



THE USE OF A WRITE-PAIR-SQUARE STRATEGY TO IMPROVE THE STUDENTS' ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT (The Case of Tenth graders of Kesatrian 2 Semarang Senior High School in the Academic Year of 2012/2013)

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Abstract

Many problems faced by students in participating in the classroom and writing a text. This study discussed the use of write-pair-square strategy to improve the students' active participation in writing descriptive text. The objectives of the study are to find out the implementation of write-pair-square in teaching descriptive text and to investigate the improvement of students' participation and writing achievement after being taught by using write-pair-square strategy. The research focused on teaching of descriptive text by using write-pair-square as the strategy. The subjects are SMA Kesatrian 2 Semarang students. This study used Classroom Action Research that was carried out through a pre-test, first and second cycle activities. The result showed that the students' progress of participation improved. The average score of pre-test was 11.27, post-test 1 was 20.13, and post-test 2 was 30.24. It also showed that students' mastering descriptive improved. The average achievement of students' pretest was 63.27, first cycle test was 70.23 and post test was 77.66. According to this study, I conclude that teaching descriptive text by using write-pair-square as the strategy is helpful for students. It is recommended for English teachers to use Write-pair-square as the strategy for students' improvement of their writing skill.

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching writing in traditional way is still can be found in many schools. Harmer (2004) pointed out in his book that in some teaching, particularly in teaching writing, students write a composition in the classroom which the teacher corrects and hands back the next day covered in red ink. The students put the corrected pieces of work in their folder and rarely look at them again. This situation can be found in some schools in Indonesia.

That kind of activity in teaching Language teaching is considered as Traditional Teaching (TL) method. Dealing with student's improvement in learning language, especially in writing skill, there is shifting happen in Educational field. The shifting here is from TL method into Cooperative Learning (CL) method. There are several definitions of CL suggested by some researchers. One of the definitions is pointed out by Felder and Brent (2007). They suggested that CL refers to students working in teams on an assignment or project under conditions in which certain criteria are satisfied, including that the team members be held individually accountable for the complete content of the assignment or project. From this definition, students are not working alone, individually. They work within a group which has the same goal.

Another definition of CL is suggested by Slavin in Syafini and Rizan (2010). He describes CL as students working in small groups and are given rewards and recognition based on the group's performance. By doing the activity together, they can socialize with their peers. The involvement of each members is highly required since they are dependent each others. The success of the group depends on their hands. Everybody is involved in the activity. The fast learners will help the slow ones. The slow ones will learn how the fast learners do the activity. They will work together to finish the task.

Compare to the CL, TL has less advantage in the process of learning. It is in line with the statement suggested by Felder and Brent. They say:

“ relative to students taught traditionally- i.e with instructor-centered lecture, individual assignments, and competitive grading-cooperatively taught students tend to exhibit higher academic achievement, greater persistence through graduation, better high-level reasoning critical thinking skills, deeper understanding of learned material, greater intrinsic motivation to learn and achieve, greater ability to view situations from others' perspectives, more positive and supportive relationships with peers, more positive attitudes toward subject areas, and higher self-esteem” (Felder and Brent, 2007).

When the teachers are using Traditional Learning, the students are asked to accomplish the task individually. There will be competition among them. The fast learners will get more success than the slow ones. They will get busy with themselves and try their best to fulfill what the teacher wants them to do. They ignore their friends because it is nothing to do with the others. The most important are they, themselves.

From the definitions above, I can conclude the description of Cooperative learning. They have several main points; (1) it is a sort of strategy of learning; (2) the base in group work with group goal; and (3) the activity requires teamwork. Given these facts, it seems like Cooperative Learning is a suitable to be implemented both in small or big classes. However, creating groups will likely be benefit for big classes, like in Indonesian schools. This activity will be useful both for students and teachers. Students who are working in group will actively participate in small groups. Since most of Indonesian students are typically still ashamed if they have to participate in front of the classroom. Therefore, instead of actively involved, they will tend to keep silent and just listen to the teachers.

Writing plays its big role in expressing students' idea. Hence, writing is still considered as the important skilled that should be taught to the students. The skill of expressing oneself in the form of writing has been the aim of many teachers to cultivate in their students. The ability of writing can be cultivated by using the

appropriate method so that the students can learn effectively and can reach the ultimate result. Sometimes students face their own problem in learning how to write. Teachers should know their obstacles in order they can overcome the students' problem in doing activity of writing.

