



Original Article

Students' Perception on Utilizing Pair Work in Writing Descriptive Text at SMPN 7 Padang

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Abstract:

This study aims to investigate students' perceptions of utilizing pair work in writing descriptive paragraphs at SMPN 7 Padang. Writing descriptive texts is a complex skill that requires mastery of vocabulary, grammar, organization, and creativity, which often poses challenges for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Pair work has been proposed as an effective strategy to enhance engagement and support the writing process through collaboration and peer interaction. This quantitative descriptive research involved 32 eighth-grade students selected through total sampling. Data was collected using a validated questionnaire consisting of 20 items on a four-point Likert scale, covering four indicators: attractiveness, effectiveness, relevance, and perceived motivation. The results indicated that students' perceptions were generally positive, with attractiveness scoring the highest mean (3.15), followed by perceived motivation (3.08), relevance (2.99), and effectiveness (2.97). Findings suggest pair work increases enjoyment, facilitates task completion, and supports long-term writing development, although challenges remain regarding equal contribution and confidence building. It is recommended that teachers implement structured work activities, promote fair participation, and integrate reflective follow-up tasks to maximize their benefits in writing instruction.

Keywords: Descriptive Text; Pair Work; Perception; Writing

Introduction

Writing is one of the most essential foundational English language skills students must develop for effective communication and academic success (Firman, 2022). Among the different types of writing, descriptive text requires students to express their ideas clearly and vividly, which can be difficult for many learners. According to Hyland (2003), writing is a complex process that involves various cognitive and linguistic skills, including organisation, vocabulary choice, and grammatical accuracy. Writing involves planning and structuring ideas to communicate objectives on paper effectively. Students can also



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use writing to effectively share their ideas, emotions, and opinions about what they have read, seen, or experienced ([Tuanany, 2019](#)).

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), students often find it challenging to write well-structured descriptive texts. Therefore, writing requires daily practice because it is a difficult skill with many factors to consider, including coherence, grammar, style, form, and content. "The criteria for judging good writing are organisation, unity, coherence, conciseness, clarity, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and usage," according to [Fawcett, S., and Sandberg, A. \(1990\)](#). However, there are still different views on what constitutes effective writing. [Kevin \(2009\)](#) argues that the characteristics of good writing include organisation, coherence, conciseness, clarity, punctuation and usage, appropriate ideas, proper grammar, length, spelling, and logic. In conclusion, students can improve their ability to write and express their thoughts in well-written works by practising writing English texts. According to [Klimova \(2014\)](#), children should have enough writing opportunities. Furthermore, without enough experience, students cannot write well and efficiently.

Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of pair work in improving students' ability to write descriptive texts. Most Libyan learners have only been exposed to pair work in the UK. However, [Almanafi and Alghatani's \(2020\)](#) results showed that 79.3% of the study participants had an optimistic or positive view of pair work in learning English. In addition, 74.5% considered pair work a helpful method for improving language skills. [Mahmud's \(2022\)](#) findings indicated that teachers' management of writing skills instruction was effective, thus positively impacting students' writing abilities. This is evidenced by the average student score in the good category (71.75). [Marsevani and Yeo \(2023\)](#) reported that after implementing this method, the average score increased from 68.76% in the pre-test to 78.66% in post-test 2. Although this increase has not yet reached the standard of success, pair work can help students improve their ability to compose descriptive texts, especially regarding vocabulary and organisation. Many previous studies have examined the effect of pair work on writing descriptive texts. Meanwhile, the current study further explores how students perceive pair work in their writing process. This study discusses students' perceptions of pair work in writing descriptive texts.

Perception is a person's ability to form an impression, opinion, or emotion about something based on observation or reasoning. Perception, often regarded as a sensory process, is how an individual receives stimuli through their senses. When the stimulus persists, the perception process occurs ([Walgito, 2010](#)). Furthermore, [Tarmiji \(2016\)](#) states that perception is a process that involves introducing information or signals into the human brain. Additionally, Slameto argued that a teacher must understand the fundamental concept of perception to understand students better and become an effective communicator, emphasising that perception is relative rather than absolute. The reaction resulting from perception can take many different forms. The individual's attention determines which stimuli will provoke a response. Therefore, if a person's emotions, cognitive abilities, and life experiences differ, their perception of a stimulus may also vary from person to person. The same object is often seen differently by everyone. Several factors, such as perspective, experience, and knowledge, can influence these differences. According to [Chen \(2003\)](#), one technique to gauge and assess the efficacy of instruction is via students' perceptions. To determine if a lecturer or teacher is successful, it is crucial to consider how the students perceive them. If the outcome is ineffective, it may be modified or enhanced and then modified according to the learning preferences of the pupils. According to Petergem's 2007 research, measuring students' perceptions is crucial for

gauging their learning achievements across all skill sets.

