Investigating the Use of Peer Feedback as a Strategy in Teaching Descriptive Text

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the use of peer feedback strategy in teaching descriptive text writing in XI-5 students at SMAN 10 Pandeglang by using a qualitative case study approach. Data collection methods include classroom observation and semi-structured interviews. Classroom observation was conducted to observe the implementation process of peer feedback directly in the classroom while learning descriptive text writing. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with several students and teacher involved in the study. The interviews with students aimed to explore their perceptions and challenges using peer feedback, and their impact on writing quality and learning motivation. Meanwhile, interviews with teacher focused on the strategy used in implementing peer feedback. The results showed that peer feedback helped students develop better descriptive text-writing skills, regarding word selection, idea organization, and motivate the students to write descriptive text.

Keywords: descriptive text, peer feedback strategy

Introduction

Writing ability is a crucial language skill for students to master, involving the complex process of formulating and organizing ideas (Harmer, 2004; Nunan, 2022). One of the writing skills that is often taught is descriptive text. The descriptive text requires students to be able to describe an object, place, or person in detail and clearly so that readers can imagine the subject described (Knapp & Watkins, 2005; Widiati & Basalama, 2022). However, writing descriptive text is often challenging for most students as they need help to choose the right words, organize ideas, and provide vivid descriptions (Hogue, 2008; Shuhaimi & Shamsudin, 2022).

Considering these challenges, the teachers must explore effective teaching strategies. Peer feedback is one such approach worth considering. This strategy involves students providing feedback and comments on each other's writing (Rollinson, 2005; Lundstrom & Baker, 2022). It encourages critical thinking, helps students identify strengths and weaknesses in writing, and enhances communication and collaboration skills (Berg, 1999; Abadikhah & Zaman, 2022). In the context of descriptive text learning, peer feedback can be particularly effective. It helps students improve their ability to use rich sensory language, describe objects in detail, and organize ideas coherently. The process of analyzing and critiquing peers' work

develops critical thinking skills (Cho, 2022). Moreover, receiving feedback from peers offers new perspectives on how one's writing is perceived, potentially leading to improvements. Peer feedback also fosters a collaborative and supportive learning environment. Students often feel more comfortable receiving feedback from peers than from teachers, creating a sense of community and encouraging open, productive discussions.

The preliminary study conducted at class XI 5 at SMAN 10 Pandeglang the researchers found that the students' lack of active participation in discussions, difficulties in organizing ideas, and a teacher-centered approach which makes students feel afraid to ask questions then the students are less active and interactive this makes the results of descriptive text that students have made there are many mistakes, such as grammar writing errors, generic structure of descriptive text and insufficient development of ideas. These factors contributed to various errors in students' descriptive texts, including grammar mistakes, improper generic structure, and insufficient idea development. In addition, to solve these issues the researchers propose implementing a peer feedback strategy in descriptive text learning. This approach aims to develop not only students' descriptive writing skills but also their critical thinking, collaboration, and communication abilities all crucial for future academic and professional success.

Based on previous studies by Shuhaimi and Shamsudin (2022), Abadikhah and Zaman (2022), Chuang and Nguyen (2022), Qian and Dang (2022) and Lundstrom and Baker (2022), some gaps in the literature can be identified. Although these studies have explored various aspects of peer feedback in ESL/EFL writing contexts, there is a lack of research that specifically focuses on the use of peer feedback in teaching descriptive texts. In addition, most studies have investigated the effectiveness of peer feedback or student perceptions, but few have combined both aspects, especially in the context of descriptive writing. Existing research also does not explore in depth the specific challenges students face when using peer feedback for descriptive text. In addition, there are gaps in understanding the long-term effects of peer feedback on descriptive writing skills, the role of teachers in facilitating effective peer feedback for this genre, and how cultural factors and technology integration can influence the process.

Furthermore, implementing peer feedback the researcher will provide guidelines on its use, emphasizing elements of descriptive text, its generic structure, identification, description, and conclusion, and idea organization. Therefore, this study aims to 1) investigate the use of peer feedback in teaching descriptive text and 2) students' perceptions and challenges when

using peer feedback as a learning strategy for descriptive text.

