

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SIMULTANEOUS ROUNDTABLE IN TEACHING WRITING AT EFL SETTING

**Mohammad Romadhoni<sup>1\*</sup>; Yam Saroh<sup>2</sup>; Ani Asryan<sup>3</sup>**

Humanities, and Social Sciences, Teaching English to Speakers of Other  
Languages, National Dong Hwa University, Taiwan<sup>1\*</sup>;

Curriculum and Teaching Methodology, School of Education, Central  
China Normal University, China<sup>2\*</sup>;

Higher Education, School of Education, Central China Normal  
University, China<sup>3</sup>

*<sup>1</sup>610802618@gms.ndhu.edu.tw; <sup>2</sup>yam.saroh@yahoo.com;*

*<sup>3</sup>asryan.ani1997@gmail.com.*

**Abstract:** EFL teachers are currently considering implementing practical strategies to help students make rapid progress in learning English and reach their learning goals. Simultaneous Roundtable is one of the strategies that are familiar to them. In particular, the Simultaneous Roundtable strategy is examined in this study in order to determine whether it is effective for writing English descriptive essays. Indonesian seventh graders were examined in this experiment. The experimental group applied the Simultaneous Roundtable strategy. The control group then received instruction using a teacher's feedback strategy. The Simultaneous Roundtable strategy was more effective than the traditional teacher feedback strategy for improving the students' descriptive writing skills. Simultaneous Roundtable, therefore, is recommended for EFL teachers to implement since it can be one of the practical teaching strategies that significantly improve students' descriptive writing skills and increase their interpersonal and social skills.

**Keywords:** simultaneous roundtable, students writing skill, descriptive writing

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has mandated English as a compulsory subject for junior high school students since 1972. Even though English in Indonesia has

been intensively learned for almost half a century, it is still not widely used by society. It indicates that English is limited to some occasions, such as schools, international meetings, and conferences. Consequently, English in Indonesia is categorized as English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It has led to some Indonesians being unable to communicate effectively in English. Meanwhile, English is essential to develop science, technology, economy, and culture in the global sphere in the current age. Thus, it is essential to encourage Indonesian people to use English daily.

Most Indonesian students still find it difficult to master English because it is used to functioning as a foreign language in Indonesia. Further, they usually find difficulties in writing. Most junior high school students lack confidence in their ability due to a lack of vocabulary (Albaladejo et al., 2018; Leona et al., 2021; Tivnan, 2015), and are hesitant to begin writing, which prevents them from writing independently. Even, some of them still do language translation without understanding the generic structure and grammatical features of descriptive text, the purpose of writing descriptive text, and the types of descriptive text (Yani, 2021). The problem was that these students have become too used to conventional teaching methods, in which the teacher controls the learning environment, gives direct feedback, and most of the time does not require active engagement on the part of the students.

In addition, Brown (2015) explains that writing has less performance than other language skills since it is complicated. Therefore, applying an appropriate strategy is expected to alter the class to be more interesting when dealing with writing difficulties. Since writing skill usually requires complex ideas for students to come up with, having a partner is crucial for them to bridge their ideas before starting writing and help them develop their ideas to be a complete text. Also, it enables students to gain more confidence and encouragement from their partners.

Researchers in this study applied a Simultaneous Roundtable strategy out of a variety of cooperative learning strategies because it engages students' participation. Kagan and Kagan (2009) highly recommend using Simultaneous Roundtable to improve interpersonal skills such as team-building and social skills, knowledge-building, and thinking skills. A sequenced series of activities in the Simultaneous

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Roundtable assists students in expressing their ideas towards the topic, solving the problem, and assisting them in understanding the topic. Thus, the researchers decided to examine the effectiveness of the Simultaneous Roundtable in teaching descriptive writing to secondary school students. The significance of this study is stimulating and encouraging other researchers to create a new and creative modification strategy for Simultaneous Roundtable in teaching descriptive text. In addition, English teachers may use this technique to make writing classes more interactive to encourage students' interest in writing. Students can recognize their mistakes on their own by using this strategy.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Descriptive Writing***

McCharty (1998) defined descriptive writing as writing that creates an image with words and phrases that use a precise sense of detail. Additionally, Faisal & Suwandita (2013) determined descriptive writing characteristics relating to the physical appearance that attracts the reader's senses, as well as their emotions and intellect. A writer should illustrate their feelings and views to demonstrate how their senses interpret what they observe and experience. Detailing a passage in this way helps writers successfully elucidate their passage confidently to share a curious story with the readers.