In traditional learning, writing is assessed merely by evaluating the product of students' writing. They submit their writing to the teacher and the teacher will correct them and give it back. The only aspect that is evaluated is only the text produced by the students. Although sometimes the teachers give kind of comment that praise the students if their works are considered as a good one or the teacher will give those corrections or comment to the students for improving their ability in the future time. This is what so called product oriented. However, nowadays, the paradigm of this product oriented has already shifted. The process oriented is now being considered as the thing that teacher should notify.

In cooperative learning, the students are not depending on the teacher. They are not merely listening to the teachers' lecture. They actively participate in the classroom activity. They work in groups and they play role within the group. Student's active participation also becomes the issue of this study. The participant of the students will be one of the discussions in this paper. The students' participation can be seen for example by observing whether the students ask the question to the teacher. Syafini and Rizan (2010) mentions that in group works sometimes the participation of the group members is not equal and there are group members who indulge on a free ride without contributing the group work and objective. in one group there are different students with different characteristic. This characteristic that defines the different participation of the students.

There are some techniques under the umbrella of Cooperative Learning. They are Group-Investigation, Student Teams Achievement Division (STAD), Learning Together, Jigsaw, Murder and Write-pair-square (Jacobs et al, 1997). All of them are suitable to

be implemented in the Language Teaching. I am interested in Write-pair-square in teaching writing to my students. The reason is because it covers both group and pair work. Moreover, it seems like it is preferable in improving their writing skill. Working in groups not only increases students' active participation but also build their social skill development, improves communication, enhance the independence and accountability. Hence, using Cooperative Learning through Write-pair-square is likely useful to be implemented in my classroom.

Education deals with students, teachers and knowledge. Teacher as the one who has the knowledge should share the knowledge they have already had to the students through Teaching and learning activity. Students as the subject of the study are guided by the teachers to learn something, in this case is language. In the process of teaching and learning, the teachers give many efforts in order the knowledge can be transferred effectively. There are many techniques used by teachers to improve students' ability. One of them is teaching using Cooperative Learning.

However, in the real education field in Indonesia in which we can see it from the existing schools whether they are public or private, general or vocational, and primary or secondary schools, we can still easily find that traditional learning activity is still used in teaching learning process. We cannot simply say that traditional teaching is not good. However, many researchers have conducted and find that traditional learning is not adequate enough to meet the students' need. Campbell in Syafini and Rizan (2010) suggested that rote learning has been a common practice in today's educational scene in Language Learning. Hence, in this study, I pick a Cooperative Learning implementation to prove the previous study about the effectiveness of using CL in Language Teaching.

Students' active participation or students' active participation is one of the aspects of educational success. In CL, students' active participation is highly required. The students are the centre of the lesson. They play a

big role in making the process successful. It is very difficult to make the students willingly participate in the teaching learning process. They will feel ashamed with their friends or even with the teachers. It is because of lack interpersonal communication between students and teachers. Therefore, teachers should aware about this problem. Guiding the students to become familiar with communication will create a good atmosphere around the students.

Dealing with students' active participation, it still has a relationship with the character of the students. Students characters are different each other. Therefore, teachers should know each students character in order they will have a treatment based on their character. This is the unique phenomena of being a teacher. Since they face several different students with different interpersonal and characters in one place. The demand of producing active students that can involve actively in the classroom becomes goal that should be fulfilled by the teachers. Society generally and parents particularly want their children become a good student with high academic competence and good manner. It is because after they graduate from school, they will encounter the world with all of its challenges.

Students supposed to involve in every activity in the classroom actively. The fact happens in the field yet is different from the theory. Some students are open to the teachers and the rests are not. Syafini and Rizan (2010) suggested that extroverts generally produce more action with fewer thoughts whereas introverts produce numerous thoughts with little action. Although we know that everyone is unique with their own characters and talents, it becomes a problem when these differences are encountered in the classroom, moreover in a big classroom. The extrovert students will expose their existence while the introvert sometimes feels intimidated since they are too shame to express their opinion. In this case, teachers need to know each student's intelligence so that they can explore their own talent. This heterogeneous situation makes the treatment that should be done by the teachers are different.