Theoretical Review

Peer Feedback

The Peer feedback involves students giving and receiving feedback on their peers' written work (Farah, 2017). Through peer feedback, students can learn from different perspectives, develop critical thinking skills, and build a collaborative learning environment (Bijami et al., 2020). In addition, peer feedback can also increase students' motivation and confidence in writing (Hosseini, 2019). On the other hand, peer feedback is an increasingly adopted teaching strategy in learning writing, especially in English as a foreign language (EFL). In the peer feedback process, students give each other comments and suggestions on their peers' writing. This strategy has been shown to benefit the development of students' writing skills (Qian & Dang, 2022; Lundstrom & Baker, 2022). One of the main benefits of peer feedback is its ability to improve the quality of students' writing. Research conducted by Abadikhah and Zaman (2022) showed that students who engaged in the peer feedback process experienced significant improvements in the quality of their writing, especially in terms of idea organization, vocabulary use, and grammatical accuracy. This finding is supported by Chuang and Nguyen's study (2022), which revealed that peer feedback

helps students identify errors and weaknesses in their writing to make more effective revisions.

In addition, to improving the quality of writing, peer feedback can empower students and increase their motivation to learn. According to Qian and Dang (2022), involvement in the peer feedback process makes students feel more responsible for their learning process and builds a sense of ownership over their writing. Shuhaimi and Shamsudin (2022) also found that peer feedback can increase students' motivation in writing as they feel supported and encouraged by their peers. However, some considerations need to be considered when implementing peer feedback. Lundstrom and Baker (2022) emphasized the importance of adequate training for students so that they can provide constructive and meaningful feedback. In addition, Abadikhah and Zaman (2022) suggested considering factors such as students' ability levels, group dynamics, and perceptions of peer feedback. In conclusion, peer feedback is an effective strategy in teaching writing, especially in English foreign language teaching.

Descriptive Text

The descriptive text aims to provide a detailed, vivid, and interesting picture or description of an object, place, or event so the reader can see, hear, or feel what is being described. The descriptive text invites readers to imagine or feel the object described through word choice and rich and specific

language. According to Watkins (2022) in the book "Genre, text, grammar," descriptive text is "text that describes everything in detail so that the reader seems to experience it himself." Meanwhile, Hogue (2023) argues in the book "Introduction to Academic Writing" that descriptive text is text that describes the characteristics or properties of an object in a way that can attract readers to imagine or feel what is described". Based on some expert statements above, the researcher concluded the descriptive text aims to describe an object, place, or event in a detailed, lively, and interesting way so the reader can see, hear, or feel what is being described. The descriptive text uses rich word choices and language to give the reader a clear and detailed picture.

Method

This study used qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of students' and teachers' perceptions and experiences in applying peer feedback as a strategy in descriptive text learning (Creswell, 2012). The research was conducted at SMAN 10 Pandeglang, Banten. The participants in the study are class XI 5. The selection of participants was carried out using the purposive sampling technique to select participants who can provide rich information relevant to the research objectives.

This research used involve direct observation of the interaction between teachers and students in the classroom, conducted periodically during the learning process, to gain a deeper understanding of the use of peer feedback strategies in teaching descriptive text. The researcher used an instrument in the form of observation through activities in the classroom to find out the interaction of students and teachers. Observation is a data collection method that allows direct and systematic observation and recording. Harmer (2004) states that systematic observation and recording of signs that appear on the object of research is called observation. Teacher observation will focus on implementing the peer feedback strategy in teaching descriptive text. The researcher was observing the steps taken by teachers in preparing and guiding students in the peer feedback process, including the instructions given, the division of groups, and assistance during the peer feedback session. In addition, the researcher was observed how the teacher provides feedback and guidance to students after the peer feedback process is completed. Observation of students focused on their involvement in the peer feedback process and its impact on learning to write descriptive text. The researchers were observed how students interact and collaborate with their peers during the peer feedback process, including how they give and receive feedback. In addition, the researchers were also observing changes in students' writing

quality and learning motivation as the peer feedback process progresses.

This study used semi-structured interviews for the interview part to get descriptive opinions from students and teachers. This data was then used to obtain additional information from students' answers to the questionnaire to help obtain additional responses and students' opinions towards implementing peer feedback.

The researchers took two students as representatives, one male and one female, to get students' perceptions on using peer feedback strategy in learning descriptive text. The researcher made ten questions to get in-depth information divided into two question sessions. Questions 1-5 aimed to find out students' perceptions, and questions 6-10 aimed to find out the challenges faced by students in doing peer feedback in descriptive text learning. In conclusion, semi-structured interviews were conducted with students involved in the peer feedback process. The interview was focus on the perceptions, experiences, and challenges of implementing peer feedback as a strategy in descriptive text writing.

