

## TEACHING WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXTS USING FOUR SQUARE WRITING METHOD (FSWM)

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### *Abstract*

The aim of the study was to find out whether using Four Square Writing Method in teaching writing descriptive is effective. The form of this research was a pre-experimental study. The population of this research was the Year-10 students of SMA Negeri 8 Pontianak in academic year 2018/2019. By using cluster random sampling, the researcher took one class as the sample of this study. The sample was 35 students of X MIPA 1. The data were collected through written test. Before analyzing the data using t-test formula, the students' test results were graded based on the scoring scale. In accordance to the findings of this study, it showed the significant effectiveness in students' writing ability taught by using Four Square Writing Method. The obtained t-value (15.40) was higher than the critical r value (1.961) by the degree of freedom 33. It was inferred that Four Square Writing Method affects students' descriptive writing ability significantly.

**Keywords: Descriptive Texts, Four Square Writing Technique, Writing**

### INTRODUCTION

Writing essentially is an activity to deliver ideas in written form through a process. By writing, students can express their experiences, feeling, and information they have. Linse (2005) argues that writing is a process of gathering ideas and working with them until they are presented properly and are comprehensible to readers. Students are challenged to develop ideas through writing. Brown (2007, p.392) suggests that "Writing is indeed a thinking process". In other words, writing is not just an instant outcome. It derives from practising it step by step. The process of composing writing takes an important role in producing a well-structured writing.

In a foreign language context, English is taught in schools, but it does not play an essential role in national communication. It is mostly learnt during formal education, rather than during the daily conversation. Still, it has taken a part in the educational curriculum, particularly in the state school. Berns (1990) defines foreign language learning as a target language learning in

a country that does not use this language as a speech community. Generally, EFL learners use English to develop their language proficiency for some instrumental motivation, such as being able to read English in novels, or taking a study abroad. It is commonly known that writing can be very challenging for the learners of EFL. Especially for some parts of writing, such as, generating ideas and organizing the content.

In Indonesia, English is a necessary subject in junior and senior high schools. In *Kurikulum 2013*, the latest curriculum which is mostly implemented by high schools all over the country. The mentioned curriculum expects the high school students to be able to develop their ideas into words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs. The students are required to be able to write more than one paragraph as it extends into short essays. Generally, the essay writing itself is a sort of writing which describes a certain topic. Academic essays are common for high schools. They can be descriptive essays, narrative essays, or analytical exposition. An essay begins

with an introductory paragraph. Then it is followed by body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph. Here, students are supposed to be able to convey their knowledge and meaning in their writing as well as the well-structured paragraphs appropriately.

In learning English as a foreign language, one of the basic competencies for the tenth grade students is to be able to write descriptive texts. In *Kurikulum 2013*, students are demanded to recognize the purpose and the function of each paragraph in writing descriptive texts. Descriptive texts are type of text that describe a particular object. They illustrates the details of the object by its characteristics. Anderson and Anderson (1998) claims that descriptive texts have three main parts, introduction, description, and conclusion. The introduction is general statements that introduce the object. It also consists of a thesis statement. Meanwhile, the description is the series of paragraphs that describes the features, qualities, or characteristics of the object. Each of paragraph consists of a main idea and supporting details related to the topic. The optional one is concluding paragraph which signals the end of the text.

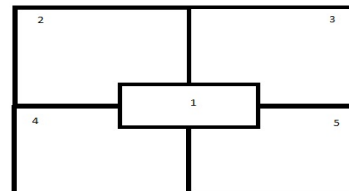
Besides, there is a teaching writing technique which can guide students to create well-organized writings. It known as Four Square Writing Method (FSWM). Gould and Gould (1999) developed the technique to help students write in effective way. This technique is used as the part of first writing process to build convincing framework. It is a method of teaching basic writing skills (i.e., proper writing structure, sentence formation and punctuation) that will help students to organize their thoughts in writing. It also expects students to focus on developing ideas. Gould and Gould add that this technique is great for visual learners and can be used with all language levels.

Four Square Writing Method is classified as a graphic organizer. Generally, graphic organizer can be a set of charts, diagrams, or web that offers ways to brainstorm details and then arrange those details in logical order. Gould and Burke (2010) state that Four Square Writing Method utilizes simple graphic organizer consisting of four squares in which to put ideas. Actually, this technique is somewhat similar to mind-mapping since both of them are used to generate ideas. The difference is this technique only requires four ideas to be explained in four squared shape.