A descriptive text focuses on creating and developing a character, setting, or object. According to Zahrowi (2009), descriptive writing can create a vivid picture and describe a person's impressions. In descriptive writing, Keraf (2000) explains that the writer conveys the feeling, image, and experience of the character as if they are also in the scene. However, it is crucial that students make a clear description so that the reader can envision the object. White (1986) stated that there are at least five points regarding the usage of descriptive text:

- a) Assisting the readers to see the object which is being described. A description serves all rhetorical purposes, not just for expression.
- b) Expounding the reader to a specific subject. For example, when an engineer describes tools to help explain to other partners what is possible.

- c) Describing something to catch the readers' interest. For example, a sales manager describes a product by giving a persuasive statement.
- d) Making the reader create something. For example, the description allows readers to draw what they read in their minds, thereby enriching their perspective.
- e) Demonstrating something to the readers.

Wadirman (2008) explains that the generic structures of a description contain two elements.

- a) Identification: it functions to identify the subject to be portrayed.
- b) Description: It elaborates the detailed features, such as; physical appearance, qualities (degree of beauty, excellence, or worth/value), and other characteristics (prominent aspects that are unique).

### ***Descriptive Writing at Junior High School in Indonesia***

Regarding the basic competence stated in the curriculum, students are expected to comprehend and produce written and oral descriptive text concerning the social function, generic structure, and language features of the descriptive text of people, animals, and things. According to the 2013 curriculum, descriptive writing for English classes has been emphasized in integrating ethical values. As a result, the first students' descriptive paragraph assignments must be completed in composition classes. For instance, students are asked to describe their childhood home, a person who was important to them, an object, or their summer vacation, including moral values for students to learn. Most students, especially EFL learners, produce a text-based on their capability (Carter, 2015). Junior high school students must comprehend and produce written and oral text demonstrated through four integrated English skills. As writing enables students to understand and develop new ideas and concepts, construct meaning from different reading sources, and develop critical thinking.

### ***Conventional Technique***

The conventional technique applied in this study was teacher feedback. It was used to review the students' writing. Teachers use

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traditional teaching methods in order to teach the students writing. Traditional teaching involves the teacher controlling the learning environment. Dutta (2010) said that “traditional teaching is discipline-oriented and each discipline has its own logical structure and sequence, which is complemented by standard textbooks” (p. 246). The characteristics of conventional teaching are subject expert provided learning objectives and assignments, large group lectures, structured laboratory experiments. So, the teacher holds control and responsibility and plays the role of instructor and decision-maker. Briefly, the teacher is viewed as the cause of learning in the traditional teaching model. As a consequence of the conventional technique, students are unable to express their ideas, opinions, thoughts, and experiences, which can result in them getting bored writing anecdotes. They cannot freely develop their creativity.

### *Simultaneous Roundtable*

According to Kagan and Kagan (2009), A Simultaneous Roundtable enables each student to write a response on their paper; students pass their papers clockwise so each teammate can add to the initial responses. In the Simultaneous Roundtable, the varied responses from each student encourage creativity and critical thinking. Thus, it is critical to build positive interdependence among the students. However, more significantly, it builds team cohesion and reinforces the power of teamwork because students see in action the chance of multiple viewpoints and ideas.

Kagan and Kagan (2009) explain several steps in the Simultaneous Roundtable strategy. Before applying this strategy, each member in a group should take a piece of paper and a pencil.

- a) At the beginning of the process, the teacher will assign a topic or question to the students and they will have some time to think about what they want to write about the topic.
- b) After delivering the topic or question, all students in the groups should respond by writing, drawing, or building something with manipulative; in this step, the teacher provides think time while students elaborate their ideas.

- c) The third step is to have students give thumbs up when they do the problem, or the teacher can give appropriate signals when students complete the problem.
- d) The students pass the papers or projects clockwise, one at a time.
- e) Students continue what their friend has already written in a group and add what was already written.
- f) Then the process is repeated from step 3 until the time is up, starting at step 3 and continuing until the time is up (see figure 1).

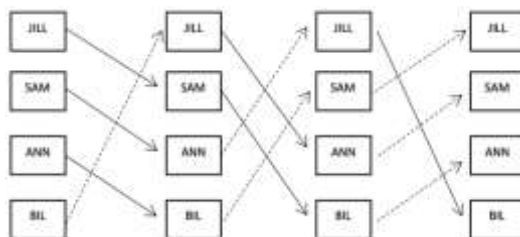


Figure 1. Simultaneous Roundtable steps

*Note.* Simultaneous Roundtable Steps. Adapted from "Kagan Cooperative Learning", by Kagan and Kagan, 2009, *Kagan Publishing*, p. 6.34. Copyright 2009 by Kagan Publishing.

