

**THE EFFECT OF USING FOUR-SQUARE WRITING METHOD
ON STUDENTS' WRITING ABILITY AND VOCABULARY MASTERY
AT SMK NURUL FALAH PEKANBARU**

Felci Tria Sauhana

Universitas Islam Indragiri - Riau
Email: sauhanafelcitria@gmail.com

Abstract

This research aims to find out the students' writing ability category, to find out the students' vocabulary mastery category, to find out whether the use of the Four-Square Writing method can have a significant effect on students' writing ability in descriptive text, and to find out what extent the using of Four-Square Writing method gives the significant effect on students' vocabulary mastery. This study is quasi-experimental research that pre-test and post-test designs are used in this research. The sample of this research is the first-year students at SMK Nurul Falah Pekanbaru. They are experimental and control classes. Then the data were collected by using writing in descriptive text and vocabulary tests. The four-Square Writing method was used in this research. The result of this research shows that 1. There is a significant effect on implementing the Four-Square Writing method on students' writing ability for the experimental group. The T-test result was 19,868, its df was 28, comparing a number of significance. Suppose probability >0.05 , the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. Suppose probability <0.05 , the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted. Because the significance was $0.000 < 0.05$ thus, H_a was accepted while H_0 was rejected. 2. There is a significant effect on implementing the treatment of Four-Square Writing toward students' vocabulary mastery for experimental class. The t-test result was 12,231, it was df 28, by comparing the number of significance. Because the significance was $0.000 < 0.05$ thus, H_a was accepted while H_0 was rejected.

Keywords: *Four-Square Writing method, Writing Ability, Vocabulary Mastery*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui kategori kemampuan menulis siswa, untuk mengetahui kategori penguasaan kosakata siswa, untuk mengetahui apakah penggunaan metode *Four-Square Writing* dapat memberikan pengaruh yang signifikan terhadap kemampuan menulis siswa dalam teks deskriptif dan mencari tahu sejauh mana penggunaan metode *Four-Square Writing* berpengaruh signifikan terhadap penguasaan kosakata siswa. Penelitian yang dilakukan dalam penelitian ini adalah penelitian eksperimental semu yang menggunakan desain pre-tes dan post-tes. Sampel penelitian ini adalah siswa tahun pertama di SMK Nurul Falah Pekanbaru. Mereka sebagai kelas eksperimen dan kelas kontrol. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan menulis dalam teks deskriptif dan tes kosakata. Metode *Four-Square Writing* digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Hasil

penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa terdapat pengaruh yang signifikan penerapan perlakuan metode *Four-Square Writing* terhadap kemampuan menulis siswa kelompok eksperimen. Hasil uji-t 19,868, *df*-nya 28, membandingkan angka signifikansi. Jika probabilitas $>0,05$ maka hipotesis nol (H_0) ditolak. Jika probabilitas $<0,05$, hipotesis alternatif (H_a) diterima. Karena signifikansi $0,000 < 0,05$ maka H_a diterima sedangkan H_0 ditolak. Selanjutnya, ada pengaruh yang signifikan penerapan *Four-Square Writing* terhadap penguasaan kosakata siswa kelas eksperimen. Hasil uji-t sebesar 12,231, *df*=28, dengan membandingkan bilangan signifikansi. Karena signifikansi $0,000 < 0,05$ maka H_a diterima sedangkan H_0 ditolak.

Kata Kunci: *Metode Four-Square Writing, Kemampuan Menulis, Penguasaan Kosakata*

INTRODUCTION

English is one of the languages in the world used by many people in many countries. In this globalization era, English has become the most dominant language used for international communication. It is supported by Crystal (1997), stating that English is the language that has spread throughout the world most extensively and is dominating in several necessary fields, including international commerce, education, and communication. English is an international language, used in many countries, both as a native and a second or foreign language. English is used as a subject or even a language to communicate in every

country, including EFL countries like Indonesia enough for academic purposes.

Writing skill has an essential role in learning English. The learners of English as a Foreign Language may be able to listen to music, read some books, or speak in English, but if they cannot produce a written form in English, they are not qualified enough for academic purposes. Writing cannot be separated into other subjects in learning the language since students are often required to complete many writing forms. For example, in reading, speaking, or listening classes, students still do writing activities in doing some assignments. Furthermore, an English essay has

been one of the very well-known requirements for applying for students' scholarships, study abroad or international research projects, etc. The learners of EFL are demanding to have good skill in writing.

