covered syntax, word choice, mechanic, and grammar. Meanwhile, Raimes' writer process, organization and content are covered in Byrne cognitive problem.

Unfortunately, most of the fourth semester students of English Education Department of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro in the academic year of 2013/2014 are not able to fill all those criteria in writing argumentative essay based on the indicators in the previous explanation. It can be seen from the average score of pre-test. The

result shows the score 42.73 which is still under the limit of passing grade 60. The low score of students' writing in argumentative essay was caused by some factors, namely: factor from the class situation and factor from lecturers. There are two problems which occurred in the classroom. The first is the cognitive problem which is the low score of writing test. The second is the class which cannot be said an effective class.

Here, the researcher proposed a solution to solve those problems. The proposed solution is collaborative writing technique. Barkley, Cross, and Major (2005: 256) define that in collaborative writing, students pairs or triads write a formal paper together. Each student contributes at each stage of the writing process: brainstorming ideas, gathering and organizing information, drafting, revising, and editing the writing. It means that in pairs or triads, students will produce better work than when they work alone. Collaborative writing will improve document quality by pooling the strengths of group members. At the same time, individual weaknesses are caught by the group and revised. Ultimately, collaboration can be a form of motivation for students as they become excited about working in a group as well as the prospect of learning from other students.

According to Barkley, et al (2005: 256) there are seven guidelines for teacher/lecturer in collaborative writing process. The guidelines are as follows: (1) students form pairs or triads at your direction or by choosing partners and then generate ideas by brainstorming together or conducted preliminary research; (2) together, students organize their ideas and create an outline; (3) students divide up the outline, selecting or assigning sections for each student to write initial drafts individually; (4) teams read first drafts, discuss and resolve any significant disparities in voice, content, and style; (5) teams combine individual sections into a single document; (6) teams revise and edit their work, checking for content and clarity as well as grammar, spelling, and punctuation; and (7) after the final edit, teams submit their papers to the professor for assessment and evaluation.

Based on the background above, the researcher formulates the research problem as follow: Can collaborative writing technique improve the students' writing skill in argumentative essay of the fourth semester students of English Education Department of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro in the academic year of 2013/2014? And how is the class situation when collaborative writing technique is implemented in teaching argumentative essay at the fourth semester students of English Education Department of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro in the academic year of 2013/2014?

## **Method**

This is a classroom action research which was conducted through three cycles. Action research develops through self reflective spiral: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (McNiff, 1988: 27). McNiff (1988: 2) says that action research is the name given to an increasingly popular movement in educational research. It encourages a teacher to be reflective of his own practice in order to enhance the quality of education for himself and his pupils. It is form of self-reflective enquiry that is now being used in school-based curriculum, professional development, school-improvement schemes, and so on, and it is actively involves teachers as participant in their own educational process. Therefore, in order to conduct an action research, researcher must have the ability to become self-reflective in solving the problems that he is dealing with. This design was considered as the most appropriate design since the purpose of this study was concern to the students' behavior improvement.

The population of this research is the fourth semester students of English Education Department of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro in the academic year of 2013/2014 which consists of 75 students, divided into three classes.

In this study there were two kinds of data: qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data were collected by observation and interview. Observation was done when the teaching-learning-process took place, before the teacher used collaborative writing technique to teach writing and after the teacher used collaborative writing technique in teaching writing. It was to know the students' skill and the students' difficulties in writing. Then the observation was continued by focusing on the use of collaborative writing technique in teaching writing. Here, the researcher observed the activity by himself since he himself is actually the lecturer of writing class. The second technique of collecting qualitative data was interview. It was done by the researcher by interviewing the students after the teaching-learning-process to add the data.

The quantitative data were collected by a test. The test was done to measure the students' writing skill which was obtained from writing test before the teacher used collaborative writing technique to teach writing (pre-test) and after the teacher used collaborative writing technique to teach writing (post-test).

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **1. Situation Before the Research**

The problems of students in the fourth semester of English Education Department of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro were dug up through observation, interview, and pre-test. From those four things conducted, there were two main problems. The first is writing skill problem to write argumentative essay and the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

The first problem is students' writing skill to write argumentative essay. Based on the pre-test score that was low, 42.73 – which is below the passing grade 60, then it can be concluded that the writing skill was low.