Through the steps of Four Square Writing Method, students do not only develop ideas but also turn them into sentences which ordered in paragraph form. Students also pay attention to the error of their writing aspects during the steps of the technique. At the end of the step, students simply make five-paragraph essays. Come to think, Four Square Writing Method is expected to help students to see how ideas relate to each other. It also drills students to compose, understand, and stucture their written communication. This technique reinforces main ideas, supporting details, and concluding paragraph.

To implement the Four Square Writing Method (FSWM), teachers must prepare a few things. First is a topic that all students know about to be demonstrated in front of the class. Then four square on the chart paper as the model. Last is each students' own four square in a loose-leaf paper. It is important to know that this technique is a type of map for ideas, words, and phrases.

In Four Square Writing Method (FSWM), there are six steps to do in teaching writing descriptive texts. According to Gould and Gould (1999), the first step is Getting Start in which students are given the topic to discuss and elaborate the related ideas as much as they can. It guides students to understand the relationship between one ideas to another. Secondly, brainstorm three supporting ideas and a concluding sentence. In this step, students choose simply three features related to the topic that are going to be described on the boxes. The main or general idea is placed in the center box of the four squares (box 1). It is called an introduction paragraph. In the first paragraph, it must be consisted of a thesis statement. The top two boxes (2 and 3) are each used for an example, detail or description paragraph of the central idea in box 1. (see the following figure)



**Figure 1. Four Square Writing Method**

The lower left (box 4) is used for supporting examples or details as well. Box 2, 3, and 4 are named description paragraphs. The remaining

box, lower right (box 5), will be employed to build a summary or concluding paragraph. Shortly, box 2, 3, and 4 must include reason, examples, and description that describe the ideas in the box 1. While box 5 will be a wrap-up paragraph that reflects the four boxes engagingly. Thirdly, add the supporting details. For an item in boxes 2, 3 and 4, students must elaborate more supporting details to prove, clarify or give examples of the word or phrase at the top of the box. Fourth, add the connecting words. Students may add the connecting words in descriptive texts, such as, moreover, in summary, or in conclusion on each box when it is needed. Fifth, incorporate vivid language into writing. In this stage, students transform their thoughts on the organizer into a sheet of paper. They use the organizer as guidance to write a coherent paragraphs. They turn the phrases into completed sentences. It deals with the choice of word in their writing. It would be better if students use interesting or descriptive words in their statements. According to the aspects of descriptive text, students use the present tense, and other tenses properly. Last but not least, do the 5-paragraphs. In this last step, the students do some correction on the use of spelling, punctuation and capitalization.

By chance, the mention difficulty of EFL students was reflected at the school where the researcher conducted the teaching practice. Moreover, the Four Square Writing Method (FSWM) has not been used in the concerned school. Besides, this technique is coherent with the generic structure of descriptive texts. So, the researcher intended to apply in teaching writing descriptive texts to year-10 students of SMA Negeri 8 Pontianak. It was aimed to find out whether or not the Four Square Writing Method (FSWM) affects students writing descriptive texts significantly. Still, it is believed that through this technique, students are able to generate and organize their thoughts into paragraphs cohesively.

## METHOD

The research design used in this study was a quantitative design, a pre-experimental research particularly. Creswell (2013) defines a pre-experimental design as observations under-controlled conditions. He also says “In an experiment, investigators may also identify a sample and generalize to a population; however

the basic intent of an experimental design is to test the impact of a treatment (or an intervention) on an outcome, controlling for all other factors that might influence that outcome”. It means that there is a created condition or it is called manipulation. The subject is given an exposure to do something, so that the researcher can get the research purposes. Podesva and Sharma (2013) expressed that in the experimental pretest-posttest design, the group is assessed prior to the treatment, and then assessed after the treatment. In this case, the dependent variable was students’ ability in writing descriptive texts, and the independent variable was the use of Four Square Writing Method.

**Table 1. Experimental Design**

Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
O <sub>1</sub>	X	O <sub>2</sub>

In conducting this study, the researcher determined the population and the sample of the research. The researcher chose a cluster random sampling. It is used where the population consists of certain groups or cluster randomly. In this case, the population was the year-10 students of SMA Negeri 8 Pontianak in academic year 2018/2019 Since the research was conducted in a senior high school, rather than asking each of students, the researcher considered a class as a group or a cluster. Here, the school learning group was X MIA 1 which consisted of 35 students. They were selected through a lottery.