Data analysis in this study followed Miles and Huberman's (2014) Interactive Analysis Model to systematically organize and interpret the collected information. The process began with data condensation, where interview transcripts, observation notes, and student writing samples were coded to identify key concepts. Initial codes were then refined and grouped into categories. Next, data display such as matrices were used to visualize patterns and relationships within the data. The final step involved drawing and verifying conclusions, where overarching themes were identified through an iterative process of examining coded data and visual displays.

To ensure validity, the researchers used triangulation by comparing data from various sources (observation, interview, and documentation) to verify the findings. In addition, member-checking was also conducted by asking participants to confirm the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations. To address potential bias and enhance reflexivity, the researcher kept a reflective journal throughout the study, which documented personal assumptions, emotional responses, and decision-making processes. This journal was reviewed regularly to identify and mitigate potential bias in data collection and analysis. During observations and interviews, the researcher used standard protocols to maintain consistency and minimize personal influence. Peer debriefing sessions were also conducted with colleagues not involved in the study to challenge the researcher's assumptions and interpretations. These steps collectively worked to control the researcher's influence, increase the credibility of the study, and provide a more objective analysis of peer feedback as a strategy in teaching descriptive text.

Result

The peer feedback strategy has been implemented in learning to write descriptive texts, and the results have been positive. Based on observation, it was seen that students became more engaged and motivated as they gave and received feedback from their peers. Interaction and discussion among students also increased, creating a more active and collaborative learning atmosphere. Students tend to be more open to receiving suggestions and criticisms from peers than from teacher, so they can learn from different perspectives and understand the strengths and weaknesses of their writing.

The above statement is supported by the findings of the interview with student one, who said: "*I feel that peer feedback has made a very positive contribution in improving my ability to write descriptive texts. I got a lot of valuable input*". Student two supports the above statement: "*peer feedback also makes me more accustomed to criticizing other people's writing constructively.*". It can be concluded that peer feedback creates a collaborative and supportive learning environment. Students feel more open and comfortable receiving feedback from peers than from teachers. This process encourages more active and productive discussions among students and builds ownership of the learning process.

From the teacher's perspective, using peer feedback strategy is an effective approach to developing students' writing, critical thinking and collaboration skills. It also helps increase students' sense of ownership and responsibility for their learning process. In addition, with peer feedback, the teacher's burden in providing individualized feedback to each student can be reduced. The English teacher's interview answers support this: "*I have found peer feedback to be incredibly valuable for improving students' writing skills. When they evaluate each other's work, they develop a much deeper understanding of what makes a strong descriptive piece.*"

However, some challenges were encountered. Some students still need help giving constructive and specific feedback. Therefore, teachers need to monitor and provide clear guidance on how to provide effective and meaningful feedback. With proper guidance, students can maximize the benefits of the peer feedback strategy in writing descriptive texts. *The student's perception and challenge of using peer feedback as a strategy in learning descriptive text.*

This study reveals the perceptions and challenges students face regarding implementing peer feedback in learning to write descriptive texts. Most students viewed this activity positively as it was considered beneficial for improving their writing skills. Getting feedback from peers makes students feel more open to receiving criticism than from teachers alone (Graham & Perin, 2007).

The above argumentation is supported by the interview answers from students as follows: "*I feel more comfortable and open to receiving feedback from my friends than from the teacher. It is because we have a more equal and relaxed relationship, so there is no awkwardness or fear of criticizing each other.*"

In addition, when giving feedback on their peers' writing, students should critically analyze and evaluate the writing. The research findings reveal that this process helps develop students' critical thinking skills, such as the ability to identify strengths and weaknesses in writing and provide constructive suggestions for improvement. Students feel more comfortable exchanging ideas with peers because they can freely discuss and exchange ideas and opinions without any restrictions, such as teachers and students. Students also appreciate other benefits, such as developing critical reading skills, analyzing text structures, and gaining new perspectives from their peers' writing styles (Fahim & Jalili, 2016). However, students face several challenges in implementing peer feedback. The main obstacle is needing more constructive and detailed criticism and suggestions (Kaufman & Schunn, 2011). Students with low ability tend to feel less confident commenting on the writing of other students considered more capable. This difference in ability level leads to variable quality of feedback and less trustworthiness (Gielen et al., 2010). Students

stated, "*In my opinion, implementing peer feedback in descriptive text learning has its own challenges. I feel less confident about giving criticism or suggestions to my friends because, I am confused about what aspects to focus my comments on*". Non-academic factors such as peer relationships and personality can also influence how feedback is given and received (Mukunnan & Ahour, 2011). Some students even underestimated comments from their peers. Students' interview answers support this: "*I still need to hone my skills in constructive criticism. That is, how to deliver suggestions or criticisms without seeming judgmental or hurtful to my friends.*" This finding indicates the need for training, guidelines and close supervision from teachers to make the implementation of peer feedback effective (Min, 2006). With adequate preparation and assistance, students can minimize the obstacles they face so that the benefits of this activity can be maximized.