However, according to Kellogg (2008) in his research about *Training Writing Skills; A cognitive Developmental Perspective*, learning how to write a coherent, practical text is a protracted and challenging achievement of cognitive development that contrasts sharply with the acquisition of speech. As Reid (1994) says that writing is a complex skill because some components should be focused on by the writer in writing, such as the purpose of writing and the writer's knowledge of writing like paragraph components and pattern organization. Then Mumtaz (2007:15) in Amri (2017:67) displays that writing is difficult to apply due to the consideration of writing demands of learners to create satisfactory writing. Composition results are the judgment of

reasoning, scripting, and editing of the process.

Besides, Vocabulary mastery is essential for studying English. A learner who learns grammar without vocabulary will be challenging to convey what he or she wants to say. However, a learner who learns vocabulary or just read text or free dictionary will say something (Harmer, 2001). According to Hatch and Brown (1995), there are several difficulties in mastering vocabulary. The first is such a test may be used with classes of learners who speak different first languages, and thus translation is not a practical approach. Second, there is the likelihood that some learners will have poor reading skills, and thus the test needs to be able to be given orally if necessary. Furthermore, the third is that the tested words' contexts must not cause too many problems for the learners.

Based on the preliminary study conducted, it was informed by the English teacher that the students had so many errors in writing descriptive text so that they could not

reach a score of 75 as the standard minimum criteria (KKM). In a test of writing descriptive text that the topic given was about "My Friend," it was found that among 29 students, there were only ten students who reached KKM. It means that the students have a problem in writing descriptive text. The next problem faced by the students was a lack of vocabulary mastery. The students could not differentiate when to use the noun, adjective, or verb. They also have limited vocabularies—another problem the teachers usually find that the students are not creative in writing activities. The teachers themselves realize that they also cannot find any suitable method to be applied to engage the students during writing activities, so they often choose to teach based on the textbook all the time.

With the strong desire to find the solution to these problems, using the Four-Square Writing method is an appropriate way to be applied in the classroom. Based on Gould (1999), the Four-Square Writing method is a simplified graphic

organizer for teaching writing. It is a method of teaching necessary writing skills that are applicable across grade levels and curriculum areas. It can be applied to the narrative, descriptive, expository, and persuasive forms of writing. Besides, the Four-Square Writing method is a learning activity to develop and increase the students' vocabulary knowledge by making a personal connection with words like in the sentences or paragraph. This method will guarantee that students can write with confidence and fun. Four-square Writing Method briefly performs the students about the purpose of the text genre, the generic structure, and the language features of the text. It also helps the students in making a paragraph unity and trains them to develop their ideas.

Based on the description above, it can be assumed that this method is an appropriate way to be applied in teaching writing the descriptive text of the first-year students of senior high school because it is suitable across grade levels and curriculum areas, and descriptive text is one of the text

genres that could be applied in this method. Another reason is that this method can solve those problems that appear at SMK Nurul Falah Pekanbaru to reach 75 as the standard minimum criteria after using this method. Therefore, the writer is interested in researching with the title: "The Effect of Using Four-Square Writing Method on Students' Writing Ability and Vocabulary Mastery at SMK Nurul Falah Pekanbaru.

Four-square Writing Method is purposefully designed and scheduled to be used during the start of the school day to have maximum opportunities to continue developing and supporting their proficiencies with these skills and knowledge throughout their day (Gould, 1999).

To use this method, according to Gould (1999), a rectangle is drawn, width exceeding height, and divided into four smaller rectangles of equal size. An additional rectangle is drawn in the figure center, taking up some of the areas in each of the other four rectangles. A total of five rectangles

is thus created. The students then write a complete topic sentence in the center rectangle. The student then writes sentences in the lower-left, upper-left, and upper-right rectangles that develop the central topic's thesis. Finally, the students write a summary sentence in the lower-right rectangle. The summary sentence describes how the reader is intended to feel about the topic. An example is shown below, as illustrated by Gould (1999).

METHOD

This research was quasi-experimental research aimed at finding out the Four Square Writing method's effect on students' writing ability and vocabulary mastery. According to Gay and Arriasian (2000), experimental research is the type of research that can test hypotheses and establish cause and effect relationships. The participants of the research were the first-year students of SMK Nurul Falah. The pre-test and post-test were administered to the participants. The pre-test was carried out at the

beginning in order to find out their abilities in listening comprehension. After that, they were given the treatment in the middle. In the end, the post-test was administered. In the research, the pre-test and post-test were compared to determine the effect of using the Four Square Writing method on students' writing ability and vocabulary mastery.

