

Writing Ability Improvement Through Student Teams Achievement Divisions at Pirayanawin Klonghin Wittaya School

Nurika Mustika

University of Muhammadiyah Jember
(nurika_mustika@yahoo.co.id)

Abstract

The aims of this research is to find out how Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) can improve students' descriptive writing ability of the third grade students at Pirayanawin Klonghin Wittaya School, Thailand in the 2014/2015 academic year. The design of this research is classroom action research (CAR). The subject of the research is the third grade of Pirayanawin Klonghin Wittaya School in the 2014/2015 academic year that consists of 33 students. The observation used writing test as primary data and observation checklist. STAD improved the students descriptive writing ability in two cycles from the percentage of students scored ≥ 63 , was 56.6% in cycle 1 to 80% in cycle 2 and from $M= 62.2$ in cycle 1 to $M= 72$ in cycle 2. Based on the research result, it can be concluded that STAD (Student Achievement Divisions) is able to improve students' descriptive writing ability by having heterogeneous teams in terms of ability and gender that make them easy in generating their ideas and able to have peer tutoring.

Keywords: writing ability, STAD (students teams achievement divisions)

Today communication is important in our life. Communication is the ability in understanding and expressing ideas, feeling and information. There are two ways to communicate with other people those are first by speaking and second by writing. But today writing was become a crucial topic. From writing we can share our feeling or ideas without meeting the people. As said by Hyland (2003, p. 9), writing is a way of sharing personal meanings and it emphasizes on the individual to create his or her views on the topics.

The process of thinking in writing a text or paragraph is not as easy as we think. That statement is in line with Cahyani and Hodijah (2007) in Zulkarnaini (2011, p. 144), writing skill is the hardest skill because writing is not only about composing a word or sentence but also developing our ideas into a paragraph that

is well organized. Moreover when talking about writing descriptive paragraph, our paragraph must be organized well and visualized our mind to make the readers get the same experience. Additionally, in Thailand, English is learned as foreign language, so that will be hard for them to share their ideas into written form. Most of students in Thailand have a difficulty in writing and that was surveyed by Gleen Toh (2000). The survey that is done among the teachers in Thailand found that there are some problems which Thai students face when they are given writing task. Those are first, learners have problem with grammar; second, learners have a problem phrasing or expressing what they want to say; third, learners have limited vocabulary.

The Result of preliminary study that was done through interview and observation is that the students have problem in writing. This

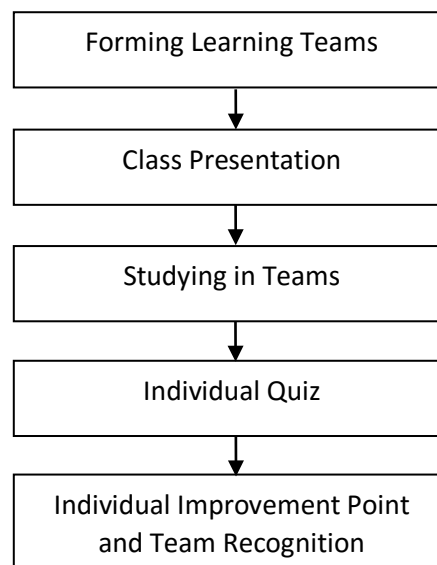
problem happens because first, the students have a difficulty in arranging sentence; second, they have a problem in sharing their ideas into written text; third, they lack to practice because most of the activity was focused and emphasized on speaking. The teacher also said that the third grade students are good in speaking but less in writing. In this case, STAD is used as a method to teach writing because this method can help the students in arranging sentences and developing their ideas by discussing and working in a group. Previous study that is done by Mella (2013) shows that there is significant effect of using STAD on student's achievement in writing descriptive text. In line with that, the researcher does a research entitled "Improving student's descriptive writing ability using Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD)."

STAD is one of cooperative learning method which is developed by Slavin. STAD is used to teach some lesson such as mathematic, language, art and science (Slavin,2005, p. 12). The major idea in STAD is to motivate students in helping and supporting each other in understanding the material given.

Based on Slavin (2005, p. 143), there are five major components in applying Student Team- Achievement Division (STAD) in class: Forming Learning teams, Class Presentation, Studying in Team, Individual Quiz, Individual improvement point and team recognition.