According to [Putri \(2015\)](#), writing has a positive impact and expresses emotions, ideas, and thoughts through visual language. After speaking, listening, and reading, writing is one of the four core language skills taught. Writing is used in academic settings, daily life, and as a means of communication. [Dantes & Mettaningrum \(2013\)](#) state that writing is a productive ability that enables everyone to express and share ideas in written form, as [Abbas \(2019\)](#) claims. Students must develop their writing skills because they play a key role in writing assignments. Writing allows authors more time to reflect and communicate their thoughts. There are five different writing methods, each briefly described. The first is prewriting, where students must generate ideas and plan their writing. This process includes brainstorming, gathering information, planning, and making lists. The goal of brainstorming is to produce ideas relevant to the topic. The second step is writing, where students craft the initial draft of their text, incorporating ideas and illustrative details. Later, students can edit and revise their work texts. Clouse (2006) pointed out that writing has different goals, including sharing experiences, informing people, and entertaining.

- a) To talk about your experience and share how you feel or think about it. For example, the writing could express how frustrated you are about finding the mice.
- b) To share information, help the person learn, set the facts straight, or help. For example, the writing might describe what occurs when a house has mice.
- c) Short stories, romance books, and funny newspaper articles are all written to entertain. For example, the writing could be funny about living with mice.

[Cox \(1962\)](#) states that writing serves four primary purposes: to inform, entertain, make fun of something, and convince. To inform means the writer shares their knowledge with the audience. Secondly, to amuse means entertaining people with jokes or funny situations. Thirdly, ridiculing means using humour to talk about an important topic. To convince means the writer wants to change what the reader thinks or does.

Descriptive text explains or characterises people, animals, or objects in terms of shape, qualities, quantity, etc. [Suprijadi and Masitoh \(2015\)](#). A descriptive text uses visual experience to describe a person, location, or object. Descriptive writing aims to explain, describe, or reveal a person or thing. When descriptive phrases are used, readers seem to see, hear, and feel what is being communicated in the text. "Descriptive text is a kind of text to give information," Jailani adds. This type of text describes an object, person, or other entity, such as our dogs or acquaintances. In other words, a descriptive text outlines or describes anything based on its attitude, traits, form, etc. This type of material often uses the Simple Present Tense. Furthermore, according to Pardiyono, a description paragraph is a written paragraph that aims to describe an object, whether it is living or non-living, clearly to the reader. Based on the above definition, a descriptive paragraph provides detailed information about a specific person, location, or event. Descriptive writing vividly portrays a person, place, or object so the reader can visualise the subject and feel like the writer. It can enhance other writing or create a mental image of something's appearance.

Yulitrinisa and Narius (2018) say that teachers should select the best methods to inspire and motivate students to learn. Teachers can use "Pair Work" to teach English lessons. Pair work helps students participate more by sharing their ideas. It also gives them a chance to build confidence. [Rosmawar \(2018\)](#) explains that pair work is a way for students to learn together by sharing thoughts and information in pairs. Pair work

involves two or more people working together to learn, which can happen inside or outside of school and includes teachers and students. In this paired activity, the teacher acts as a guide or explanation so students can understand the rules given to them. According to [Millah \(2019\)](#), pair work is where students collaborate to complete tasks. Pair work can also be helpful for English teachers because it encourages students to be more effective in finishing their tasks ([Baleghizadeh & Rahimi, 2011](#)). Students enjoy working in pairs because they feel more comfortable with their tasks. When choosing partners, they consider age, skill level, familiarity, and interest in learning English. Pair work is a learning practice where students work together in pairs, with each student partnering with another, and all pairs working simultaneously. Working in pairs can help students become more confident and motivated in learning English. It also allows them to discuss and practice together ([Rosmawar, 2018](#)). Pair work effectively allows students to improve their writing skills and easily generate ideas. Students have reported that working in pairs helps improve their English, according to Almanafi, AOS, and Alghatani, RH (2020). This practice enhances their English skills, and working in pairs is among the best methods to boost their language abilities. Pair work activities encourage students to collaborate. To complete a task successfully, they must cooperate, fostering a friendly and positive learning environment where students enjoy working together. It often makes students less afraid of making mistakes. Most students feel more confident when completing a task independently without always relying on the teacher.