Gay (2000) states that population is group interest that the evaluation of the result to be generalizable. It involves object or subject that has certain quality and characteristics. The population of this research was the first year of SMK Nurul Falah Pekanbaru. The first-year students in this school were divided into seven classes. After getting the interview results, the writer chose cluster sampling. It was class X Accounting 1, which consists of 29 students as the experimental class, and X Hospitality Accommodation, which consists of 29 students as the control class.

There are two research instruments used; test and observation sheets. The test is one of

the instruments to measure the students' ability to do something. Suharsimi Arikunto (2006:150) states that a test is a series of questions or exercises used to measure skill, intelligent knowledge, individuals, or groups' aptitude. In this study, the researcher prepared a writing and reading test. Also, the observation sheet is used to observe the teacher's activities. The observation sheet is designed based on the indicator of variable X (using the Four-Square Writing method) and adapts based on the students' relevant situation and condition.

Furthermore, to get the data, tests and teacher's observation sheets were used to determine the effect of using Four Square Writing on students' writing ability and vocabulary mastery at the first-year students of SMK Nurul Falah Pekanbaru. The test was done in two stages. The first was the pre-test, which was done before doing the treatment. In the pre-test, students were asked to write a descriptive text related to the topic given entitled "My Mom" and vocabulary test in

the form of multiple choices in 2x45 minutes. The second was the post-test, which was administered after treatment. The post-test given was the same test as the pre-test. The students were asked to write the text individually and a multiple-choice test about vocabulary in 2x45 minutes. The tests are administrated after they had been taught through Four-Square Writing Method for the experimental group. Both tests were about writing descriptive texts.

Before collecting the data, each item of the question was tested to be ideal to try out. The purpose of the try out was to find out the quality of the test items. We got the central point from Brown (2003:3) that a test is a method of measuring a person's ability, knowledge, or performance in a given domain. In line with that, Creswell (2008) states that validity is the individual's scores from an instrument that makes sense, meaningful, enable you, as the researcher, to draw reasonable conclusions from the sample you are studying to the population. It meant that validity is the extent to which

inferences make from assessment results are appropriate, meaningful, and useful in terms of the assessment's purpose.

Reliability was an essential characteristic of a good test. To calculate the reliability of the test, the researcher found out the mean of the students' scores the standard deviation. To determine the test's reliability, the following formula was used; the discrimination index of an item indicates the extent to which the item discriminates between the students, separating the more able students from the less able.

Post-test scores from experimental and control classes were used to determine whether there was a significant effect or not of using the Four-Square Writing method through small group discussion on students' writing ability and students' vocabulary mastery at SMK Nurul Falah Pekanbaru. The score was analyzed statistically, both descriptive and inferential statistics.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to find out there is a significant effect of using the Four-Square Writing Method through small group discussion on students' writing ability and vocabulary mastery at SMK Nurul Falah Pekanbaru. In this research, a pre-test was taken in April. The students' vocabulary mastery and writing scores before giving a treatment are categorized as low to average. The cause is the teacher did not use the appropriate strategy in teaching writing, did not explain how to identify the topic, main idea, detailed information, references, inferences, and pattern of a paragraph.

There is an effective method to use in the Four Square Writing Method through small group discussion to solve the students' problem with vocabulary mastery and writing ability. Based on the previous journals are talking about Four Square Writing Method and Small group discussion, it already gives proof that Four Square Writing Method through small group

discussion can help the student's vocabulary mastery and writing ability.

Specifically, the study is done to answer the research questions that are stated as follows whether there is a significant effect of using the Four-Square Writing Method on Students' Writing Ability and Vocabulary Mastery at SMK Nurul Falah Pekanbaru.

To answer the research question, the researcher gets the answer from the hypothesis of data analysis. The researcher found that:

Firstly, there is no significant difference between the writing ability pre-test mean score of the experimental group and the writing ability pre-test mean score of the control group at SMK Nurul Falah Pekanbaru. The explanation is that the T-test result is -0.76, its df is 56, the standard deviation of the experimental group is 11.32, and the control group is 32.06. So, in the conclusion $p = 0.940$, the 2-tailed value is bigger than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). The result showed that the mean scores did not differ much between

both groups. It could be determined that the subjects in both groups were equivalent before giving the treatment at SMK Nurul Falah Pekanbaru.