Validity test is the extent in which to measure what it is supposed to be measured. The test should be constructed as the representative of the course. Heaton (1988) emphasizes that a test must achieve content validity and reflect the component skills and areas that are going to be assessed. Therefore, in order to know the validity of the test, the researcher chose context validity by constructing a table of specification. Besides examining the validity, the researcher assessed the reliability of the test. Reliability indicates the consistent measurement of the quality of the test. Heaton (1988) states that reliability is primarily important in the use of public achievement and proficiency tests and classroom tests. There are some general types of reliability. In this proposed study, the test reliability was measured by using inter-rater reliability. It means that one test is administered once and it is scored by two

different raters. The value of having two raters is that the results would be more objective. The raters must be in the same major. In this case, the first rater is the researcher and the second rater is the English subject teacher. Here, the raters observed the same results to avoid bias and compared their data. In this conducted study, the observer scores did correlate.

This research applied measurement technique to collect the data. Arikunto and Jabar (2009) define measurement as an activity of comparing one thing with units of a certain size. It gives numerical rate towards an occurrence. In this study the researcher asked the students to compose descriptive texts about the tourist attractions, which was in purpose to collect the data (content, vocabulary, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization). The researcher administered a pre-test and a post-test on the experimental group. The researcher gave a pre-test to students at the first meeting. In the next meeting, the researcher introduced and applied the Four Square Writing Method to students. The researcher gave students exercise and asked them to write 5-paragraphs descriptive texts in person. At the last meeting, the researcher administered the post-test to see how Four Square Writing Method affected teaching writing descriptive texts.

To find out the effectiveness of Four Square Writing Method in teaching writing descriptive texts, the researcher analyzed the comparison of pre-test and post-test. Still, before analyzing the data using the existed formulas, students' test result were scored based on the proposed scoring scales. The table of specification and a scoring rubric used in this research was modified and adapted from Jacobs *et al* as cited in Weigle (2009).

**Table 2. Table of Specification**

No	The item to be evaluated	Specification
1	Content	Introduction
		Description
		Conclusion
2	Organization	An appropriate title, thesis statement, supporting evidence, and the conclusion of the text
3	Vocabulary	Noun
		Action Verb
		Adjective

		Connecting Word
4	Language Use	Sentence agreement, present tense, and word order/form.
5	Mechanics	Spelling
		Punctuation
		Capitalization

Then, to answer the research questions, the researcher used t-test formula and effect size formula for analyzing the data. The first question was answered by applying t-test formula (Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Razavieh, 2010, p.177). This formula can be seen as follow:

$$t = \frac{MD}{\sqrt{\frac{\sum d^2 (\sum d)^2}{N(N-1)}}} \dots\dots\dots(1)$$

Legends:

- t = the calculated difference
- MD = the mean of post-test and pre-test difference
- $\sum d$  = the sum of post-test and pre-test difference
- N = the number of student

To calculate MD of the above formula, the following formula is used to obtain the interval score of pre-test and post-test as follow.

$$MD = M_2 - M_1 \dots\dots\dots(2)$$

M of  $M_1$  and  $M_2$  refer to average score of students' post-test and pre-test respectively (Kubiszyn & Borich, 2007). To compute M of  $M_1$  and  $M_2$ , the following formula was applied.

$$M = \frac{\sum x}{N} \dots\dots\dots(3)$$

Legends:

- M = mean score
- $\sum x$  = the sum of students' individual score
- N = the number of the test item

To answer the second research question, the effect size formula was used as shown in the below formula as follows.

$$ES = t \sqrt{\left(\frac{1}{N}\right)} \dots\dots\dots(4)$$

Legends:

ES = effect size

t = the result of t-test

N = the number of students

The value of “t” is computed with Formula 1. The result of effect size calculation was classified into the following table, adapted from Cohen, Manion, and Morisson (2007).