From the effective point of view, there are some points to be considered: the students' attitude and the class situation. First, the attitude – the students said that writing is difficult and boring. The technique that the lecturer gave was the same every day. Second, the class situation – there was no interaction in the class. The only interaction was teacher-centered. There were no activities except the teacher explanation in front of the class.

To measure the improvement of the students, there are some indicators of writing skill and the effectiveness of teaching and learning process. The indicators of writing are: content, organization, diction, grammar and mechanics. The indicators for the effectiveness of teaching and learning process were taken from Brown's principles (2003). They are automaticity, meaningful learning, the anticipation of reward, intrinsic motivation, strategic investment, language ego, self-confidence, risk-taking, the language culture connection, the native language effect, interlanguage, and communicative competence.

## 2. Situation After Research Implementation

### a. Improvement in Writing Skill

The followings are the average scores comparison of students' writing skill after pre-test, post-test of cycle 1, post-test of cycle 2, and post-test of cycle 3.

**Table 1. Average Scores Comparison of Students' Writing Skill after Pre-Test, Post-Test of Cycle 1, Cycle 2, and Cycle 3**

No.	Indicators	Pre-test	Post-test of		
			Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
1.	Content	13.65	14.57	15.77	18.16
2.	Organization	8.28	10.47	13.08	15.83
3.	Diction	8.28	9.92	13.09	15.19
4.	Grammar	8.89	10.31	12.60	13.97
5.	Mechanics	3.63	4.20	5.00	5.00
<b>Sum of Average Scores</b>		<b>42.73</b>	<b>49.47</b>	<b>59.55</b>	<b>68.15</b>

Comprising the result of pre-test, post-test 1, 2, and 3, there were some indicators of writing skills improved. They are as follows:

The first indicator is content. The pre-test result was 13.65, then post-test 1 result was 14.57, post-test 2 result was 15.77, and the last is post-test 3 result was 18.16. It can be said that students' skill in writing argumentative essay with appropriate content was improved. The students who firstly can write argumentative essay with *showing no knowledge of subject, non-substantive, not pertinent, or not enough to evaluate*, are now able to write argumentative essay with *limited knowledge of subject, little substance, and inadequate development of topic*.

The second indicator is organization. The pre-test result was 8.28, then post-test 1 result was 10.47, post-test 2 result was 13.08, and the last is post-test 3 result was 15.83. It can be concluded that students' skill in writing argumentative essay with good organization was improved. The students who firstly can write argumentative essay with *no communication, No organization, or not enough to evaluate*, are now able to write argumentative essay with *somewhat choppy, loosely organized but main ideas stand out, limited support, and logical but incomplete sequencing*.

The third indicator is diction. The pre-test result was 8.28, then post-test 1 result was 9.92, post-test 2 result was 13.09, and the last is post-test 3 result was 15.19. It can be concluded that students' skill in writing argumentative essay with correct diction was improved. The students who firstly can write argumentative essay with *essentially translation, little knowledge of English vocabulary idioms, word form or not enough to evaluate*, are now able to write argumentative essay with *adequate range, occasional errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage but meaning not obscured*.

The fourth indicator is grammar. The pre-test result was 8.89, then post-test 1 result was 10.31, post-test 2 result was 12.60, and the last is post-test 3 result was 13.97. It can be concluded that students' skill in writing argumentative essay with correct grammar was improved. The students who firstly can write argumentative essay with *virtually no mastery of sentence constructions rules, dominated by errors, no communication or not enough to evaluate*, are now able to write argumentative essay with *major problems in simple/complex constructions, frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions, and/fragments, run-ons, deletions, meaning confused/obscured*.

The fifth indicator is mechanics. The pre-test result was 3.63, then post-test 1 result was 4.20, post-test 2 result was 5.00, and the last is post-test 3 result was 5.00. It can be concluded that students' skill in writing argumentative essay with correct mechanics was improved. The students who firstly can write argumentative essay with *frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, poor handwriting, meaning*

*confused or obscured, are now able to demonstrate mastery of conventions, few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing.*

#### **b. The Effectiveness of Teaching and Learning**

The effectiveness of teaching and learning would be said good when it has the twelve teaching principles of Brown (2003). The measurement of the effective teaching and learning was by the researcher during the implementation of collaborative writing technique. The results are as follows:

##### 1) Automaticity

When the students discuss with their partners, they started speaking English as much as possible. They were unconsciously using English in the classroom. When the lecturer asked some questions in English, they would directly raise their hands and answered in English. It could be seen in each meeting that when the lecturer asked, or ordered something they could answered them well.

