

Analysis of Students' Perception of Small Group Discussion Techniques in Expository Text Writing Activities at SMAN 17 Pekanbaru

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze students' perceptions of the implementation of small group discussion techniques in expository text writing activities. The research employed a qualitative descriptive design and was conducted at SMAN 17 Pekanbaru on 29 August 2025. The population consisted of 200 eleventh-grade students, and 20 students were selected purposively as the sample. Data were collected through classroom observation, face-to-face interviews, and documentation of students' expository texts. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was applied to analyze the data. The findings reveal that students generally perceive small group discussion positively. The technique helped students generate ideas, enrich vocabulary, improve text organization and cohesion, and build confidence in writing. However, several challenges were identified, including unequal participation, occasional code-switching to Bahasa Indonesia, and limited time allocation. Documentation of students' texts confirmed improvements in structure, coherence, and lexical variety after participating in group discussions. The study concludes that small group discussion is an effective strategy to support students' expository writing, with recommendations for structured group roles, better time management, and active teacher facilitation.

Keywords: Collaborative Learning; Expository Writing; Small Group Discussion; Students' Perception; Thematic Analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

English, as an international language, plays an important role in education, technology, and global communication. Writing is one of the essential skills in English learning and is often regarded as the most complex because it requires the ability to organize ideas, select appropriate vocabulary, and apply correct grammar (Vance, 2021).

Among the various text types, expository text is particularly significant because it requires students to explain a topic logically, systematically, and coherently (Amer, 2013). However, preliminary observation at SMAN 17 Pekanbaru revealed that many students face difficulties in writing expository texts, such as unclear structure, grammatical errors, and limited vocabulary.

Collaborative learning, especially through small group discussion techniques, is considered a potential solution. In discussions, students can exchange ideas, provide peer feedback, and improve their writing collaboratively. This aligns with social constructivist theory (Palincsar, 1998), which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in constructing knowledge.

Previous studies (Zainurroziqi, 2021; Rizki & Indrayani, 2024; Maghfuroh, 2015; Li & Zhang, 2021) have confirmed the effectiveness of small group discussion in improving writing performance. However, most studies emphasized achievement outcomes rather than

students' perceptions, particularly at the senior high school level in Indonesia. Thus, this study seeks to analyze students' perceptions of small group discussion techniques in expository text writing activities at SMAN 17 Pekanbaru.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing Skills

Writing is a complex cognitive process involving planning, drafting, and revising (Flower & Hayes, 1981). The main components of writing include content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics (Brown, 2001).

ExpositoryText

Expository writing aims to explain or inform readers in a logical and objective manner. Its typical structure consists of a thesis statement, supporting arguments, and a reaffirmation (Black, 1985).

SmallGroupDiscussion

Small group discussion is a collaborative strategy in which students exchange ideas in groups of 4–6 members (Nyumba et al., 2018). It is effective for enhancing participation, understanding, and critical thinking (McCafferty & Jacobs, 2013).

Students'Perception

Students' perception refers to how learners interpret and evaluate their learning experiences (Robbins & Judge, 2017). Positive perceptions encourage active participation, whereas negative perceptions may hinder engagement.

Previous Studies

- Zainurroziqi (2021): Small group discussion improved students' hortatory exposition writing.
- Maghfuroh (2015): students reported that group discussion helped idea generation and built confidence.
- Li & Zhang (2021): structured discussions improved EFL learners' writing quality.

The research gap is that few studies have specifically examined students' perceptions of small group discussions in expository text writing at the senior high school level.

3. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design. It was conducted at SMAN 17 Pekanbaru on 29 August 2025. The population consisted of 200 eleventh-grade students, and 20 students were purposively selected as the sample. Data were collected using observation

checklists, structured interviews, and documentation of students' expository writings. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's framework, which includes familiarization with the data, coding, identifying themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and producing the report.

4. RESULT & DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this research show that students generally hold positive perceptions of small group discussion in expository text writing activities. They reported that the technique facilitated idea generation, enriched vocabulary, improved text organization, and enhanced confidence in writing. These perceptions were confirmed through the documentation of students' texts, which showed clearer structure, better coherence, and greater lexical variety after the application of the technique.

Despite these positive outcomes, several challenges were identified. Some students noted unequal participation within groups, where certain members dominated the discussion while others remained passive. There was also frequent code-switching into Bahasa Indonesia, which occasionally disrupted the focus on English. Moreover, limited time allocation was perceived as a barrier to maximizing the benefits of group work.

The results of this study are consistent with the social constructivist perspective that emphasizes the role of interaction in learning. They also align with findings from previous studies, which demonstrated that small group discussions improve writing performance. However, the challenges highlight the importance of teacher facilitation and structured role assignments within groups to ensure that all students are engaged and that the discussion contributes effectively to the writing process.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study concludes that students perceive small group discussion positively in expository text writing activities. The technique was effective in helping them generate ideas, enrich vocabulary, organize their texts, and build confidence in writing. Nevertheless, unequal participation, dominance, code-switching, and limited time were obstacles that needed to be addressed. It is suggested that teachers assign clear and structured roles in groups to ensure balanced participation, manage time effectively during discussions, and provide active facilitation to support the process. Future research could explore teachers' perspectives or compare small group discussion with other collaborative learning techniques to broaden the understanding of its effectiveness.

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