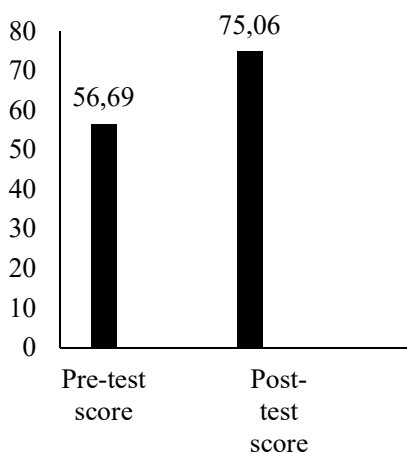
**Table 3. Criteria of the Effect Size**

Effect Size	Qualification
ES < 0.1	Weak Effect
ES < 0.3	Modest Effect
ES < 0.5	Moderate Effect
ES < 0.8	Strong Effect
ES ≥ 0.8	Very Strong

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The obtained data were taken through written test. The researcher used t-test formula to answer the research questions. The findings of the recent study indicated that there was a significant difference in students writing achievement. It is illustrated by the students' post-test score was higher than the students' pre-test score.



**Figure 2. Students' Pre-test and Post-test Mean Score**

To compute the t-test value, the researcher calculated the mean deviation of the students mean scores (MD) is 18.37. It is calculated from M2-M1 where M2 is 75.06 and M1 is 56.69. It can be inferred that there was a significant difference between M1 and M2 after the treatment applied. The findings of students' t-test is shown on the following calculation.

$$t = \frac{18.37}{\sqrt{\frac{13505 - \frac{(413449)}{35}}{35 (34)}}}$$

$$t = 15.40$$

To find out the effectiveness of the treatment, the following formula is applied.

$$Es = 15.40 \sqrt{\left(\frac{1}{35}\right)}$$

$$Es = 2.43$$

From the calculation above, the researcher found that the mean score of pre-test (M1) was 56.69, the mean score of post-test (M2) was 75.06, the standard deviation squared was 13.505, pooled standard deviation was 643, t-value was 15.40, and the effect size score was 2.43.

### Discussion

At the degree of freedom ( $d_f$ ) = 34 and significance value = 0.05, the t-value of this research is 15.40, which is higher than the critical value from the t-table (1.691). It suggests that the use of the Four Square Writing Method increased students' ability to write descriptive texts. Furthermore, the effectiveness could be seen from the effect size which was 2.43. It was higher than 0.8. It is classified as a very strong effect. Hence, the null hypothesis ( $H_o$ ) of this study is rejected and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) is accepted. In other words, the use of the Four Square Writing Method (FSWM) affects students' descriptive writing ability significantly.

The findings showed that the Four Square Writing Method contributed to increasing students' ability in writing descriptive texts. The effectiveness of the Four Square Writing Method can be seen by some factors occurred. Firstly, students were encouraged to organize their ideas in writing descriptive essays using of Four

Square Writing Method. Students were able to write their essays which matched the topic with substantial ideas. Gould and Gould (1999) have a view that the Four Square Writing Method precisely works in prewriting and organizational skill. It guides students to provide details and to enhance their writing ability. In the implementation, students learned to write each part of the descriptive text; introduction, description, and conclusion paragraph.

Secondly, it can be seen that the students were able to arrange their ideas by placing the proper ideas in Four Square Writing draft. In each box, students determined the main idea and the supporting details. This technique also covered the previous theory by Hoshima and Hogue (2009). They claim that every good paragraph must consist of a controlling idea and supporting sentences. Besides, the main idea is the most general statement in a paragraph which describes the given topic meaningfully. Students realize that ideas must be linked to each other and in agreement. In order, the message is delivered well. Students composed from the general into the specific ideas. For example, student SN wrote "Beautiful Beach" as the general statement. "Green plant", "white sand", and "fresh air" were followed as the detailed descriptions. It did show progress compared to the previous test.

Thirdly, it can be proven by the participants during the research. Students showed positive responses in whole meetings. It can be said that students enjoyed the learning activity during the treatment applied. The excitement were reflected on the achievement of their post-test results which presented the higher scores rather than their pre-test scores. This result is coherent with Rahman's (2016) findings which indicated that the Four Square Writing Method emerged students' interest in writing activity for its instructions are easy to follow.

