



The Impact of the Round Table Technique in Paragraph Writing: A Study Based on Grade 11 Learners of English as a Second Language

D.M.R.N. Dasanayaka
University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the impact of the round table technique in paragraph writing and examine learners' perceptions of applying the round table technique in paragraph writing. An experimental research design addressed via a mixed-method approach was implemented, which involved 40 grade 11 English as a Second Language (ESL) learners of Sri Saranankara Sangaraja Maha Vidyalaya in the Kurunegala district in Sri Lanka. Quantitative data were collected using the pre-test and post-test and were analyzed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Statistics. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed through thematic analysis. The study's findings revealed the mean difference between the post-test scores of the experimental and control group was 3.75 with the standard deviation of 1.997, and the significant level was 0.000. Furthermore, results obtained in the independent sample t-test showed that the significant value generated Sig. (P value) = 0.000 < 0.05 while accepting the H1. It means there is an impact of the round table technique on paragraph writing. Moreover, findings indicated that the students in the experimental group positively perceived the round table technique as improving their writing skills in paragraph writing incorporating writing stages while creating a learner-centered classroom as a cooperative technique. This study serves ESL practitioners by adopting an effective writing technique in teaching paragraph writing.

Keywords: cooperative writing technique; experimental research; learner- centered approach; process approach; writing skills

1. Introduction

Writing is one of the productive skills in English as a Second Language, as it requires the learners' ability to construct ideas, compose, and communicate their ideas meaningfully to the reader in a written form. According to Harmer (2006), writing is a compulsory skill determined as part of the syllabus in English Language teaching. It entails gathering and arranging thoughts, writing them down, and then reshaping and revising them to convey the idea (Meyer, 2005). As Boardman (2008) pointed out, the paragraph is the basic unit of

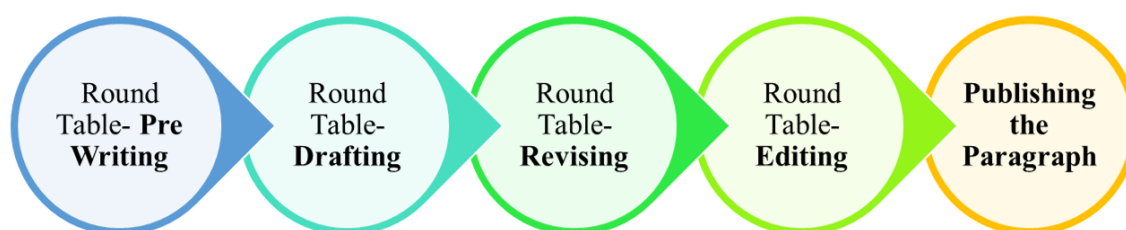
academic writing in English. Thus, learners need to learn how to write a paragraph because all other academic writing is based on the paragraph of writing a text. Moreover, Paragraph writing is one of the test types in the Ordinary Level (O/L) English paper in Sri Lanka that examines grade 11 ESL students' ability to write simple compositions on various topics (G.C.E. O/L examination, 2020). Thus, grasping the writing skills for writing a paragraph is necessary for ESL learners in grade 11.

However, according to Richard and Renandya (2002), "writing is the most difficult skill for learners to master" (p. 303). Besides, Sepianita (2010) found that learners spend a considerable amount of time writing down their ideas and organizing their thoughts on paper, as well as focusing primarily on grammar and word choice, dealing with form over meaning. Richards and Renandya (2002) stated that the student's writing difficulties resulted not only from pre-writing but also from other writing stages¹. Thus, learners' writing difficulties result from generating and organizing ideas and converting these concepts into readable texts. Similarly, Arachchi (2016) pointed out that many ESL learners of grade 11 in Sri Lanka encounter writing difficulties and problems when constructing a paragraph due to a lack of writing skills and creative thinking, vocabulary, writing mechanisms, and grammar. Thereby, ESL learners of grade 11 face difficulties when writing a paragraph due to writing problems.

Consequently, teachers should be creative in the teaching process by facilitating the writing techniques that can assist learners in generating ideas, focusing on grammar and vocabulary, planning content, organization in writing, and creating an enjoyable and motivating learning environment. Thus, Kagan (2010) emphasized that the round table technique² is one of the cooperative writing techniques which assists learners in developing their interpersonal, social, and academic skills in writing. According to Stenlev and Siemund (2011), the round table technique within the learner-centered classroom fosters positive interdependence among team members and interest in the writing due to the shared writing surface. Thus, considering the above facts, it is essential to investigate the impact of the roundtable technique in paragraph writing in grade 11 ESL learners.