Simultaneous Roundtable supposed that in a group, there are four students, we can mention them as Jill, Sam, Ann and Bil through the editing stage of a writing task. At the same time, they edit each other's descriptive writing. It works like this: Jill's descriptive writing is edited by Sam, Sam's descriptive writing is edited by Ann, Ann's descriptive writing is edited by Bil and Bil's descriptive writing is edited by Jill, each editing process is given think time. When it is completed, each student passes the work paper on their hands to friend sitting next to them to be edited for another time. Jill's descriptive writing is edited by Ann, Sam's descriptive writing is edited by Bil, Ann's descriptive writing is edited by Jill, Bil's descriptive writing is edited by Sam. The Simultaneous Roundtable will be finished if each writing product has been corrected by all members except the writer him or herself. We can see another figure below (see figure 2).

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**Figure 2 Detail Scheme of Simultaneous Roundtable**

Kagan and Kagan (2009) recommend that each student write their name at the top of a paper copy. If possible, copy the form on colored paper. The student should pass their paper to the person to their left within the team. Each student writes a positive message to the recipient upon receiving a form. A form is passed and filled out until returned to its original sender.

### *Advantages and Disadvantages of Applying Simultaneous Roundtable Technique*

The Simultaneous Roundtable provides equal opportunities to all students in the group, and students can share their views and ideas simultaneously. Barkley et al. (2005) stated that a simultaneous roundtable enables students to build upon each other's contributions. This activity encourages students to adjust their writing, such as content, conventions, style, and vocabulary, in response to the comments of those who have written before. Larasati (2016) found that the Simultaneous Roundtable strategy improved students' writing of narrative texts. She revealed that the factors influencing students' ability were the teacher's (explanation) and students' (attention, participation, and interest). Besides, Murtini et al. (2016) confirm that the modified process from Simultaneous Roundtable into Competitive Simultaneous Roundtable strategy resulted in a constructive impact on the students' writing competence. In short, it reveals that Simultaneous Roundtable assists students to focus on their attention, gives students quiet time to think about their responses, and provides an accumulation record.

Yulianingsih et al. (2016) observed that simultaneous roundtables can develop students' writing skills in procedure texts. Shortly after the treatment, she mentioned that they were able to use a proper vocabulary of procedure text after receiving the treatment. Budiarta (2017) noted that 94% of second-semester university students responded positively to the questionnaire. They agreed that the application of the Simultaneous Roundtable assisted them in improving genre-based paragraph writing ability and made them actively participate in the class.

However, Barkley et al. (2005) explained that Roundtable is one of the strategies called the natural way of improving writing, so Simultaneous Roundtable is only used for relatively simple tasks, not for complex ones. It does not work when used to write an essay with long paragraphs because it is only the surface of the writing technique. Students may be confused about where to begin writing. Additionally, the learners do this in 24 hours under pressure to make this technique effective. Students will lose time, and they will probably become bored. Thus, it is not a good technique for writing an essay with a long paragraph.

## **METHOD**

This study applied an experimental research design to establish possible cause and effect relationships between experimental and control groups. In this design, all variables except the independent variable are controlled to ensure that the study results are as accurate as possible. Latief (2012) stated that experimental design is a type of quantitative research method that aims to examine cause-and-effect relationships involving independent (cause) and dependent (effect) variables. In establishing this quasi-experimental study, initially, the researchers assigned experimental and control groups. The following stage is administering the pre-test to both experimental and control groups, giving treatment to the experimental group, and administering a post-test to both groups to assess the differences between the two groups (Creswell, 2012).

Sugiyono (2013) explained that a variable is an attribute or characteristic of a set of objects observable and determined by the researcher. Due to the research design, two variables were tested in this study. The independent variable was the Simultaneous Roundtable



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strategy, while the dependent variable was students' descriptive writing skills. Writing test was applied in this study (Pre-writing test and Post-writing test). The test was in descriptive writing. A pre-test was conducted to examine the students' initial writing accomplishments before treatment and determine whether or not the two groups were similar. A post-test was used to assess the effectiveness of the 'Simultaneous Roundtable' as an educational strategy, while a scoring rubric served as a basis for the study.