The implementation of the Four Square Writing Method helped students to enhance their language uses, connecting words, and mechanics. The language uses in descriptive text are the sentence agreement, present tense, and the word order. Those can be obtained by exercising the fourth and fifth step of Four Square Writing Method where students revised their writing. The findings in students' post-test indicated that the students were able to put connecting words (e.g. also, moreover, etc.) to continue a line of thought appropriately. At the same time, the Four Square

Writing Method encouraged students to write in unity and coherence as well. Then, through the last step of Four Square Writing Method, which is also following the step of writing, students revised their use of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling in their writing. Before the treatment, the students did not pay attention to their writings. For example, students BB did not put the correct capitalization when she started a sentence, while in another sentence, she put a big letter of a word in the middle of a sentence. On the other hand, on her post-test she shown that she paid more attention to her mechanics aspect in her writing. Thus, the students' post-test results showed that students' writing was easier to understand than the pre-test writing.

Meanwhile, the students had lack of knowledge in choosing appropriate vocabularies when they wrote their essays. Even after the revising steps, a few students still presented those drawbacks. For example, student DAF on his post-test chose to write "Kutai National Park has a good view." Instead of "view" to express the beauty of the environment around the destination, the word "scenery" would be more appropriate to the nature features of an area.

Last but not least, the researcher experienced difficulty in managing the classroom. Some students at the back seats could not pay attention properly in writing the essays. Some of them made noise and discussed irrelevant issues to each other. To overcome those matters, the researcher walked around to keep the students focus on their writing. In a small case, students were lack of vocabulary. So, the researcher asked them to find words in their printed dictionaries.

Some students took a longer time to finish their writing. It was true that the process of gathering ideas consumed much time rather than rewriting the ideas into paragraphs. Still, the Four Square Writing Method focus on the drafting ideas appropriately. Since students need to rewrite their ideas, some of students were lack of time and few of them were unwilling to rewrite. So that, few of them as well produced untidy handwriting, but they were still readable. That is why, the researcher emphasizes the students to simply write the important ideas, three to four supporting ideas are enough to make a short essays.

Regarding the research's result, it is recommended to apply the Four Square Writing

Method as an alternative way to teach students writing descriptive texts. This technique is recommended to be used to as an alternative from teaching writing. This technique may seem time-consuming. Despite of its drawbacks, it is a convincing way to build a substantial framework of writing through exercises. It can be said that through a simple graphic organizer called Four Square Writing Method (FSWM), students can produce well-organized essays. Since the purpose of the technique is to ease students writing appropriate details match with the topic. Moreover, the findings are also in line by the previous studies which claimed that the Four Square Writing Method could assist students in producing cohesive and coherent essays. To cope with, the use of Four Square Writing Method (FSWM) does affect to teach students' descriptive writing ability to year-10 students of SMA Negeri 8 Pontianak in academic year 2018/2019.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

### Conclusion

According to the research findings and discussion, it can be inferred that there was a significant difference in students' result after getting the treatment. It is confirmed that the students' post-test score was higher than the students' pre-test score. The total of  $O_1$  (pre-test) score was 1984 and the mean score was 56.69. Meanwhile, the total of  $O_2$  (post-test) score was 2627 and the mean score was 75.06. It shows that the class average increased after the treatment applied.

The obtained t-value of this research is 15.40. The critical t-value of t-table verified the degree of value ( $df$ ) = 34 and the significance value = 0.05 is 2.62. It proves that the t-value is higher than the critical t-value ( $15.40 > 2.62$ ). Hence, it states that the students' pre-test and the post-test score of this study have a significant difference.

The prediction of the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) of this research is accepted. It can be inferred that the use of the Four Square Writing Method affects students' descriptive writing ability significantly of Year-10 students of SMA Negeri 8 Pontianak in academic year 2018/2019.

### Suggestion

According to the result of this research, the researcher would like to suggest a few things.

Firstly, the researcher recommends English teachers to apply the Four Square Writing Method to teach writing descriptive texts as an alternative way. This technique helps students to organize ideas before they begin to write. Secondly, based on the implementation, the teacher needs to emphasize the students to write only the important ideas and details in the Four Squares draft so that they can use the time efficiently. Thirdly, the teacher needs to give clear instructions to students and make sure that they fully get the point about what to do in using the Four Square Writing Method. Fourth, in a big class, each student is not likely to get an equal attention from the teacher. So, the researcher proposes to other researchers who have any intention to explore and cover this technique in smaller classes or in group tasks. It is also expected that other researchers can cover all aspects of writing in vocabulary.

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