This study's findings in line with previous studies that highlight the benefits of peer feedback in learning to write, especially writing descriptive texts. Peer feedback improves students' descriptive writing skills, creates a collaborative learning environment, and develops critical thinking skills (Cho & MacArthur, 2010; Benjamin et al., 2020; Hosseini, 2019). However, the challenges in providing quality feedback are consistent with previous research findings (Hubers et al., 2020). Clear guidelines and training for

students on providing constructive and specific feedback are needed to overcome these challenges. Teachers are also important in facilitating peer and final feedback to ensure a correct understanding of important concepts in writing descriptive texts.

The use of peer feedback strategies in writing instruction, particularly in the context of writing descriptive texts, has attracted the attention of many researchers in recent years. Previous studies have provided valuable insights into the impact and implications of this strategy. One of the important findings from previous studies is that peer feedback can improve the quality of students' writing. A study conducted by Abadikhah and Zaman (2022) showed that students who engaged in the peer feedback process experienced significant improvements in the quality of their writing, especially in terms of idea organization, vocabulary use, and grammatical accuracy. This finding aligns with Chuang and Nguyen's (2022) study, which revealed that peer feedback helps students identify errors and weaknesses in their writing to make more effective revisions. In addition to improving the quality of writing, previous studies have shown that peer feedback can empower students and increase their motivation to learn. Research conducted by Qian and Dang (2022) found that engaging in peer feedback made students feel more responsible for their learning process and built a sense of ownership over their writing. This finding is supported by Shuhaimi and Shamsudin's study (2022), which revealed that peer feedback can increase students' motivation in writing as they feel supported and encouraged by their peers.

However, some studies have also identified challenges and considerations to consider in implementing peer feedback. Lundstrom and Baker (2022) emphasized the importance of adequate training for students so that they can provide constructive and meaningful feedback. In addition, Abadikhah and Zaman (2022) also suggested considering factors such as students' ability levels, group dynamics, and perceptions of peer feedback.

Based on the findings from previous studies, the use of peer feedback strategies in teaching descriptive text writing has great potential to improve the quality of students' writing and boost their learning motivation.

Conclusion

This study investigates the use of peer feedback strategy in teaching descriptive text writing to in XI-5 at SMAN 10 Pandeglang. Based on the results of classroom observations and interviews with students and teachers, it can be concluded that the use of peer feedback can improve the quality of students' descriptive writing, especially in the aspects of word choice, organization of ideas, and sharpness of description. The process of giving each other feedback helps students identify strengths and weaknesses in their writing so that they can make more effective

revisions. Students had a positive perception of the use of peer feedback and felt that this strategy helped them develop their descriptive text writing skills better. However, some students also acknowledged challenges, such as difficulties in providing constructive criticism and managing group dynamics. Teachers consider peer feedback as a useful strategy in teaching descriptive text writing, as it can increase students' engagement and motivation. Besides, peer feedback gave some differentiation of learning style in the class. By using peer feedback, the teacher has various way to increase and achieve the goals of teaching and learning in the class. However, thorough preparation, intensive guidance from teachers, and adequate training for students are essential for effective implementation.

Teachers need to adequately train students to give constructive and meaningful feedback before implementing peer feedback. This can be done through examples and simulations that actively involve students. Teachers should provide sufficient time for the peer feedback process and monitor the activity closely. Guidance and intervention from teachers are essential to ensure quality feedback and overcome challenges in group dynamics. Further research can be conducted to explore other factors that influence the effectiveness of peer feedback, such as students' ability level, class or different cultural environments. For example, the further research might be discussed about the impact, implementation, students' motivation, and confidential learning using peer feedback in the class. Considering these conclusions and suggestions, peer feedback can be a useful strategy for teaching descriptive text writing and improving students' skills and motivation in learning this important writing skill.

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