In terms of experimental studies, it is essential to work carefully on organizing the instrument. A writing test was used as a primary instrument to collect statistical data in this study. The researchers, therefore, carefully made the blueprints of the pre-test and post-test before constructing the writing test. Also, ensuring the content validity involves the test's content and its relationship to the construct it is intended to measure (Ary, 2010). The validation included a blueprint for the paragraph writing rubric. Expert validators were chosen since they have good experience of teaching English in writing classes. One of the validators earned a master's degree in English education and is still in the doctoral program. Two others have been teaching English at the junior high school level for 15 years. Hence, it could be assumed that they understood how to judge whether the validity of the writing test constructed for this study corresponds to the validity of the writing skill assessment results.

Furthermore, it is essential to check the reliability of the data. Latief (2012) affirmed that reliability represents the examinees' actual skill level. Meanwhile, Brown (2007) stated that the instrument is reliable when the same instrument is given for matched students, and the result is similar. The writer used Alpha Coefficient Reliability to check the instrument's reliability. The alpha formula was devised because it could measure the instrument's reliability and shape the score scale from 1 to 4. The technique is also suitable for reliability tests to find the form description (Arikunto, 1986). The data showed that the coefficient of reliability of the pre-test is 0.831 while the post-test is 0.846. According to the criteria, this value is more significant than 0.80. It means the result data from both tests have a

good reliability level. It indicates that both data and the results of the tests can be trusted.

In terms of the research setting, this study was conducted at SMPN 1 Ngoro Jombang in the seventh grade. However, the instrument was tried out in grade VII at SMPK Wijana Jombang. In essence, it analyzes whether the test directions are sufficiently clear and suitable for descriptive writing or not. Also, it is used to verify the allotment of time for the test. After trying out the writing test, the researchers distributed the pre-test to both the experimental (grade VII-A) and control groups (grade VII C), which aimed to measure the students' achievement in writing skills before implementing the treatment. It was also used to measure the homogeneity of the two variables. IBM Statistics SPSS 22 was applied to analyze the statistical data. According to the statistical analysis, there is no significant difference between grades VII A and VII C in the pre-test. It means that both groups had the same competence before giving the treatment.

**Table 1 The Treatment Schedule of The Experimental Study**

No	Meetings		Experiment	Control
1.	Meeting (2x40)	1	Pre-test	Pre-test
2.	Meeting (2x40)	2	Give a model of describing people & Explain descriptive text.	Give a model of describing people & Explain descriptive text.
3.	Meeting (2x40)	3	Students practice (Simultaneous Roundtable is applied)	Conventional Teaching by teacher's feedback
4.	Meeting (2x40)	4	Posttest	Posttest

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

The data in this study were collected from the students' pre-test and post-test in both control and experimental classes. The experimental class consisted of 32 students; meanwhile control class consisted of 25 students.

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It was found that the levels of significance of both the control and experimental groups exceeded 0.05 in the statistical analysis. The control group was 0.283. On the other hand, the experimental group was 0.101. It infers that the data distribution of both groups was normal. After checking the normality of the data distribution, the homogeneity was calculated to determine that both classes were from the same variance. The Levene test shows the level of significance value of mean 0.341, which is more than 0.05. The essential measurement of median data was Sig. 0.336 more than 0.05. Thus, it can be concluded that the data was from a population that has the same variance. In other words, it indicates that both classes have the same level.

**Table 2 Descriptive Statistic Analysis**

Dependent Variable: Writing Skill

Strategy	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Simultaneous Roundtable	78,69	7,554	32
Conventional	60,88	10,841	25

Regarding the above data, it is noted that the experimental class' mean is 78.69, which is higher than the control class' mean score, 60.88. It indicates a gap in terms of mean scores in both groups. However, it cannot be concluded that the experimental group is better than the control group. Further, the researchers need to apply statistical analysis using ANCOVA to deal with selection bias (Ary, 2010) to see whether the mean difference is significant. Table 3 illustrates the results of the statistical analysis conducted using ANCOVA.

The results of the ANCOVA analysis show that the significance of background knowledge is 0.155 at Sig.> 0.05. It means that there is no significant effect of students' background knowledge on students' writing skills. Furthermore, the result shows the strategy's influence on students' post-test score is 0.000 at Sig. < 0.05, Ho is rejected, and Ha is accepted. It indicates that the strategy significantly impacted students' post-test scores. The influence of the strategy is 51.1%. Meanwhile, the influence of

background knowledge is 3.7%. These results suggest that using a simultaneous roundtable is beneficial for teaching descriptive writing in EFL settings.