The explicit steps will be explained as follows:

1. **Forming Learning Teams**
The students are divided into several learning teams that consists of four until five students. In forming teams, the teacher considers each students achievement level. After that the teacher lists the students into several parts: high, medium and low. By using this list, the teams that consist of four until five students will be formulated. So, each team consists of one high, two medium and one low.
2. **Class Presentation**
In STAD, there will be a lesson presentation that is done by the teacher before the



Picture 1. The General Procedure of STAD

students learn in teams. The presentation should include introduction, lesson development and guided practice. The introduction includes a simple statement of lesson goal and a brief review of prerequisite skill. Lesson development emphasizes and focuses on explanation and assessment. Guided practice requires students' responses about material given.

3. **Studying in Teams**
The team consists of four until five students that heterogeneous. Each member of the team collaborates in doing worksheet and reinforces the material given by the teacher. In this case, each member will discuss the problem, explain the solution and comment on their member's solution. Each team have obligation to make their members understand the material learned.
4. **Individual Quiz**
After the students study in teams, they will have individual quiz. In this case their teammates are not allowed to help in doing the quiz. Their score also affect the teams score.
5. **Individual Improvement Point and Team Recognition**
The idea behind the individual improvement

score is to make them understand about the importance of their effort in studying in group and doing the quiz. Each student contributes point for their teams based on their improvement level score. Certificate is given to the best team as appreciation for their effort.

Writing Ability

According to Oshima (1998, p. 2), writing is a progressive activity. This means that when you first write something down, you have already been thinking about what you are going to say and how you are going to say it. Then after you have finished writing, you read over what you have written and make changes and corrections. Therefore, writing is never a one step action; it is a process that has several steps. So, in general writing is a process of expressing our ideas into written form that always have progression.

The Aspects of Writing

1. Grammar
Grammar is an important role in the use of English. It is not only dealing with the ability to convey ideas through sentences, but also to improve self confidence in making communication. The correct language in term of grammar will lead the readers to understand the text. As stated by Burn (2009, p. 10), grammar is essentially about the system and pattern we use to select and combine word.
2. Vocabulary
Vocabulary is very important in supporting English skills, because ideas and feelings can be expressed through vocabulary or words. According to Bram (1995, p. 48), words are the basic tool for writing, because words carry meaning where the writer's conveyed the message.
3. Organization
Organization is the student's ability to arrange their ideas into a good paragraph

which is unity and coherence. According to Oshima (1998, p. 6), paragraph is a group of related statements that a writer develops about a subject. The first sentence states the specific point or idea of the topic. The rest of the sentences in the paragraph support that point or idea. It means that a paragraph must be unified.

4. Mechanics

Heaton (1990, p. 135) state that mechanics is the ability to use correct punctuation and spelling in the written language. It means that when we want to write a paragraph or text, we should pay attention to the use of punctuation and spelling.

Method

Based on the objectives of the research, the research aims to improve students' writing ability in teaching and learning process. Thus, kind of this research is Classroom Action Research (CAR). Since this study is a classroom action study, its procedures, therefore, comprised to complete. The design used in this research is proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart; there are four stages that are preceded by preliminary study those are planning, acting, observing and reflecting. The research was done collaboratively with the English teacher. The collaboration focuses on finding and defining the research problem, planning the action, implementing the action of the research, observing the class, evaluating and analyzing data. The subject of the research is the third grade students of elementary school in Pirayanawin Klonghin Wittaya School in the 2014/2015 academic year which consists of 33 students.

The instrument that is used to collect the data was writing test and observation checklist. The result of writing test is used as primary data and observation checklist was used as supporting data. The writing test itself was constructed based on Thailand curriculum. The writing test is about descriptive text. There are four aspects which are evaluated

those are grammar, vocabulary, mechanic and organization. The scoring system is as follow:

The observation will be focused on the indicators of the performance of the

students' active participation during teaching and learning of writing. The students will be observed using observation checklist which concern in four indicators that is as follows:

No	Name	Aspect of Writing				Total Score	Score
		G	V	M	O		
1	dst						

Where:

G: Grammar

V: Vocabulary

M: Mechanics

O: Organization

There are some categories in scoring students' writing test which is adopted from Hughes (1989, pp. 91-93), that is as follow:

Score	Grammar	Vocabulary	Mechanic	Organization
1.	Errors of grammar or word order so severe as to make comprehension virtually impossible.	Vocabulary limitations so extreme as to make comprehension virtually impossible	Errors in spelling or punctuation so severe as to make comprehension virtually impossible.	Lack of organisation so severe that communication is seriously impaired.
2.	Errors of grammar or word order very frequent; reader often has to rely on own interpretation.	Vocabulary so limited and so frequently misused that reader must often rely on own interpretation.	Errors in spelling or punctuation so frequent that reader must often rely on own interpretation.	Individual ideas may be clear, but very difficult to deduce connection between them.
3.	Errors of grammar or word order frequent; efforts of interpretation sometimes required on reader's part.	Limited vocabulary and frequent errors clearly hinder expression of ideas.	Frequent errors in spelling or punctuation or punctuation; lead sometimes to obscurity.	Little or no attempt at connectivity, though reader can deduce connection between them
4.	Errors of grammar or word order fairly frequent; occasional re-reading necessary for full comprehension.	Uses wrong or inappropriate words fairly frequently; expression of ideas may be limited because of inadequate vocabulary.	Errors in punctuation or spelling fairly frequent; occasional re-reading necessary for full comprehension.	Some lack of organisation; re-reading required for clarification of ideas.