Several empirical studies have proven the impact of using the round table in paragraph writing in foreign ESL/ English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Flora et al. (2020) concluded that a modified roundtable can increase students' paragraph writing skills as the round table technique enables students to use the target language and share their ideas at every step of writing, and it can be illustrated as follows.

Figure 1: The procedures of a roundtable technique based on the process approach in paragraph writing



Source: Adapted from Kagan (2009)

¹ Writing stages: "pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing and final draft" (Alodwin & Ibnian, 2014)

² Kagan (2009) stated that in a round table technique, each learner writes an idea for a multiple-ability task and passes it to the person on the right. He further mentioned that the paper is circulated to the entire group at once, and students should write a different task each time they receive a paper.

The study findings of Adelina (2017) show that the round table technique increased students' writing skills within learner centered approach. Moreover, the study's findings of Nurhasanah (2014) on "Improving Students' Ability in Writing a Narrative Text by Using Round Table Strategy at Grade viii c of SMP Negeri 11 Kota Bengkulu" demonstrated that the round table technique created a learner-centered classroom in which students actively participated in group discussions to share their opinions and check their understanding amongst themselves, improving students' narrative writing abilities.

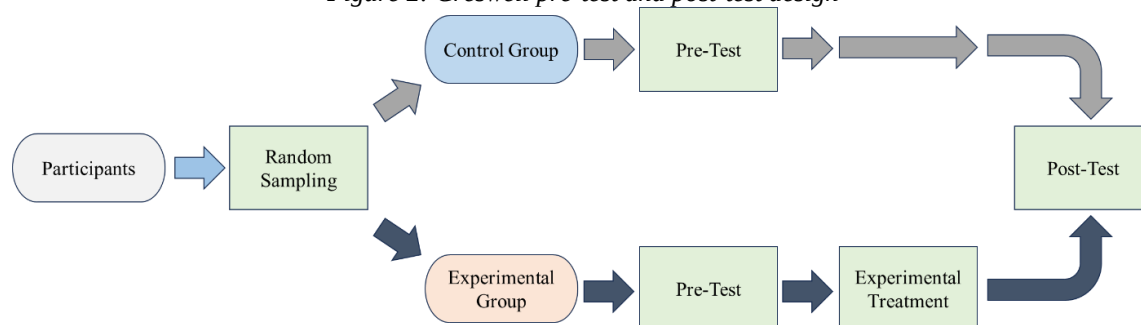
However, most studies have been conducted in foreign ESL/ EFL contexts to investigate the impact of the roundtable technique in paragraph writing, and the findings have shown that the roundtable technique improves paragraph writing, it has not been applied to the Sri Lankan context. Based on the problem above, it is essential to investigate the impact of the round table technique on grade 11 ESL learners' paragraph writing and their perceptions of applying the round table technique in paragraph writing. To conduct a systematic review, the researcher identified the following research questions to meet the objectives of the study:

1. What is the impact of the round table technique in paragraph writing on grade 11 ESL learners?
 H0: The round table technique does not impact grade 11 ESL learners' paragraph writing
 H1: The round table technique impacts grade 11 ESL learners' paragraph writing
2. What are the grade 11 learners' perceptions toward the round-table technique in paragraph writing?

2. Methods

To answer the research questions, an experimental research design³ addressed via a mixed method was used. Thus, pre-tests and post-tests were used to answer the first research question quantitatively, as illustrated below.

Figure 2: Creswell pre-test and post-test design



Source: Creswell (2012)

As shown in the Figure 2, the researcher conducted a pre-test for both the control and experimental group. Next, the researcher conducted an intervention in which the experimental group was taught paragraph writing using the round table technique, while the control group was taught paragraph writing without using the round table technique. Finally, the researcher conducted a post-test for the control and experimental group. Semi-structured interviews were conducted for the experimental group after the collection of quantitative data to answer the second research question qualitatively.

³ According to Ross and Morrison (2003), experimental research design compares control and experimental group on the dependent or outcome variable to test cause-and-effect relationships in a carefully controlled environment.

