

Chapter 21

The Instructional Design of Basic Writing

Setya Ariani
Universitas Mulawarman
setya.ariani@fib.unmul.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Within the framework of EFL learning, writing independently often poses considerable challenges for students, especially those who have limited linguistic resources and writing experiences. Many students struggle with the task of formulating ideas and expressing them in a coherent paragraph structure, and these difficulties are further complicated by the issues with grammar and word choice (Supiani, 2017). In addition, the presence of large class sizes and a scarcity of individualized instructor feedback frequently inhibits students from receiving the crucial guidance needed to improve their writing (Putra et al., 2025). Acknowledging these challenges, educators should focus on maximizing students' writing efforts by providing substantial attention through effective teaching strategies that involve guidance and constructive feedback. Collaborative learning serves as an alternative for facilitating writing activities

among university students, as it promotes a more interactive and student-oriented learning environment.

Collaborative learning consists of pairs or small groups cooperating during educational activities, proving especially beneficial for college students through teamwork, group projects, and peer interaction (Ariani & Valiantien, 2022; Barkley et al., 2005). It constitutes a significant instructional practice that allows students to utilize the language they have learned in real-world situations, thus enhancing their opportunities to engage with the target language, work together to tackle linguistic difficulties, and further refine their language abilities (Winarti & Cahyono, 2020). The collaborative aspect in writing process encourages students to seek assistance and facilitate significant information exchange among peers, which in turn enhances a sense of connection (Wang et al., 2024). This chapter contributes to meaningfully incorporate collaborative learning into the instructional design of a basic writing course. Specifically, the collaborative learning idea supports sentence construction to prepare for a paragraph writing.

2. INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

2.1 Course Content and Topics

Basic writing is one of the foundational courses offered to undergraduate students at English Literature Study Program of Universitas Mulawarman during the first semester. This course stresses the mastery of sentence structure as essential element for cultivating skills at paragraph level. Substantial writing difficulties can detract from the overall writing quality such as grammatical errors, poor sentence construction, and challenges in logically organizing ideas and arguments, leading to confusion among readers (Taye & Mengesha, 2024; Workie & Haregu, 2020). The foremost factor in arranging instruction on grammar, writing mechanics, and sentence

structure before engaging in paragraph writing is to guarantee that students thoroughly understand and cultivate the essential components of writing (Arum & Hasbi, 2017). This order of instruction is corroborated by earlier studies, which highlight that advancements in composition, sentence construction, grammar, and mechanics are crucial for guiding students' focus towards the enhancement of proficient writing abilities in the English language (Filomeno, 2025; Oguan & Valle, 2022).

For one-semester learning plan consisting of 16 weeks, including mid test and final test, the course topics cover fundamental elements of sentences, grammatical and mechanical errors, types of sentence errors, clauses, and four types of sentences (simple, compound, complex, compound-complex). The organization of course topics throughout a semester should be constructed progressively, beginning with essential sentence-level knowledge and then moving on to more intricate structures. The first week begins with course introduction and diagnostic test. Between the second and seventh weeks, there is an intensive emphasis on grammatical, mechanical, and sentence-related errors, categorized as follows: components of sentences (weeks 2 and 3), word order within sentence structure (week 4), sentence errors (week 5), mechanics (week 6), and clauses (week 7). The mid test occurs during the eighth week. From weeks nine to twelve, simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences are discussed in that order. Sentence transformation takes place in week thirteen. The four types of sentences are reviewed in week fourteen. The final test is administered in week fifteen. In week sixteen, a collaborative project is undertaken where students will write a description on a specific topic, for instance, local culture.

2.2 Teaching Method

Peerarogy, a term coined by Howard Reheingold, represents a pedagogical approach that focuses on collaborative learning and peer-

to-peer teaching, encouraging students to learn together by expanding upon each other's knowledge (Yeban, 2022). Moreover, there are five key models or elements of peeragogy that instructors can utilize to structure their courses or subjects. First, discussion/reflection group is structured to support students in comprehending the subject matter, elevate their confidence in expressing their thoughts, and stimulate deeper critical thinking through collaboration with peers. Second, writing group collaborative learning can be implemented by educators to improve students' writing ability and obtain constructive feedback from peers. Third, problem/project-centered collaborative learning encourages collaboration among students by resolving issues through a student-centered approach that motivates them to develop and explore their own questions. Fourth, peer-teaching collaborative learning provides students with opportunities to act as facilitators, presenters, or leaders, which not only enriches their understanding of the subject but also promotes active collaboration among peers. Fifth, learning communities support active engagement and teamwork through common interests and collective participation.

2.3 Teacher and Student Roles

The application of collaborative learning delineates the roles of both educators and students during classroom teaching and learning process, as it transitions instruction from a teacher-centered model to a mutual-development of knowledge. In collaborative learning, students take part in small-group activities to exchange knowledge and expertise, with the educator primarily acting as a facilitator who directs the learning process (Kirschner, 2001). Fusco et al (2025) point out three phases in which educators can start organizing collaborative activities in the classroom. Prior to collaboration, it is important for educators to prepare students by developing their communication and relational skills and establishing a positive classroom culture. During the collaboration, educators supervise and assist students to guarantee that each group member learns both individually and collectively,

fostering successful collaboration. After collaboration, educators and students engage in a reflective discussion about learning experience (Hasbi et al., 2025a). Meanwhile, as noted by Ansari and Naseer (2024), the roles of students in collaborative learning encompass participating actively in learning process, sharing and exchanging ideas and information, collaborating and working as a team with other students, co-creating knowledge, respecting diverse viewpoints, engaging in problem-solving and decision-making, developing critical thinking skills, and being responsible for both individual and group learning outcomes.