The results show a significant difference between the students who received Simultaneous Roundtable and those who received the teacher's feedback strategy on their descriptive writing. The students who received Simultaneous Roundtable got a higher score than the teacher's feedback strategy. Moreover, the descriptive statistic table 1.2 shows that Simultaneous Roundtable (experimental class) is 78.69, and the mean of teacher's feedback (controlled class) is 60.88. Based on these findings, the researchers concluded that a Simultaneous Roundtable is more effective than the teacher's feedback strategy. It is obvious that Simultaneous Roundtable made the students perform better in writing descriptive text.

**Table 3 The Results of ANCOVA Analysis**

Dependent Variable: Writing Skill

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent Parameter	Observed Power
Corrected Model	4620.64 <sup>a</sup>	2	2310.32	28.23	.000	.511	56.458	1.000
Intercept	323.88	1	3231.88	39.49	.000	.422	39.489	1.000
<b>Strategy</b>	4618.87	1	4618.87	56.44	<b>.000</b>	<b>.511</b>	56.436	1.000
<b>Background knowledge</b>	170.01	1	170.01	2.08	<b>.155</b>	<b>.037</b>	2.077	.293
Error	4419.50	54	81.84					
Total	295384.00	57						
Corrected Total	9040.14	56						

a. R Squared = .511 (Adjusted R Squared = .493)

b. Computed using alpha = .05

The present study demonstrates the effectiveness of Simultaneous Roundtables using sequential activities where students work in groups. The results confirm the findings of some previous studies that also found

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Simultaneous Roundtable as an effective teaching strategy to boost students' writing skill, particularly in descriptive writing. Using simultaneous roundtable to improve students' writing skills, Tarigan and Sianipar (2021), Larasati (2016), and Yulianingsih et al. (2016) concluded that this method was successful in improving students' writing performance on functional texts, including descriptive and narrative texts. Tarigan and Sianipar's research found that the students felt motivated and enjoyed the Simultaneous Roundtable method and they were better at composing descriptive paragraphs. This strategy seemed to be fun for the students since they enjoyed the sharing and discussion section applied. Yulianingsih et al. (2016) found that after receiving the treatment, students performed better on writing tests. In addition, Larasati (2016) investigated the factors that influence students' ability. These factors include teacher factors such as explanations and comments, and student factors such as attention, participation, and interest.

Murtini et al. (2016) altered the strategy from Simultaneous Roundtable to Competitive Simultaneous Roundtable. They confirmed that students were actively involved in the writing process when a modified Simultaneous Roundtable was implemented. Additionally, they pointed out that this teaching strategy would improve students' writing of descriptive paragraphs. According to Barkley et al. (2005), Roundtable encourages students to collaborate to produce their best writing. In implementing this strategy, they may adjust the content, conventions, style, and vocabulary of their writing as a result of their partner's comments.

As Stenlev & Siemund (2011) state, the Simultaneous Roundtable is one of the most effective strategies used in a carefully sequenced series of activities. This study showed that the students enjoyed communicating, cooperating, and sharing with their peers to complete their learning activities through this strategy. In terms of writing skills, they demonstrate a good teamwork by sharing their knowledge and competencies to produce a good paragraph or passage assigned by the teacher. Therefore, Kagan (2009) deems a Simultaneous Roundtable a highly recommended cooperative learning strategy. A Simultaneous Roundtable provides students with the opportunity to discuss their work and find solutions

together. They did communicative discussions and gave each other's feedback on their writing. It is, then, helping improve the students' writing skills.

## **CONCLUSION**

In short, this study reveals that the Simultaneous Roundtable strategy is an effective strategy to teach descriptive writing in Junior high school. The implementation of this strategy contributed to improving students' interpersonal skills, such as team building and social skills. Besides, simultaneous roundtables are also recommended to improve knowledge and thinking skills. Additionally, a simultaneous roundtable assists the students in exploring their ideas and comparing their ideas with their partners in a group setting. Through Simultaneous Roundtables, every student can recognize their mistakes and correct them independently. They also can gain confidence through the discussion process with their partners in a group. However, implementing this strategy demands well-planned preparation. The teachers must prepare the techniques for achieving the learning objectives before teaching. In other words, it emphasizes that before using a Simultaneous Roundtable as a teaching strategy in writing, the teacher should ascertain whether or not this strategy is appropriate for the particular material since this strategy may not be applicable to all materials. Overall, this study provides evidence that Simultaneous Roundtable is influential for the teaching of writing, particularly descriptive writing. To future researcher are recommended to investigate the implementation of Simultaneous Roundtable in teaching other English skill, such as; speaking, listening and reading. As it works well with writing class, it is highly possible that this strategy will also make impressive results to improve students' other English skills. Thus, it is necessary to investigate if Simultaneous Roundtable is effective for teaching other English skills; listening, reading and writing.

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