5.	Some errors of grammar or word order which do not, however, interfere with comprehension.	Occasionally uses inappropriate terms or relies on circumlocutions: expression of ideas hardly impaired.	Occasional lapses in punctuation or spelling which do not, however, interfere with comprehension.	Material well organised; links could occasionally be clearer but communication not impaired.
6.	Few (if any) noticeable errors of grammar or word order.	Use of vocabulary and idiom rarely (if at all) distinguishable from that of educated native writer.	Few (if any) noticeable lapses in punctuation or spelling.	Highly organised; clear progression of ideas well linked; like educated native writer

This formula is used to measure the percentage of students who pass the writing test:

$$E = \frac{n}{N} 100\%$$

Note: E = The percentage of the students who achieve the target score
 n = The total number of the students who achieve the target score
 N = The total number of students

(Ali, 1993, p. 186)

No	Name	Participations				Active	Passive
		1	2	3	4		
1	dst						

The indicators of observation are:

1. Paying attention
2. Asking / Answering Question
3. Working in group
4. Performing the task

The students will be categorized as active if they fulfill at least 3 indicators.

Result and Discussion

There were 3 meetings of each cycle including the test. Each cycle consists of four steps that are planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Each meeting was provided 90 minutes. In the last meetings of each cycle, the students were given writing test that ask them to write descriptive text based on the picture given in the worksheet that contains of 10 sentences. The first cycle was held on February 3rd to February 5th 2015. The

material was descriptive text about animal. In the first meeting, the teacher explained about descriptive text to the students and also reviewed about some materials relate with descriptive text, such as present tense and adjective. They also had some exercises that are related to the material. In second meeting, the teacher reviewed the descriptive text that was explained before, and then they did exercise in groups. They described the animal picture that was given. The picture itself was the same for every group. Then each of the

group wrote the task on the whiteboard. After that the students with the teacher analyzed the exercise that was given. In the third meeting, they did the writing test. The writing test itself was constructed based on Thai curriculum. The students by were observed in the first and second meeting using observation checklist to know their active participation during teaching and learning process.

The second cycle was held on February 10th to February 12th 2015. The material was descriptive text about person. The topic was changed to limit the chance in cheating and also increase the challenging level. In the first meeting, the teacher explained about descriptive text to the students and also reviewed about some materials that are related to descriptive text, such as present tense and adjective. They also had some exercises. In second meeting, the teacher reviewed the descriptive text that was explained before, and then they did exercise in groups. They described the picture that was given. The picture itself was about person but the picture was different for every group. Then each of the group wrote the task on the whiteboard. After

participation during teaching and learning process.

Based on the calculation of observation result in Cycle 1, 55.3% of 33 students were actively involved in the teaching learning process with 50% students active in first meeting and 60.6% students active in second meeting. Then in Cycle 2, 84.7% of 33 students were actively involved in the teaching learning process with 78.8% students active in first meeting and 90.6% students active in second meeting. So till the research was over, there were only 15.3% students who weren't active during teaching and learning process.

Based on the result of writing test in cycle 1, the researcher found that there were 17 students got ≥ 63 and 13 students got ≤ 63 in writing test. Then, Mean score of the students in cycle 1 was 62.22 with 56.6% students passed the minimum standard score. In cycle 2, the researcher found that there were 24 students got ≥ 63 and 6 students got ≤ 63 in writing ability. Then, Mean score of the students in cycle 2 was 72 with 84.7% students passed the minimum standard score. Thus, the results can be simplify as follow:

	Writing Test Result	Observation Checklist Result
Cycle 1	M = 62.22 (M 62.22 < M 63)	The percentage of students' active = 55.3 %
	E = 56.6 % (E 56.6 < E 70%)	The Percentage of passive students' = 44.7 %
Cycle 2	M = 72 (M 72 \geq M 63)	The percentage of active students = 84.7 %
	E = 80 % (E 80 % \geq E 70%)	The Percentage of passive students = 15.3 %

that the students with the teacher analyzed the exercise that was given. In the third meeting, they did the writing test. The students were observed in the first and second meeting using observation checklist to know their active

From the data above, it can be concluded that the students achieved the criterion of success in cycle 2, so the research was stop in cycle 2 and categorized as a success.

