

## Students' writing skills through collaborative writing and the tendency to work in a group

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**Abstract:** This study aims to enhance students' writing skills through collaborative writing at a Senior High School and determine their preference between collaborative writing in pairs or groups. The study discovered that students lacked enthusiasm in completing the writing work, which caused poor motivation and challenges in formulating ideas. This study employed a classroom action research (CAR) methodology and consisted of two cycles. The data were collected through observations of the teaching and learning process, interviews with students, and conducting writing assessments. The research findings indicated that engaging in collaborative writing increased students' interest in writing activities due to the opportunity for interaction with their peers. Collaborative writing facilitated the creation of ideas by allowing each group member to contribute, resulting in a diverse range of thoughts. The successful implementation of collaborative writing was complemented by the implementation of group work. It was also shown that students prefer collaborating more in group tasks than working in pairs. The researcher discovered an enhancement in the students' writing scores.

**Keywords:** Collaborative writing, tendency, working in group, writing skills

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan keterampilan menulis siswa melalui collaborative writing di Sekolah Menengah Atas dan mengetahui preferensi mereka antara menulis kolaboratif secara berpasangan atau berkelompok. Penelitian menemukan bahwa siswa kurang antusias dalam menyelesaikan pekerjaan menulis, sehingga menyebabkan rendahnya motivasi dan tantangan dalam merumuskan ide. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi penelitian tindakan kelas (PTK) dan terdiri dari dua siklus. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi proses belajar mengajar, wawancara kepada siswa, dan melakukan penilaian menulis. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terlibat dalam menulis kolaboratif meningkatkan minat siswa dalam kegiatan menulis karena adanya kesempatan berinteraksi dengan teman sebayanya. Penulisan kolaboratif memfasilitasi penciptaan ide dengan memungkinkan setiap anggota kelompok berkontribusi, sehingga menghasilkan pemikiran yang beragam. Keberhasilan pelaksanaan penulisan kolaboratif dilengkapi dengan pelaksanaan kerja kelompok. Hal ini juga menunjukkan bahwa siswa lebih suka berkolaborasi dalam tugas kelompok dibandingkan bekerja berpasangan. Peneliti menemukan adanya peningkatan pada nilai menulis siswa.

**Kata kunci:** Collaborative writing, kecenderungan, bekerja berkelompok, kemampuan menulis

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## INTRODUCTION

In contrast to other linguistic competencies, writing proficiency is considered more intricate and demanding due to the fact that it necessitates students to acquire knowledge of particular regulations and refine their handwriting, spelling, coherence, punctuation, and arrangement of concepts into logical texts (Alsamadani, 2017; Deveci, 2018). The complexity of writing often impedes students' engagement, ultimately affecting their performance in language learning and comprehension. Noor et al. (2017) claimed that

students who encounter difficulties in the written word tend to perform unfavorably on written examinations and research endeavors that demand exposition. The reason for this is that academic writing requires regular practice and proficiency in practical skills (Akhtar et al., 2019). Students often do not take writing skills important as compared to speaking and listening skills because they do not view written texts as a vital means of communicating fluent message (Jawas, 2019).

Writing is not just a means of communication; it is also an essential activity in daily life, including business, creativity, and academic endeavors (Dudley-Evans, 2010; Zekarias, 2023). When teaching English to speakers of other languages, the development of students' writing abilities can help them think more critically and organize their ideas in a way that is conducive to synthesis, evaluation, and critique (Alwahoub et al., 2022). During the writing process, students often encounter significant challenges in terms of grammar, cohesion, and coherence (Jain et al., 2021; Enesi et al., 2021; Zekarias, 2022). In addition, they also identified students' minor writing challenges, such as issues with paragraph structure, word choice, and misspelling of vocabulary. This suggests that writing poses a challenge for students, particularly those who are learning English as a foreign language. Hence, the presence of a teacher is crucial for students during their writing process. Teachers must proficiently instruct students in the art of writing as facilitators.