The theories above are the ideal situations that actually should happen in education field. However, the facts in the real field are sometimes still far from the ideal ones. They are still many problems happen in making the harmony between theories and facts. Considering the facts that different from the ideal situation, I think it is needed to conduct a study about how to overcome this problem. Therefore, I need to give it a try on using Cooperative Learning to improve students' active participation and writing skill.

Related to the background above, the researcher formulated the research problem as follows: (1) What problems are faced by the Tenth Graders of SMA Kesatrian 2 in participating and writing a descriptive text? (2) How is a write-pair-square strategy implemented in the classroom activity? (3) How is the students' participation improvement when they are taught by using a write-pair-square strategy? (4) How is the learners' achievement in writing description text improved by using a write-pair-square strategy?

RESEARCH METHODS

In this research, I applied qualitative approach to identify the use of writing-pair-square in improving students' active participation in writing descriptive text. In completing this research, I collected data and information from the main source, namely field research. This term referred to my efforts in obtaining the empirical data from the subject of the research. I also conducted the activity of gathering information from library facilities such as references and books which supported the efforts in conducting this research. I decided to carry out an action research in SMA Kesatrian 2 Semarang as I had been teaching there and wanted to know how is the effective way in using a write-pair-square to improve students' active participation and their writing ability.

The research design of this study was Action Research. It took two cycles. Each cycle consisted of three meetings excluded the pre and post-test. Each cycle had four steps; they were

planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The place of this research was at a private school. It is SMA Kesatrian 2 Semarang at Gajah Raya Street number 58, Semarang. The research was conducted in the second semester of the academic year of 2012/2013. The pre-cycle test was conducted on April, 24 2013. The second cycle was conducted on April, 30 2013 – May, 8 2013. Second cycle was conducted on 14-21 May 2013 and post test 2 was conducted on May, 22 2013.

In this research, some instruments were used in form of observation sheet, outsider observer, field notes, rubric of students' active participation, students' observation sheet, and test. Observation sheet was used to describe the exact situation during the research was conducted. It was be used by the outsider observer. He filled the observation sheet while doing the observation. I collaborated with one of the teachers in my school to do the observation during this research was conducted. The data analysis in this study consisted of observation sheet, students' participation scoring, students' observation sheet, and writing test.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The preliminary research was conducted before the research was undertaken. I observed the students while I was teaching them. I had taught them for almost two semesters. According to the teaching experience and two semesters activities, I could identify the problems are faced by the students in learning English. Some of the problems are; (1) lack of

learning sources; (2) lack of motivation; (3) family background; (4) lack of interest; (5) lack of motivation; (6) lack of practice; (7) no support from the environment; (8) lack of participation and (9) low competence.

Those problems make the students' ability in writing skill is unsatisfying. In this study I concerned with the problems dealing with lack of participation and writing problems. The following paragraphs are the discussion about those two problems.

The pre-test was conducted in order to know the students' prior achievement in writing description text. Moreover, it was given to dig students' weaknesses in writing. The pre-test was given to the students on Wednesday, 24th April 2013, before the research was conducted. The students were asked to produce a description text after given a short explanation and sample about descriptive text. The results of the students' writing were analyzed based on the rubric of scoring writing test. The time allotment given was 90 minutes. The result of this pre-test would be compared with the result of the test after students were given treatments. The aim of this comparison was to determine the improvement of students' writing skill of descriptive text.

After administering the pre-test, the result was analyzed to get the students' score. The result of this pre-test analysis would underline the process of planning for the first cycle. The result of the pretest was attached in the following table (appendix 11). The following table was the summary of the pre-test result.

Table 1. The Summary of Pre-test Result

Category	Organization	Content	Grammar	Punctuation	Style	Total
Mean	13.17	19.80	14.83	3.70	11.70	63.27
%	65.83	66	59.33	74	58.83	13.33

Based on the data presented in appendix 11, the mean score was calculated as follows.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{mean} &= \frac{\sum x}{n} = \frac{\text{The total score of the descriptive text}}{\text{the total number of students}} \\ &= \frac{1898}{30} = 63.27 \end{aligned}$$

According to the pre-test analysis, the average of the students' result was 63.27. The passing grade of writing test was 75. The percentage of the student that achieved the passing grade was 13% (4 students). Using the same formula, the mean of each category was calculated. The result showed that the mean of organization was 13.17, content was 19.80, grammar was 14.83, punctuation was 3.70, and style was 11.77. This score then would be analyzed to get the description of their competence in writing descriptive text.