##### 2) Meaningful Learning

The chosen material of writing an argumentative essay would help the students to face the real world situation. They were forced to think on their own opinion; they have to take a stand on an issue, support their stand with solid reasons, and support their reasons with solid evidence. Besides, they must work collaboratively with their partner and discuss together. Therefore, it could be said that the activity in the classroom had reflected the principle of meaningful learning.

##### 3) The Anticipation of Reward

During the teaching and learning process, the lecturer also gave reward for those who could write argumentative essay well. The reward is presenting their writing in front of the class and giving applause for the students. They were proud of the reward and the reward had directly changed their motivation and their mood for the day.

##### 4) Intrinsic Motivation

Due the students cheered with their achievement, they started to compete with their friends in class. They wanted to get reward. Their motivation seemed higher than before.

##### 5) Self-Confidence

Through collaborative writing technique, the students were asked to collaborate with their friends in writing argumentative essay. They also discussed together. These make the students' self-confidence higher. They freely expressed their opinion and share it to their friends.

##### 6) Risk-Taking

Students' risk taking could be seen in their attitude toward the activity. The students actively used English in their discussion and conversation in the classroom. Also the students started writing argumentative essay confidently.

##### 7) Strategic Investment

This principle was clearly seen when all the students actively doing discussion. They had to wait their turn to express their opinion patiently. They also had to listen and respect their friends' opinion, and to finish all tasks given by the lecturer well. They would do something that they thought was became their investment of language.

##### 8) Language Ego

The chosen activity of pairs and group discussion meant to be challenging but at the same time improving the effective level. The lecturer should overtly display attention to the students to make the students believe that the lecturer would be there to help anytime they need him. The language learner should be treated with tender loving care and patience. When the lecturer asked questions and no one answered, the lecturer would find a way to make the students understood about what he said.

##### 9) The Native Language Effect

The translation method that students used usually would be a big obstacle for this principle to appear. Therefore, as the lecturer it was a challenge to make the students understand that not everything about "Bahasa" system would cause error. The lecturer had tried to trigger the students to think in English instead of translating it to comprehend and to write the language.

##### 10) Interlanguage

The principle of interlanguage gave the students to correct their error themselves. The students should learn to correct their mistakes with the guide from the lecturer. When the students could correct their mistakes, it is a good indicator to conclude that students' language abilities are alive and well.

##### 11) Communicative Competence

The communicative competence deals with the chosen materials that was grammatically, sociolinguistically, and functionally acceptable in the daily life. One example is when the students had to write argumentative essay about the issue of 'the controversial of national exam'.

**Table 2. The Effectiveness of Teaching and Learning Process Based on Brown's Principles (2003)**

No.	Indicators	Pre-test	Post-test 1	Post-test 2	Post-test 3
1.	Automaticity	-	-	√	√
2.	Meaningful Learning	-	√	√	√
3.	The Anticipation of Reward	-	√	√	√
4.	Intrinsic Motivation	-	√	√	√
5.	Strategic Investment	-	-	√	√
6.	Language Ego	-	-	√	√
7.	Self-confidence	-	√	√	√
8.	Risk-taking	-	-	√	√
9.	Language Culture Connection	-	-	-	-
10.	The Native Language Effect	-	√	√	√
11.	Interlanguage	-	-	√	√
12.	Communicative Competence	-	-	√	√

### Conclusions

Based on the research findings above, it can be concluded that collaborative writing technique can improve students' skill in writing argumentative essay and improve class situation (effective teaching and learning) of the fourth semester students of English Education Department of IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro in the academic year of 2013/2014.

### References

- Barkley, Elizabeth F., Cross, K. Patricia., & Major, Claire Howell. (2005). *Collaborative Learning Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty*. San Fransisco. Jossey-Bass.
- Brown, H. Douglas. (2003). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. Second Edition. New York: Longman Inc.
- Byrne, Donn. (1995). *Teaching Writing ability*. New York: Longman Group Ltd.
- Farbairn, G., & Winch, C. (1996). *Reading, Writing and Reasoning*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Hadley, Alice Omaggio. (1993). *Teaching Language in Context*. London: Heinle Publisher.
- Oshima, Alice., and Hogue, Ann. (2006). *Writing Academic English: Fourth Edition*. New York: Longman.
- McNiff, Jean. (1988). *Action Research: Principles and Practice*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Raimes, Ann. (1983). *Techniques in Teaching Writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.