The result of writing test in Cycle 1 showed that the mean score of the students' descriptive writing ability was 62.22 and the percentage of students who scored ≥ 63 was 56.6%, and the students' active involvement in teaching learning process was 55.3%. It means that the standard mean score ($M=63$), the requirement of students scoring ≥ 63 ($E = 70\%$) and the requirement of active student in observation process (70%) in Cycle 1 of this research had not been achieved. From the data above, it can be concluded that Cycle 1 was not successful.

Therefore, the researcher investigated the cause of this matter. In the first cycle, the students were shy in asking or answering question, so the chance to check their understanding was limited. The only chance is when they study in teams. It can be assumed that their understanding was not maximal. Moreover, some of them were not used to practice their writing. From the reasons above, the action in the second cycle needs to be improved by giving more practices and more challenging topics to the students that focused on the difficulty of the task. Besides that each teams had different picture while having practice in teams in order to decrease the chance in cheating the answer. The topic of the descriptive task was about person.

Ebo (2005, p. 1) said that writing can be done by every people by practicing. It means that when the students practice regularly on how to write and organize a paragraph or text in a good way; their writing ability will improve. Based on the result of writing test in Cycle 2, the students' writing ability in Cycle 2 was better than in Cycle 1. Based on the result of the test in cycle 2, the mean score was 72 and the percentage of students who score ≥ 63 was 80%. It means that STAD method is able to improve the students' writing ability.

STAD method emphasizes on the process of learning writing that happened in both through study in teams or individual learning while the teacher explained the material. The students got their first understanding while they listen to what the

teacher explained then they got their second understanding while they studied in teams. The structure of the teams used was heterogeneous teams that consisted of one high, two middle and one low. It means that when they did both listening to the teacher's explanation and studying in teams, their understanding would be maximal. As said by Kagan and Kagan (2009, p. 166), there are some benefits of having heterogeneous teams that are 1) increase opportunities for peer tutoring and support, 2) improve cross-race and cross-sex relations and integration, and 3) make classroom management easier.

By having peer tutoring, the high achiever helped the others but each member of the teams has the same responsibility to ensure that they understand the material well. It means that each student had individual and teams responsibility to achieve the target material. As said by Goodlad & Hirst (1989) in Showunmi, peer tutoring is a peer mediated instructional strategy that typically involves students in partnerships learning from each other and learning by teaching. When each of the members had a problem, the other would help to fix the problem. They shared and discussed the problem that was found, so each of them would master the material. Moreover, in the end of the practice the best team would get a reward in form of certificate.

By the giving reward, each student will motivate and support each other to be the best team. The reward that was given to the best team increased motivation to learn. As said by Slavin (2005, p. 35), when teams reward is applied, each student will motivate each other to achieve the target. Moreover, it was proved by the percentage of students' participation that always increased in each cycle. This motivation also supported each student to learn harder than before. In cycle 2, there were a lot of students who achieved the target score; it happened because they were really motivated in studying both in teams and individually. It means that they already get maximal understanding. They understand

that ensured each member of their team was a way to become the best teams.

Based on the explanation above, the results of this research have proved that the use of STAD method is able to improve the third grade descriptive writing ability of Pirayanawin Klonghin Wittaya School Pattani-Thailand in the 2014/2015 academic year.

Conclusion

The use of STAD method is able to improve the third grade students' descriptive writing ability at Pirayanawin Klonghin Wittaya School Pattani-Thailand in 2014 / 2015 academic year by having heterogeneous teams in terms of ability and gender that make them easier in generating their ideas and able to have peer tutoring. By having heterogeneous teams, the students will motivate and support each other to achieve the target material. They can share their ideas and solve the problem that is found during practice. Each member of the teams will ensure that their friends understand the material given through peer tutoring. So, each of the students can master the material well, in this case descriptive writing.

By considering the result of the research, some suggestions are given to the English teacher, the students and other researchers. The English teacher is suggested to apply the STAD method when teaching writing in the classroom because STAD can improve students writing ability. The students are suggested to be active learners both in team and individually. Besides that, they must practice their English writing ability in order to able to write English correctly in terms of grammar, vocabulary, mechanics and organization. Other researchers are suggested to: (1) conduct the STAD method by using another research design (2) conduct the STAD method to improve the speaking, listening or reading skills

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