Secondly, there is a significant difference between the writing ability post-test mean score of the experimental group and the writing ability post-test mean score of the control group at SMK Nurul Falah Pekanbaru. The explanation is that the T-test result is 6.953, its def is 56, the standard deviation of the experimental group is 5.56, and the control group is 6.33. So, in the conclusion $p = 0.000$, the 2-tailed value is smaller than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). The result showed that the mean scores did differ much between both groups. It could be determined that the subjects in both groups were not equivalent after giving the treatment of the Four-Square Writing Method at SMK Nurul Falah Pekanbaru.

Thirdly, there is a significant difference between the writing ability pre-test mean score of the experimental group and the post-test mean score of the experimental

group at SMK Nurul Falah Pekanbaru. The explanations are t-test result is -19,868, its df is 28; by comparing the number of significance if probability > 0.05 , the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. Suppose probability < 0.05 alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. Because the significance is $0.000 < 0.05$, H_a is accepted while H_0 is rejected with a significant 93,38% percentage.

Fourthly, there is a significant difference between the writing ability pre-test mean score of the control group and the post-test mean score of the control group at SMK Nurul Falah Pekanbaru. The explanations are t-test result is -14,018, its def is 28; by comparing the number of significance if probability > 0.05 , the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. Suppose probability < 0.05 alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. Because the significance is $0.000 < 0.05$, H_a is accepted while H_0 is rejected with a percentage of 87.52%.

Fifthly, there is no significant difference between the writing ability pre-test mean score of the

experimental group and the writing ability pre-test mean score of the control group at SMK Nurul Falah Pekanbaru. The explanations are T-test result is 0,0648, its df is 56, the standard deviation of the experimental group is 8,75, and the control group is 7,39. So, in the conclusion $p = 0.519$, the 2-tailed value is bigger than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). The result showed that the mean scores did not differ much between both groups. It could be determined that the subjects in both groups were equivalent before giving the treatment at SMK Nurul Falah Pekanbaru.

Sixthly, there is a significant difference between students' vocabulary mastery post-test mean score between an experimental group and students' vocabulary mastery post-test mean score of control using the Four-Square Writing Method at SMK Nurul Falah Pekanbaru. The explanation is that the T-test result is 6.011, its df is 56, the standard deviation of the experimental group was 5.22, and the control group is 8.75. So, in the conclusion $p = 0.000$,

the 2-tailed value is smaller than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). The result showed that the mean scores did differ much between both groups. It could be determined that the subjects in both groups were not equivalent after giving the treatment of the Four-Square Writing Method of the experimental group at SMK Nurul Falah Pekanbaru.

Seventhly, there is a significant difference between the vocabulary mastery pre-test mean score of the experimental group and the vocabulary mastery post-test mean score of the experimental group at SMK Nurul Falah Pekanbaru. The explanations are t-test result is -12.231, its df is 28; by comparing the number of significance if probability > 0.05 , null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. Suppose probability < 0.05 alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. Because the significance was $0.000 < 0.05$, H_a is accepted while H_0 is rejected with a significant 84.23% percentage.

Finally, there is a significant difference between the vocabulary mastery pre-test mean score of the control group and the vocabulary

mastery post-test mean score of the control group at SMK Nurul Falah Pekanbaru. The explanations are t-test result is -4.577 its df is 28; by comparing the number of significance if probability > 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. Suppose probability < 0.05 alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. Because the significance was $0.000 < 0.05$, H_a is accepted while H_0 is rejected, with a significant 42.79% percentage.

According to the findings above, it was clear that the Four-Square Writing Method had a good effect and increased students' writing ability and vocabulary mastery after being taught using the Four-Square Writing Method.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis, the conclusion could be drawn as follows: before implementing the treatments, both the students' vocabulary mastery and writing skills were the same. It implied that they have a homogenous ability. However, after implementing the treatments, it was found that the

students' mean scores of vocabulary mastery and writing skill were different from experimental class and control class. It implies that the treatments give positive and significant differences in the students' vocabulary mastery and writing skills.