However, the task of teaching writing is highly demanding and poses challenges for teachers (Shepperd, 2022). The challenges pertain to the linguistic and cultural disparities between the target language and the students' native language, as well as the learners themselves, the teachers, and the teaching environment (Tengberg et al., 2022; Martin & Mulvihill, 2019). Teachers required diverse pedagogical approaches to accomplish instruction and learning objectives (Chicherina et al., 2020; Nasir et al., 2023). An effective and suitable strategy can assist students throughout the writing process. Teaching strategies play a crucial role in the teaching and learning process of writing (Rapanta, 2021). Choosing the appropriate strategy empowers both teachers and students to attain the desired learning objectives successfully. Moreover, implementing suitable strategy can effectively inspire students during the writing learning process.

To enhance the efficacy and utility of writing activities for students, a considerable number of researchers are investigating the effects of collaborative writing (CW) and its influence on the development of writing skills (Zheng et al., 2021; Pham, 2021; Rezeki & Rahmani, 2021; Yesuf & Anshu, 2022). Collaborative learning is based on the social constructivist perspective of learning, which is influenced by prominent educators like Vygotsky, Piaget, and John Dewey. This perspective on learning posits that when students actively participate in small group discussions, it enhances their motivation and fosters a more profound comprehension of the subject matter. Consequently, it promotes the development of self-regulation skills (Chen, 2022). It encompasses diverse educational methods that facilitate collaborative intellectual endeavors among students and between students and teachers. Collaborative writing is defined as an activity where there is meaningful interaction throughout all stages of writing, shared responsibility for decision-making regarding the produced text, and the creation of a single text product (Moonma & Kaweera, 2021). Storch (2018), and Alandejani (2021) define collaborative writing as an activity characterized by a collective decision-making process and shared accountability for creating a unified text. Furthermore, collaborative cognition occurs when multiple

individuals achieve insights that are not attainable by any individual alone and cannot be attributed to the work of a single writer.

The utilization of collaborative writing techniques aligns with the core principles of the emancipated curriculum, presently implemented in Indonesia. This curriculum emphasizes a student-centered learning approach. Collaborative learning, facilitated by group or pair work, involves members engaging in role negotiation, task completion, and responsible to address problems, accomplish tasks, or generate new products. This approach promotes learner-centered and active learning (Chen & Yu, 2019; Ubaldo, 2021; Yesuf & Anshu, 2022). Collaborative writing is fundamentally a social endeavor where writers actively seek specific elements to exchange their understanding of essays (Shayakhmetova et al., 2020). In order to attain such comprehension, players must adhere to the subsequent social and interacting guidelines. Initially, the participants engage in a discussion regarding the specific goals they intend to articulate. They prioritize the goals in descending order and subsequently pursue a higher-level objective. Based on their discussions, they developed a group goal.

Meanwhile, the specification of the goal is discussed and agreed upon during the process. It is essential that the individuals possess varying degrees of proficiency and that there exist gaps in information among them. Due to this lack of knowledge, the group members are required to engage in discussions and reach agreements regarding the content, style, and even the objective of their writing. They exchange thoughts, emotions, and concepts, leading to a mutual impact on one another. Ultimately, the participants disengaged from the text. Abahussain (2020) argued that group work practically promotes students' motivation and pumps writing score in collaborative writing which they deemed more genuine, pleasurable, and favorable for their language learning. The researcher concluded that learners regarded the communicative approach, specifically group work, as both an effective method for language acquisition and a way to sustain their motivation and enthusiasm. Furthermore, this study indicates that when EFL learners perceive an activity, such as collaborative group work, as both meaningful and enjoyable, it significantly enhances their desire to actively engage in group work discussion.