The first Post-test was conducted after the third meeting of cycle 1. The students were given an answer sheet and asked to write a descriptive text about animal. The time allotment was 45 minutes. After giving the material, worksheet and exercise using write pair square strategy, the students were expected to produce a good descriptive text. The students' results of writing were evaluated and it was constructed into a result table. It was attached in the appendix 12. The following table was the summary of Post-test 1 result

Table 2. The Summary of Post-test 1 Result

Category	Organization	Content	Grammar	Punctuation	Style	Total
Mean	15.17	22.07	17.60	3.90	11.60	70.23
%	75.83	73.56	70.4	78	57.5	70.23

Based on the students' writing result table, it was found that the average score of students' writing in the first post-test was 70.23. The students that achieved the passing grade of writing test were 18 students (70.23%). The same formula was applied to analyze each category in writing rubric. From the calculation, it was found that the mean of organization was 15.17. In other words the students' organization competence achieved by them was 75% if it was compared to the maximum score. The result of mean score and achievement percentage of content, grammar, punctuation, and style was respectively 22, 07 (73.55%); 17.60 (70.4%); 3.90 (78%); and 11.50 (57.5%). Generally, there were improvement found based on average score and each rubric category except in style category.

The reflection was constructed based on the process during the actions and observation was undertaken. The reflections were as follows.

1. Students' participation result showed that the students' participation was still in poor category.
2. Based on the result of students' writing, it was found that they were still poor in category style. It was because when they were composing a descriptive text, almost all of the students were confused in

choosing the vocabulary. Sometimes they did not know the English word of the word that they wanted to write. Sometimes they misused the English word. For example they used 'see' instead of 'watch' in 'I see television with my brother' while actually he meant 'I watch television with my brother'.

3. They found difficulty in making a group in the process of 'square'. It was because the instruction was not clear enough for them. Before they did the 'write pair square' I only informed them that they were going to work individually, in pairs and in group. However, I did not give instruction how to make a group after they shared with their partner. This lack of information made them took quite long time to make a group.
4. In 'pair' step, they find difficulties about how to make the result of sharing. Some of them wrote the point and others wrote in form of paragraph. It made the students confused since there was no clear instruction about the form of 'pair' discussion result.
5. In doing the individual work, they still look at their friends' result. It could be found when the students were doing worksheet and in the process of 'write' in write pair

square strategy. When they were still having discussion in writing their opinion, it was useless since after they did 'write' process they would have 'pair' work where they would discuss their own work to their pair.

6. In doing the 'square' process, it was expected that all of the students would participate actively in sharing and discussing the topic. However, in fact there were only some students who controlled the discussion while other members were only kept silent without giving any idea. Some of them did not contribute because they did not know what to say but the others seemed not too enthusiastic in taking a part.
7. By having some worksheet in each material, they complained that they were bored of doing the written exercise.

Based on those reflections, I decided to conduct the second cycle. The planning would be based on the problems in the reflection of this cycle. I expected by having the second cycle there would be improvement.

The second Post-test was conducted after the third meeting of cycle 2. The students were given an answer sheet and asked to write a descriptive text about person. The time allotment was 45 minutes. After giving the material, worksheet and exercise using write pair square strategy, the students were expected to produce a good descriptive text. The students' results of writing were evaluated and it was constructed into a result table. It was attached in the appendix 13. The following table was the summary of Post-test 2 result.

Table 3. The Summary of Post-test 2 Result

Category	Organization	Content	Grammar	Punctuation	Style	Total
Mean	18.17	23.00	19.00	4.07	12.85	77.07
%	90.83	76.67	76	81.33	51.33	76.67

Based on the students' writing result table, it was found that the average score of students' writing in the second post-test was 77.07. This number was higher if compared to the average score in cycle 1. It showed that the students' writing competence was improved. The students that achieved the passing grade of writing test were 23 students (76.67%). The number of students that achieved the passing grade was also increased.