REFERENCES

- Algaze, Louis, et al. 2005. *Improving Persuasive Writing Through the Use of the Four-Square Writing Method*. Retrieved: December 20, 2016 from: <http://americanshs.org/Improving+Persuasive+Through+the+Use+of+the+Four+Square+Writing+Method>.
- Amri, S. (2017). An Inquiry On The Students' Writing Competence of Analytical Exposition Text. *EJI (English Journal of Indragiri) : Studies in Education, Literature, and Linguistics*, 1(2), 63-77. <https://doi.org/10.32520/eji.v1i2.225>
- Bartholamae, Megan, et al. 2010. *Bringing Four Square Writing to Life*. Retrieved: December 20, 2016, from <http://www.d46.k12.il.us/2011conference/pdf/454squarepres.pdf>

- Bander, Robert .G. 1978. *American English Rhetoric*. Harcourt College Publishers. The United States of America.
- Blanchard, Karen and Cicik Kurniawan. 2005. *Let's Talk: Grade VIII for Junior High School*. Pakar Karya. Bandung.
- Brown. 2003. *How to writing process*. Retrieved: December 20, 2016, from: <http://www.nadabs.tripod.com/ghaith-writing.html>.
- Devitt, Amy. J. 2004. *Writing Genre*. Southern Illinois University. The United States of America.
- Gay, L. R. (2000). *Educational Research Competence for Analysis and Application*. Prentice-Hall. USA
- Gould, Judith S., and Evan Jay Gould. 1999. *Four-Square Writing Method*. Retrieved: December 20, 2016 from: <http://pasdprofessionaldevelopment.wikispaces.com/Four+Square+Writing>.
- Gould, J. S., & Evan, J. 1999. *Four Square: The total writing classroom. Teaching and Learning* Company. Carthage, IL.
- Hatch, Evelyn, and Cheryl Brown. 1995. *Vocabulary, Semantics, and Language Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hammond, Jenny. 1992. *English for Social Purposes*. Macquarie University. Sidney.
- Harmer, Jeremy. 2001. *The Practice of English Language Teaching, Third Edition*. Pearson Education Limited. England.
- Heaton, J.B. 1991. *Writing English Language Tests*. Longman. London
- Hornby, AS. 1995. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. Oxford University Press. New York.
- Hughes, Arthur. 2003. *Testing for Language Teachers*. Cambridge University Press. Great Britain.
- Jauhari, Otong Setyawan. 2007. *Genre*. CV. Yrama Widya. Bandung
- Kellogg, R.T. 2008. *Training writing skills: A cognitive-developmental perspective*. Retrieved: December 20, 2016 from: kelloggr@slu.edu
- Langan, John. 2006. *English Skill*. McGraw Hill Company. New York.
- Lennenberg. 1992. *Writing skill*. Retrieved: June 15, 2016, from <http://www.concept-practiceofwritingskill.html>.

- Luban, Gwen, et al. 2006. The Importance of Four Square Writing Organizer to Writing Improvement. Retrieved: December 20, 2013, from http://www.oaisd.org/downloads/instructional_services_action_research/3_the_importance_of_a_four_square_writing_organizer_to_writing_improvementdoc_20090610_152119_76.pdf
- Nunan. 1991. *Guided of writing*. Bumi Aksara. Bandung.
- Nunan, David. 1998. *The Learner Center Curriculum*. Cambridge University Press. Great Britain.
- Nunan, David. 1989. *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom*. Cambridge University Press. Great Britain.
- Oshima Alice. 1991. *Writing Academic English*. Pearson Longman. New York.
- Oshima Alice. 1999. *Introduction to Academic Writing*. Pearson Longman. New York.
- Pardiyono. 2010. *The Art of Teaching*. Andi Offset. Yogyakarta.
- Procter, Paul. 1978. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*. New York: Longman Group, Ltd.
- Reid, Joy M. 1994. *The Process of Paragraph Writing*. Prentice-Hall Regents. The United States of America.
- Richards, Jack.C. 2001. *Curriculum Development in Language Teaching*. Cambridge Language Education. The United States of America.
- Robert A. 1982. *How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper*. Oryx Press. The United States.
- Schmitt, Norbert & Mc Charty, Michael. 1997. *Vocabulary: Description Acquisition and Pedagogy*. Cambridge University Press.
- Tijani, Ganiyu., and Ogbaje, Mandy. 2013. *Using Four Square Technique of Writing to Solve Problems of Paragraph Fragmentation: A Nigeria-Ghana Experiment*. Retrieved: December 20, 2016 from: <http://international-journalcomapp.org//Using+Four+Square+Technique+of+Writing+to+Solve+Problems+of+Paragraph+Fragmentation>.
- Troyka, L. 1987. *Defining basic writing in context*, InT. Enos(Ed.), *A source-book for basic writing teachers*. Random House. New York.