2.4 Activity Types

The teaching of basic writing topics can be strategically arranged by aligning each topic with relevant collaborative techniques. Presented below is a clear and pedagogically robust explanation of how the basic writing topics, such as sentence elements and clauses, grammatical and mechanical errors, sentence errors, and types of sentences, can be effectively taught using the peerarogy principles.

- a) Sentence elements and clauses can be accomplished through discussion and reflection groups, in which students collaboratively identify subjects, predicates, and clauses within example sentences and justify their analysis. These collaborative techniques strengthen their understanding through shared reasoning.
- b) Grammatical and mechanical errors can be tackled via problem-centered collaborative learning. Students are given sentences containing grammatical and mechanical errors and work together to identify and correct them. By collaboratively addressing language issues, students develop grammatical awareness and accuracy while engaging in group discussions.
- c) Sentence errors such as fragments, run-on sentences, and comma splices can be taught using collaborative writing groups. Students collaboratively revise sentences that are flawed, discuss strategies

for correction, and compare different revisions. This process encourages a deeper understanding of the sentence boundaries and coherence.

- d) The four types of sentences (simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex) can be introduced through peer-teaching collaborative learning. Small groups are tasked with mastering different sentence types, which they will later convey to their peers using examples and brief explanations. This technique enhances students' understanding while simultaneously encouraging collaboration.

2.5 Materials and Media

The design of instructional materials for the basic writing course further integrates digital platform to enhance engagement and draw the attention of students, such as Google Forms, Google Drive, and Canva. Google Forms are used to carry out diagnostic test. It is a test aims at identifying the strengths and weaknesses of students taking the test by evaluating their knowledge or lack thereof in a language, as well as the skills they possess or do not possess at the beginning of a language course (Hasbi et al., 2025b; Davies et al., 1999). Google Drive functions as central repository for instructional materials including the syllabus, course handbook, and printable writing worksheets. Canva is used as a visual design tool utilized for creating PPT presentations and for aiding students to elevate the visual quality of their written work prior to submission. In addition, the whiteboard continues to serve as a tool for enhancing interaction and engagement during class. It is specifically used for conducting real-time analysis of sentence errors, improving sentence construction, and facilitating revisions, thereby capturing the attention and participation of the entire class. Universitas Mulawarman has also launched the Sistem Aplikasi Belajar (STAR) to enhance academic and instructional activities. This platform offers functionalities for tracking student attendance,

distributing learning materials, managing assignments, and submitting coursework.

Some essential instructional materials prepared for the basic writing course include academic writing handbooks that provide comprehensive explanations of sentence elements, clauses, sentence types, sentence errors, paragraph development, and related topics. These handbooks are further supported with guided exercises and peer or group-writing tasks to encourage both practice and collaborative learning. Alongside the provision of handbooks, worksheets focused on grammar and sentence construction are made available to encourage regular practice in writing skills. These include tasks for sentence analysis, exercises on grammatical and mechanical errors, as well as activities for sentence arrangement and transformation. These resources aim to facilitate both individual learning and collaborative group work within the basic writing course. Sample texts and paragraphs are supplied for the purposes of discussion, reflection, and group activities, demonstrating both correct and incorrect sentence use, with the intention of progressively increase the complexity of exercises throughout the course.

2.6 Assessment and Evaluation

In the basic writing course, assessment and evaluation are conducted through various methods, starting with a diagnostic writing test that aims to generate an initial writing sample. This sample enables educators to discern critical rhetorical and linguistic aspects that demand specific instructional emphasis (Brown, 2004). To evaluate both learning process and the results of learning, formative and summative assessments proposed by Brown (2004) are implemented. Formative assessment is performed to assess students in the context of developing their competencies and skills. This process involves the provision of feedback by educators and the internalization of that feedback by students, which is essential for the future progression of

their learning. This formative assessment is integrated into collaborative tasks including group sentence analysis, peer feedback, error-correction exercises, and reflective discussions, enabling students to obtain continuous feedback from both their peers and the educator while actively participating in the learning process. In contrast, summative assessments are designed to assess or summarize the understanding that a student has achieved, typically occurring at the end of a course or instructional unit. The midterm and final examinations are primarily administered on an individual basis to assess students' independent proficiency in sentence-level writing skills.

3. RECOMMENDATION

Collaborative learning not only contributes positively to the development of writing skills by helping students recognize particular aspects of their writing that require improvement, but it also reinforces their feedback literacy, reflective practice, academic identity, and confidence (Cahusac de Caux & Pretorius, 2024; Winarti & Cahyono, 2020). Despite its advantages, collaborative learning presents various challenges. According to the findings of La et al (2018), there are four common barriers in collaborative learning activities, which encompass students' limited collaborative skills (including negotiating perspectives, providing explanations, and both offering and receiving feedback), unequal participation among group members, the dominance of higher-achieving students whose ideas tend to be more readily accepted, and the tendency for personal friendships to obstruct serious engagement and the development of well-reasoned arguments. Understanding the potential challenges associated with poor collaboration empower educators to develop more structured tasks and define clear learning objectives, consequently enhancing more successful and engaging collaborative learning experiences.

Author



Setya Ariani, M.Pd., a lecturer of English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences at Universitas Mulawarman, teaches courses in English grammar and writing. She earned her Master degree from Universitas Mulawarman in 2012. Her research explores Second Language Acquisition (SLA), EFL writing, English grammar, English language instruction, and linguistics, with publications in national and international journals. Her email is at setya.ariani@fib.unmul.ac.id and Instagram at @setyaariani.

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