Method

This study employs a quantitative research approach, utilizing numerical descriptions and opinions from the group by examining a population sample. To assess the concept of goal, a quantitative research technique looks at the relationships between variables ([Creswell, 2018](#)). [Sugiyono \(2019\)](#) states that descriptive analysis is used to determine the value of independent variables, both one (dependent) and many (independent), without using or linking to other factors. The population consisted of 32 students from Class VIII at SMPN 7 Padang. A total sampling method was used, which means all group members participated in the research due to its small size ([Sugiyono, 2020](#)). The participants were selected based on their previous exposure to pair work activities in writing descriptive texts.

Before distributing the instrument, a pilot test was conducted to ensure its validity and reliability. The validity of each item was examined using Pearson's product-moment correlation. The result showed that all 20 items had *r*-count values greater than *r*-table (0.349), indicating that every statement was valid and could be used to measure students' perceptions. A reliability analysis was performed using Cronbach's Alpha to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. The result revealed an alpha value of 0.835, which falls within the "high reliability." This indicates that the instrument was consistent and dependable for measuring students' perceptions.

The collected data were analysed quantitatively using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics, including the mean, standard deviation, and percentage, were used to describe the overall tendency of students' perceptions toward pair work in writing descriptive paragraphs. Furthermore, the mean scores were categorised into four levels of perception: Very Positive, Positive, Negative, and Very Negative. This categorisation helped interpret the degree to which students responded favorably or unfavourably toward the instructional strategy.

Results

The study results were illustrated using tables that included frequency distributions and average scores, accompanied by descriptive explanations.

1. Students' Perceptions on the Attractiveness of Pair Work on Writing Descriptive Paragraphs

This first indicator focused on how students' attractiveness of using pair work in writing descriptive texts. It consisted of five statements, and the outcomes are displayed in the table below.

Table 1. Students' Perceptions on the Attractiveness of Pair Work on Writing Descriptive Paragraphs

No	Statements	Alternative Answer				Total	Mean	Category
		SD(1)	D(2)	A(3)	SA(4)			
1.	I feel more confident in writing descriptive texts when working in pairs.	1	5	22	4	32	2.91	P
2.	Pair work makes the writing process more enjoyable and engaging for me.	0	2	12	18	32	3.5	VP
3.	Discussing ideas with friends makes learning descriptive writing more interesting.	1	6	13	12	32	3.12	P
4.	I find it easier to stay focused and motivated when writing descriptive texts with friends.	1	8	14	9	32	2.97	P
5.	Pair work encourages me to explore new vocabulary to enhance my descriptive writing.	0	3	18	11	32	3.25	P
MEAN							3.15	P

Table 1 shows that the overall average score for the attractiveness indicator was 3.15 in the positive category. The highest response was observed for the statement "Working in pairs makes the writing process more fun and interesting for me" (3.5), which suggests that most students find writing activities more enjoyable when done in pairs. Students also demonstrated a positive tendency towards exploring new understandings (3.25) and discussing ideas with friends (3.12). The lowest response was recorded for "I feel more confident in writing descriptive texts when working in pairs" (2.91), confirming that although pair work is enjoyable, students' confidence in writing does not increase significantly. This finding shows that pair work plays a more important role in enhancing enjoyment than building confidence; in other words, students feel happier when writing together, but their confidence in producing written work has not been fully improved.

2. Students' Perceptions on the Effectiveness of Pair Work on Writing Descriptive Paragraphs

The next is students' perceptions of the effectiveness of Pair Work on Writing Descriptive. This indicator had five statements that students had to respond to. The results on the effectiveness aspect can be seen in the following table.