Collaborative writing (CW) activities offer several advantages (Moonma & Kaweera, 2021). Firstly, they encourage students to reflect on their language usage and work together to solve language-related issues. Secondly, they enhance students' self-confidence when working with partners in pairs or groups, as opposed to speaking in front of the entire class. Thirdly, they stimulate student discussions about the content and organization of their writing. Lastly, CW activities reduce feelings of embarrassment by promoting interaction and mutual assistance among students. As a result, these cooperative activities are thought to assist learners without causing them embarrassment, ultimately resulting in improved language acquisition and enhanced critical thinking abilities.

However, collaborative writing also offers advantages to teachers. Collaborative writing has been introduced in specific writing courses through activities that involve pairs and small groups. The purpose is to reduce the demanding responsibilities of teachers in terms of instruction and assessment (Coffin, 2020). The development of skills relevant to the 21st century is also reflected in collaborative writing. Zheng et al. (2021) assumed the roles of peers, sounding boards, and analytical readers during the CW processes. In collaborative work, group members actively engage in discussions, encourage each other to

contribute ideas related to their writing topic, and give any feedback. This fosters learner participation in problem-solving exercises. Collaborative writing looked at how participant count affected the written texts' accuracy, complexity, and fluency as well as the type of oral interactions that took place between pairs and groups during the writing process. Therefore, student's writing abilities are the main focus of this current study, which mainly examines the effects of collaborative writing. Collaborative writing is used to alleviate the problem of teachers dealing with overwhelming workloads in handling big classroom situations. Nevertheless, there is a scarcity of research examining the utilization of collaborative writing technique as a means to address students' issue of low engagement. This study utilizes the classroom action research method to examine the effectiveness of collaborative writing technique in improving students' writing proficiency and their tendency on working in group level.

## METHOD

The research was classified as classroom action research. The researcher conducted this investigation using four distinct phases: planning, action, observation, and reflection. This progression formed a recurring cycle that could be repeated as long as the intended outcome of the action research was achieved. The cyclical action research model can be seen in Figure 1.

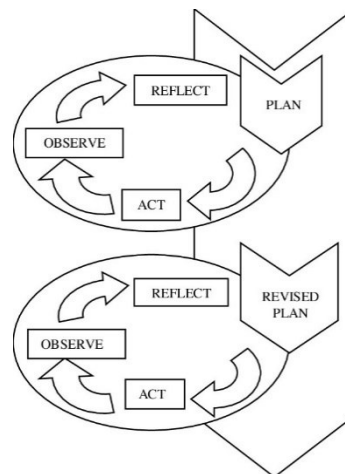


Fig. 1. Action research model by Kemmis and McTaggart

The research was conducted at one of the senior high schools in Yogyakarta. This school is a part of the Yogyakarta National Agricultural Research and Development Foundation and is characterized by an abundance of trees and plants within its surroundings. The researcher adhered to the schedule provided by the English teacher, given that the study was being conducted in that specific classroom. The participants in this study comprised the English teacher, students, and the researcher. Students in this school especially class XI come from diverse culture because some students who has family working in Sabah got scholarship from the foundation to study at this school. Consisting of 26 students, class XI was selected on account of the diversity of its members' proficiency levels. Additionally, the English teacher and the researcher discovered that students in class XI had difficulty with writing.

This research utilizes both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data consist of descriptions of the processes that occurred during observations, interviews, and actions.

The researcher conducted interviews with the English teacher and class XI students in order to ascertain their responses, viewpoints, and recommendations regarding the implementation. The observation conducted to discover the influence of collaborative writing on students' writing skills, participation, and attitudes during CW activities. Then, quantitative data gained from writing test to evaluate students' writing ability. In assessing the writing test, the researcher used a rubric adopted from Brown and Bailey's (1984) analytic scale. There are four indicators in writing rubric namely content/ideas, vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation then assess with a 1 – 4 interval score and categorized into five scale such as very low, low, moderate, high, and very high.