In the beginning, most of them were passively participate in classroom. However, by applying write pair square strategy they got opportunity to willingly participate and involved themselves in classroom activity. To make it clear in understanding the research result, the observation result of the activity was pictured in the following diagram:

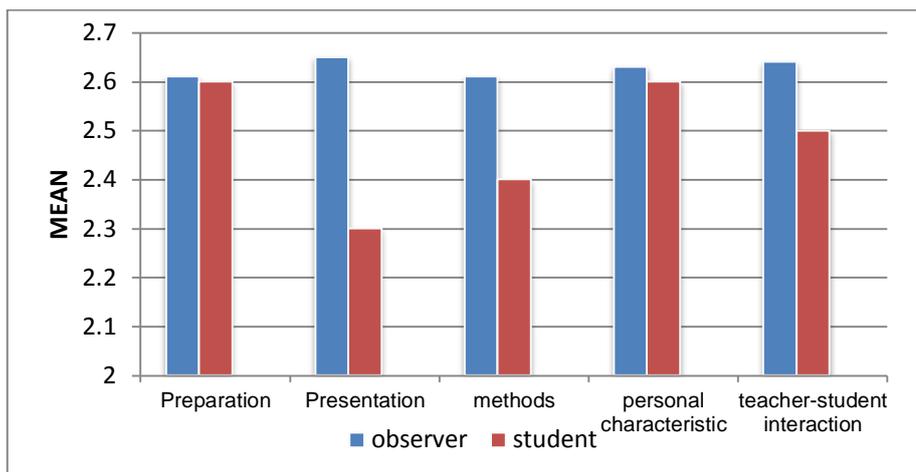


Diagram 1. The result of Research observation by Observer and students.

The figure above showed that the observation done by the observer was in line with what students thought. It meant that there was a balance between the observer's opinions with students' point of view. The observer observed started before and during the research was done. Then the result was derived from the calculation of the average score derived from each meeting. It was done to find the changes of

each meeting. In the end of the research the students were given an observation sheet to make sure that the data was taken from both sides, from observer's and students' opinion.

Another issue in this research was students' active participation. The following was students' development of participation that had been observed before and during the research.

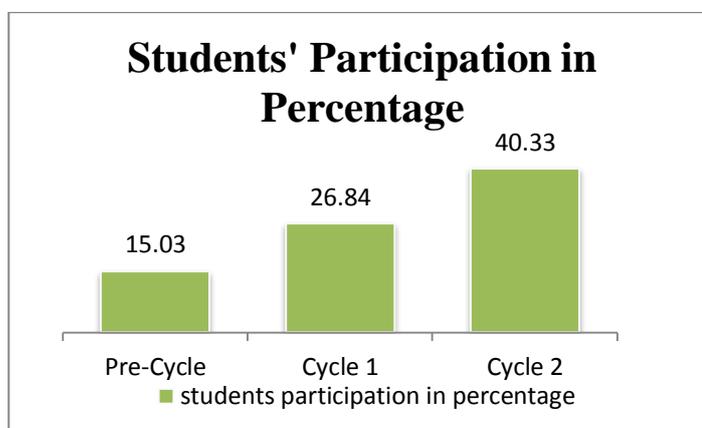


Diagram 2. The result of Research observation by Observer and students.

Table 4. The Classification of Students' Achievement

Percentage	Level of Achievement
67-100	Excellent
34-66	Good
0-3	Poor

Based on the diagram above, it was showed that students' participation in pre-cycle was 15.03%; first cycle was 26.84% and second cycle was 40.33%. Based on the classification of achievement table, the level of achievement of students' active participation was poor in Pre-cycle and Cycle 1 and improved to Good in cycle 2.

Besides participation, another concern in this research was students; competence in

writing descriptive text. In the beginning, students were expected showed change during the research or in other words they were expected to improve their competence after being taught using write Pair Square strategy. The following diagram showed clearly the development of students' writing competence from pre-cycle to the end of cycle 2.