Table 2. Students' Perceptions on the Effectiveness of Pair Work on Writing Descriptive Paragraphs

No	Statements	Alternative Answer				Total	Mean	Category
		SD(1)	D(2)	A(3)	SA(4)			
6.	Working in pairs helps me manage time better during the writing process.	1	8	15	8	32	2.93	P
7.	Working with a friend minimises distractions compared to working alone.	2	8	12	9	32	2.81	P
8.	My friend made sure we both contributed equally to the writing process.	3	11	8	10	32	2.79	P
9.	Working in pairs helps me complete tasks within the given time frame.	1	0	18	13	32	3.34	VP
10.	I can write more structured and detailed descriptive texts when collaborating with friends.	2	5	17	8	32	2.97	P
MEAN							2.97	P

Table 2 shows that the overall average score for the effectiveness indicator was 2.97 in the positive category. The highest response was “Working in pairs helps me complete assignments within the given timeframe” (3.34), indicating that pair work is effective in helping students complete writing assignments on time. Conversely, the lowest response was for the statement “My friend ensures that we both contribute equally to the writing process” (2.79), suggesting that contributions between students and their partners are not yet balanced. Additionally, the perceived effectiveness of pair work in reducing distractions was relatively low (2.81). Overall, the pair work was highly effective in time management and more structured text preparation. These findings suggest that the benefits of pair work are more evident in time management than in fair collaboration, so while students find it easier to complete assignments within the allotted time, some still experience unequal contributions from their partners.

3. Students' Perceptions on the Relevance of Pair Work on Writing Descriptive Paragraphs

The next is students' perceptions of the relevance of Pair Work on Writing Descriptive. This indicator had five statements that students had to respond to. The results on the effectiveness aspect can be seen in the following table.

Table 3. Students' Perceptions on the Relevance of Pair Work on Writing Descriptive Paragraphs

No	Statements	Alternative Answer				Total	Mean	Category
		SD(1)	D(2)	A(3)	SA(4)			
11.	Pairwork helps me apply what I have learned in class to improve my descriptive writing.	1	6	20	5	32	2.91	P
12.	Collaborating with friends would help develop my writing skills in real-life situations.	1	8	17	6	32	2.88	P
13.	Working in pairs enhances my ability to describe objects, places, and people in daily communication.	1	4	19	8	32	3.06	P
14.	Learning descriptive writing through pair work is relevant to my academic and personal language development.	0	8	20	4	32	2.88	P
15.	Using pair work in writing descriptive texts is beneficial for my long-term writing improvement.	0	8	17	7	32	3.21	P

MEAN	2.99	P
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Table 3 shows that the overall average score for the relevance indicator was 2.99 in the positive category. The highest response was for the statement "Using pair work in writing descriptive texts is beneficial for my long-term writing improvement" (3.21), indicating that students considered pair work relevant for the development of writing skills in the long term. In addition, students also considered pair work to improve the ability to describe objects, places, and people in everyday communication (3.06). However, the lowest response was for two statements: "Collaborating with friends would help develop my writing skills in real-life situations" and "Learning descriptive writing through pair work is relevant to my academic and personal language development" (2.88). This indicates that some students have not fully felt the connection between pair work and real life or their personal development. These results confirm that pair work is considered more relevant for long-term writing development than practical application in everyday communication. Thus, students believe in its benefits for writing improvement, but not all connect it to real situations outside the classroom.

4. Students' Perceptions on the Perceived Motivation of Pair Work on Writing Descriptive Paragraphs

The next is students' perceptions of the effectiveness of Pair Work on Writing Descriptive. This indicator had five statements that students had to respond to. The results on the effectiveness aspect can be seen in the following table.

Table 4. Students' Perceptions on the Perceived Motivatin of Pair Work on Writing Descriptive Paragraphs

No	Statements	Alternative Answer				Total	Mea n	Categor y
		SD(1)	D(2)	A(3)	SA(4)			
16.	When collaborating with friends, I feel more encouraged to complete my writing tasks.	1	7	14	10	32	3.03	P
17.	Receiving feedback from my friends motivates me to refine my writing.	0	3	18	11	32	3.25	P
18.	Writing in pairs makes the learning process feel more enjoyable and less stressful.	1	11	1	19	11	3.25	P
19.	I am more motivated to expand my vocabulary when writing descriptive texts with friends.	1	5	14	12	32	3.16	P
20.	I am not excited about learning English when I do pair work and write descriptive text in class.	5	9	8	10	32	2.72	P
MEAN							3.08	P