Initially, the researcher conducted interviews and observations with English teachers and students in class XI to identify issues in the English teaching and learning process. The researcher and the English teacher chose the problems to be addressed in this study based on their practicality. The main issues were students' lack of enthusiasm in the writing work and their struggles with concept generation. After identifying the problems, the researchers devised strategies to choose realistic measures for implementation. The researcher collaborated with the English teacher to prepare and implement certain tasks. During cycle I, the researcher and the English teacher started an exercise to stimulate students in brainstorming and enhance their motivation to complete the work. To address these issues, the researcher utilized collaborative writing in pairs. During cycle II, the researcher and the English instructor identified areas for improvement based on the results of Cycle I. Therefore, in cycle 2 students worked collaboratively in group to write and give their opinions based on the topic given in the form of essay. Each member of group had their role in writing the essay. Students had to discuss their ideas before grouping into one thus each part of member statement fit perfectly into an essay. This strategy was chosen due to students' performance while cycle 1 where several pairs had unequal contribution. Each cycle ended with reflection to determine the success or failure of the actions.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This study looked at students' writing participation in collaborative writing activities in pairs and groups. In cycle 1, CW activities are carried out in pairs. Students are instructed to work with their seatmates to make a short essay based on their opinion of a phenomenon that has been given. The results of this writing are then collected and assessed based on writing criteria. In cycle 1, 39% of students' writing skills are in category low. This category has the highest number of students than other points. This shows that collaborative writing in pairs has not been able to improve students' writing skills properly because the presentation of ideas in the text is not adequate. By observing students' writing skills and engagement in the cycle 1, it can be identified that learning activities need improvement thus students writing and collaborative skills can be increased. Therefore, in the cycle 2 students are working in group by giving specific instructions and parts. Each member of group has their own task in giving their ideas and those ideas from all members combined into a complete essay. The data shows that collaborative writing in groups is quite good in improving students' writing skills because 42% students are in high level and 39% students are in moderate level. It means that collaborative writing in group elevates students writing skills rather than collaborative writing in pairs. In the other hand, CW in group built students' interaction with all members in constructing their essay.