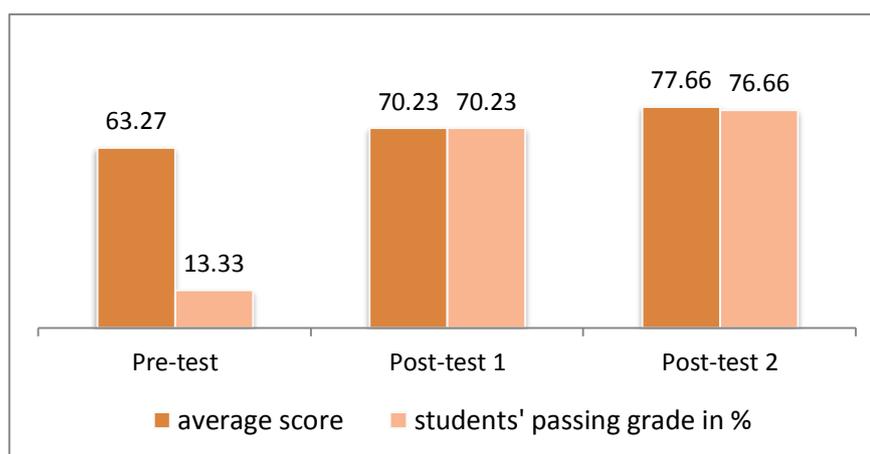


Diagram 3. The development of students' writing descriptive competence

The diagram above showed that students' writing competence in pre-test was improved both the average score and the number of students that achieved the writing passing grade. The mean score in pre-test was 63.27 and the number of students that achieved the passing grade was 13.33% from the total number of the student. The average score of post-test 1 was 70.23 and there were 70.23 % students achieved the passing grade. The last post-test's average

score was 77.66 and there were 76.67% students achieved the passing grade.

The development of students writing competence had some category that could be seen their improvement. Each category had different achievement but generally they were improved. The following diagram showed the development of students' each category competence in writing descriptive text.

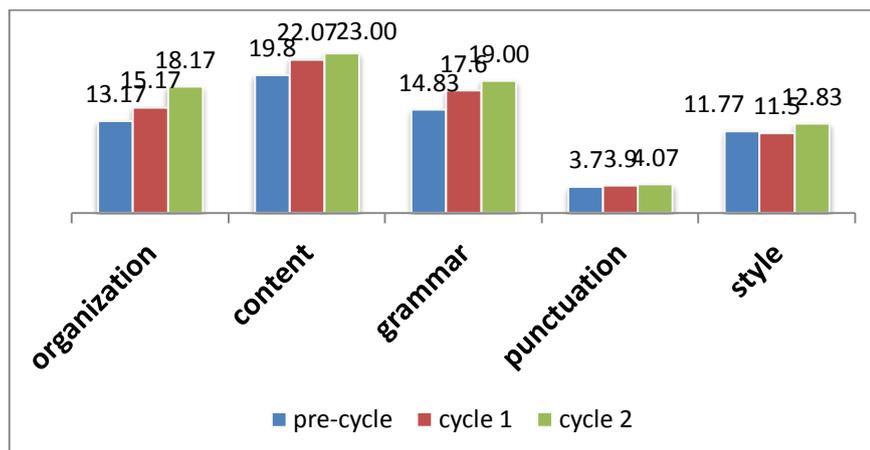


Diagram 4. The development of students' writing descriptive competence in each assessment category

From the diagram above it showed that students' competence in each assessment category was generally improved. The organization's average score in pre-cycle was 13.17; cycle 1 was 15.17; and cycle 2 was 18.17. The content's average score in pre-cycle was 19.80; cycle 1 was 22.07; and cycle 2 was 23.00. The average score of grammar competence in pre-cycle was 14.83; cycle 1 was 17.60; and cycle 2 was 19.00. The average score of punctuation in pre-cycle was 3.73; cycle 1 was 3.94; and cycle 2 was 4.07. The average score of style in pre-cycle was 11.77; cycle 1 was 11.50; and cycle 2 was 12.83.

CONCLUSION

This study concerns with the use of write-pair-square strategy to improve students' active participation in writing descriptive text. Based on the results of the study, the conclusions are as follows.

Firstly, the main problems faced by the students in the preliminary research were the lack of participation in classroom activity and writing a text especially in grammar and vocabulary.

Secondly, the Write-pair-square was implemented through action research. It consisted of pre-cycle, cycle 1 and cycle 2. In Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 there were four steps they were planning, acting, observation and reflection. Write-pair-square was done in the

acting step. It consisted of three activities; write, pair, and square. There was a pre-test and post-test in each cycle.

Thirdly, the implementation of Write-pair-square strategy in the classroom activities had developed students' active participation. The percentage of students' participation had developed from 15.33% into 40.33% and based on category they are developed from poor into good category.

Fourthly, the implementation of Write-pair-square strategy during the research had developed students' writing descriptive competence. This strategy had also improved the percentage of the students that gain the passing grade.

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