Table 4 shows that the overall average score for the perceived motivation indicator was 3.08 in the positive category. The highest responses were found for two statements: "Receiving feedback from friends motivates me to improve my writing" (3.25) and "Writing in pairs makes the learning process more enjoyable and reduces stress" (3.25). These results suggest that students felt more motivated by feedback from friends and a more enjoyable learning environment. Students also felt encouraged to broaden their horizons (3.16) and complete writing tasks (3.03). Conversely, the lowest response was for the statement "I am not enthusiastic about learning English when I do pair work and write descriptive texts in class" (2.72), indicating that some students did not experience an increased enthusiasm for learning English despite engaging in pair work. This finding shows that pair work mainly boosts motivation through social support and a more relaxed learning atmosphere. However, it does not automatically enhance students' enthusiasm for learning English. In other words, students felt more motivated by receiving feedback and a pleasant classroom environment, but not all experienced a general increase in enthusiasm for learning.

Discussion

The findings of this study showed that, overall, students had positive perceptions of using pair work in writing descriptive texts, with the average scores across the four indicators falling within the positive range (2.97–3.15). This suggests that pair work increases the enjoyment of writing (attractiveness), helps students complete tasks more effectively, offers long-term benefits for their writing development, and boosts motivation through interaction and peer feedback. The attractiveness component received the highest average score (3.5), especially in the statement that writing with a partner made the process more enjoyable. This aligns with studies indicating that peer collaboration reduces writing anxiety and enhances learning engagement (Sivaci, 2020). However, students' confidence was somewhat lower (2.91), implying that the emotional aspect was not fully developed, which is consistent with findings that peer feedback plays a more significant role in student engagement than in boosting self-efficacy (Nurkhamidah, Handayani, & Pratiwi, 2024).

In terms of effectiveness, students believed pair work helped them complete tasks within the allotted time (3.34), supporting evidence that pair work facilitates time management (Kuyyogsuy, 2019). Nonetheless, unequal contribution between partners remained a challenge (2.79), a finding also reported in other research, indicating that collaboration does not always result in balanced roles (Perez-Cañar, 2023). Regarding relevance, students perceived pair work as beneficial for long-term writing improvement (3.21). This aligns with meta-analytic evidence demonstrating a positive relationship between peer collaboration and academic achievement (Wei, 2024). However, its application in real-life situations was rated lower (2.88), reflecting similar conclusions that authentic tasks are needed so that students can recognise the direct relevance of classroom learning (Cao, Zhang, & Li, 2025).

Furthermore, the indicator of perceived motivation revealed that students felt encouraged by peer feedback and a more relaxed learning environment (3.25). This finding supports the idea that peer feedback boosts intrinsic motivation (Waluyo, 2024). Despite this, some students remained less enthusiastic about learning English through pair work (2.72). These results indicate that pair work significantly enhances student engagement, task effectiveness, long-term relevance, and motivation in writing descriptive texts. However, additional support is necessary to build confidence, promote

equitable contribution, and improve practical relevance to maximise its benefits.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that students at SMPN 7 Padang generally have a positive perception of pair work in writing descriptive texts. The overall average scores across the four indicators—attractiveness, effectiveness, relevance, and perceived motivation—range from 2.97 to 3.15, all falling within the positive category. Among these, the attractiveness indicator shows the highest perception, suggesting pair work makes writing more enjoyable and engaging for students. Pair work also motivates students through peer feedback and a supportive classroom environment. Although the indicators of effectiveness and relevance received slightly lower scores, they still indicate positive perceptions. Students recognised that pair work aided time management and supported long-term writing development, although issues such as unequal contribution and limited connection to real-life contexts were observed. Similarly, while pair work encouraged enjoyment and collaboration, it did not significantly boost students' confidence in writing.

This study emphasises that pair work effectively supports students' writing development, especially in descriptive texts. Teachers are encouraged to create well-structured pair work activities, promote fair participation, and include follow-up tasks like peer feedback and individual reflections to maximise effectiveness. Doing so can further boost student motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes in the EFL classroom.

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