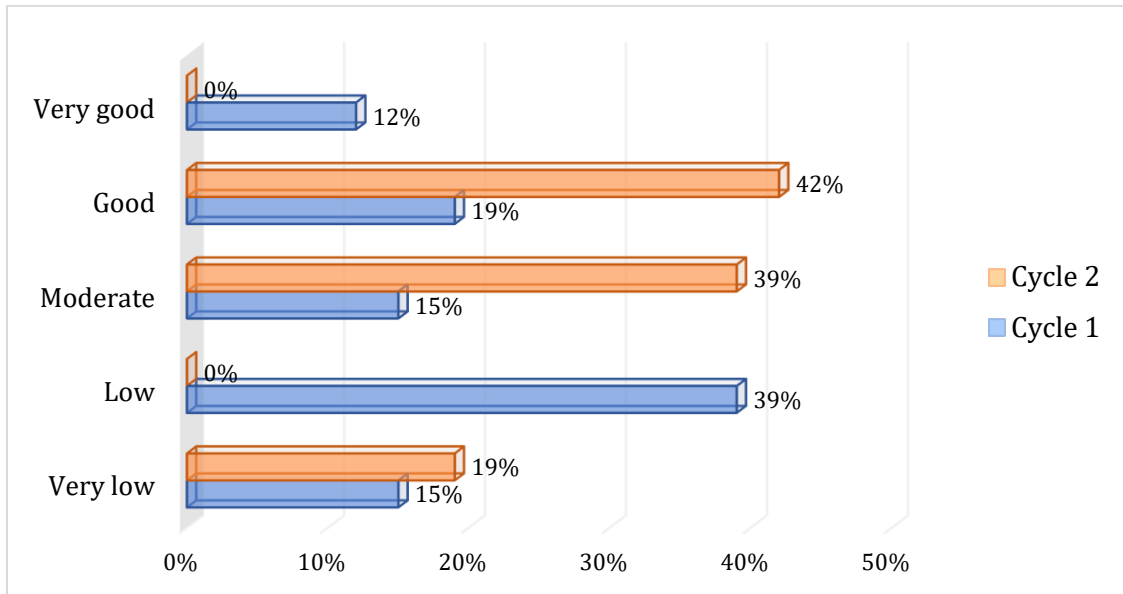


Fig. 2. Students' writing skills in each cycle

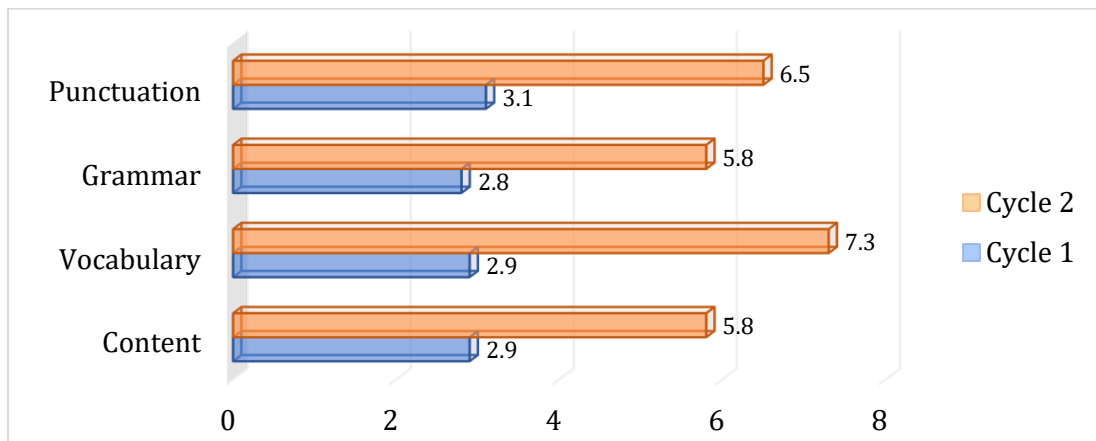


Fig. 3. Writing's aspects

Collaborative writing in cycle 1 and 2 has driven students' writing skills in various factors. Collaborative writing in cycle 2 which is involved group work in accomplishing short essay is able to boost students' vocabulary rather than pair activities. In addition, Collaborative writing in pairs is also unable to increase students' engagement and collaborative skills among students. Some of them ignore their duty in generating ideas and using their gadget while others writing the essay by themselves. In contrast, students show their high enthusiasm during CW in group on the learning activity because some students who are not excited become more enthusiastic in carrying out their assignments together. By working in group, students can manage their group work and make sure all of the members give their contribution to deepen understanding and knowledge related to their writing topic. This classroom situation can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' improvement in classroom situation

<b>Problem Indicator</b>	<b>After Cycle 1</b>	<b>After Cycle 2</b>
Students' writing skills are still low	Some students need help in understanding the topic.	Students' writing skills are increasing significantly after implementing collaborative writing in group. They can generate various ideas and compile into a short essay.
Students are less engaged in classroom activity. They ignored the instruction and focus with their own gadget	Some students show good collaboration skill with their pair but the rest of students did not take part in writing activities with their pairs due to playing gadget.	Students' engagement in collaborative writing increase significantly. They are aware with their task, discussing the ideas and giving feedback with group members. Students show their high enthusiasm on the learning activity and elevate students' attention and writing skills.

This result is also supported by interviews between researchers and students. Students' perspectives and opinions related to collaborative writing in groups can be seen as follows:

**Researcher:** We had two types of activities which are collaborative writing in pairs and group. Which one you like the most?

**A:** I am more into group activity because we can work together, for example when I confused with particular word, I can ask other friends and get a feedback. I think collaborative writing in group makes us complement each other in writing.

**Researcher:** Is there any alteration from you after writing in group?

**A:** I can boost my collaboration and communication skill. Besides, I know more about my friends' character.

**Researcher:** We had two types of activities which are collaborative writing in pairs and group. Which one you like the most?

**B:** I like group activities because we can discuss and exchange our ideas.

**Researcher:** Is there any improvement or change from yourself after writing in group?

**B:** Yes, it can improve my confidence to deliver my opinion.

**Researcher:** We had two types of activities which are collaborative writing in pairs and group. Which one you like the most?

**C:** I prefer collaborative writing in group because we can share our ideas and compile into an essay.

**Researcher:** Is there any improvement or change from yourself after writing in group?

**C:** Yes, It can improve my writing skill because while writing activity I was noticed some of misspell words and re-check through dictionary directly. So, basically collaborative writing improves my vocabulary mastery through discussion.

Students' needs and preferences need to be considered as important aspects in facilitating them with appropriate methods and strategies. Teachers as facilitators are expected to be able to meet these needs in fostering students' abilities, especially in language learning. One of the skills that is still an issue is writing. Students often experience difficulty in writing due to lack of motivation and interest which affect students' ability in generating ideas. In this study, the researcher tried to improve writing skills by using collaborative writing techniques in 2 cycles. In cycle 1, students work together in pairs to give their opinion on a topic and compile into a short essay. Based on the essay results at this stage, students' writing abilities are still in the low category. Some students do not even participate with their classmates in providing ideas and writing essays because students reluctant to involve with their friends. Reflecting on the results in cycle 1, the researcher then used a different method in cycle 2 where students wrote essays in groups with more detailed instructions. Each group member has their own role and part in conveying their opinion about a topic that has been arranged structurally. As working in group, students can communicate their thoughts with others and give feedbacks to each other thus the ideas arranged appropriately into a complete essay. This activity succeeded in improving students' writing skills significantly compared to the writing skills in cycle 1.

The interviews and writing skill level based on writing test score indicated that CW technique can have a positive impact on students' writing skills because it allows them to find out some spelling mistakes, unfamiliar words, and correct them directly by getting feedback from group members. It implies that direct feedback can support students' writing ability as Sahmadan and Hasan (2023) study. This implicitly supports students' vocabulary mastery as well. In addition, students have a tendency to CW activities in groups because it provides opportunities for students to interact, discuss, and share ideas with each other. During discussion process and generate ideas, students became more familiar their friends' character and increase confidence to give opinions. Students get more opportunities to develop their soft skills such as collaboration and communication skills while constructing an essay.

In line with this result and findings, Pham (2021) revealed that Collaborative writing elevates students' writing fluency and collaboration skills. It also found that in collaborative writing with group contributions more effective than individual writing. Each member has their own part to compose the paragraph and sharing the idea among them. This is supported by Moonma and Kaweera (2021), and Abahussain (2020), they discovered that students' writing score and proficiency in group work higher than individually as well. Moreover, group activities increase students' critical thinking while analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating their ideas from other members to complete the essay or paper. On the other hand, collaborative writing fosters students' confidence to generate and devote ideas into a complete essay. Students in CW recognized two sociocultural constructs, namely the co-



construction of knowledge and languaging, as significant advantages. The majority of participants concurred that the group deliberated on the optimal approach to utilize the target language for articulating their ideas, encompassing aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, and spelling.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, the purpose of the current study was to examine the effectiveness of the collaborative writing method on student's writing ability and their perspective on group and pairs work as a means of addressing difficulties in the English writing abilities of students. By conducting a thorough examination of student interviews and ongoing evaluations over two cycles, several significant discoveries were made, providing insight into the influence of collaborative writing on different aspects of writing proficiency. The findings of this study demonstrated that CW activities had a beneficial impact on both students' writing proficiency and their inclination toward collaborative work. Hence, it is advisable to incorporate CW activities in the writing classroom as they have the potential to serve as an efficacious approach for instructing writing, which promotes enhanced writing proficiency through collaborative tasks. Regarding the constraints, this study focused on examining the writing proficiency of students and their preference towards group or pair work, but it was restricted to a specific class. Consequently, the results could not be applied to different situations.

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