2.1 Participants / Sampling Procedure / Instruments

The participants of this study were 40 male and female (15 males and 25 female) grade 11 ESL learners of Sri Saranankara Sangaraja College in Kurunegala district. It is further supported by Halik (2021), who pointed out that most grade 11 ESL learners have writing, grammar, and vocabulary difficulties when writing a paragraph, especially in their O/L examinations. Considering the sampling procedure, the research was utilized a non-probability purposive sampling to select the homogeneous and information-rich (Patton, 2001) sample. Consequently, 40 grade 11 ESL learners were selected out of 90 grade 11 ESL learners using a proficiency test designed by the researcher. The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)⁴ benchmark was used to measure proficiency and identified their proficiency level as B1. After proficiency was measured, random sampling was utilized to divide the learners into the control and experimental group without bias (Taherdoost, 2017). As instruments, the same pre-test and post-test were used to avoid the issue of equating various pre-test and post-test formats (Chang & Mao, 1998). A semi-structured interview consisting of 8 open-ended questions was conducted

with ten randomly selected students from the experimental group as such randomization techniques ensure that each population member has an equal probability of being selected for the sample (Stockemer, 2018).

2.2 Data analysis method

Data collected via the pre-test and post-test were investigated through SPSS statics, and T-tests were used to determine whether the pre-test and post-test mean scores were significantly different from analyzing the impact of the round table technique in paragraph writing. The semi-structured interviews were analyzed thematically.

3. Results

The quantitative data for the first research question is analyzed through the pre-test and post-test results of the control and experimental group.

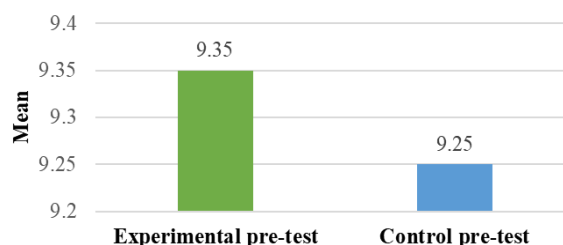
3.1 Analysis of the pre-test results of the control and experimental group

Table 1: Paired sample statistics of the pre-test marks of the control and experimental group

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Control pre-test	9.25	20	1.020	0.228
	Experimental pre-test	9.35	20	.875	0.196

Source: Primary data

Figure 3: Bar chart of mean score of the pre-test results of the control and experimental group



Source: Primary data

⁴ Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) relies on accurate judgments to map examinations (Green, 2017).

Table 1 depicts the pre-test results of two groups: control and experimental. The mean value of the control group concerning the pre-test is 9.25 with the standard deviation of 1.020, while the mean value of the experimental group concerning the pre-test is 9.35 with the standard deviation of .875. Therefore, the control and experimental group have a mean difference of 0.10. Accordingly, both groups have no considerable difference, and Table 2 and Figure 3 are further illustrated.

Table 2: Paired differences of the pre-test marks between the control and experimental group

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Con_pre_test- Exp_pre-test	-0.100	1.373	0.307	-0.742	0.542	-0.326	19	0.748

Source: Primary data

According to Table 2, the significant value of the pre-test marks of both groups is 0.748. If the $p\text{-value} < 0.05$, there is a difference between the pre-test marks of the control and experimental group. Depending on the significant value (0.748) of both groups indicates that the significant value is higher than the $p\text{-value}$. Thereby, it statistically signifies no significant difference between the marks of both groups. Thus, it may be postulated that the proficiency levels of both groups were similar before the intervention.

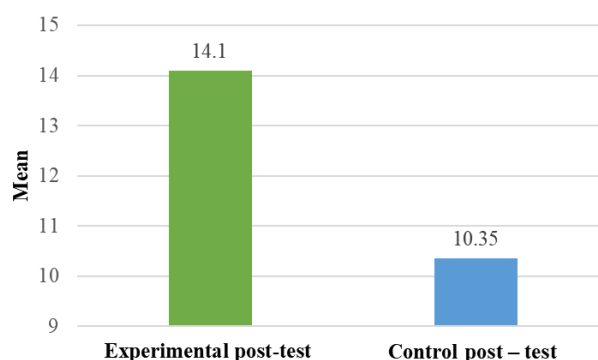
3.2 Analysis of the post-test results of the control group and experimental group

Table 3: Paired sample statistics of the pre-test marks of the control and experimental group

Pair 1		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	Control post-test	10.35	20	1.040	0.233
	Experimental post-test	14.10	20	1.651	0.369

Source: Primary data

Figure 4: Bar chart of mean score of the post-test results of the experimental group and control group



Source: Primary data

According to the Table 3, the mean value of the control test result is 10.35 with the standard deviation of 1.040, while the mean value of the experimental post-test is 14.10 with the standard deviation of 1.651. Hence, a difference of 3.75 is increased in the experimental post-test marks than the control post-test marks. Accordingly, a significant difference exists between the post-test marks of the control and experimental group. However, the marks which are increased in the post-test of the control group show a lesser increase than the post-test marks of the experimental group and Figure 4 and Table 4 are further illustrated.

Table 4: Paired differences of the post-test marks between the control and experimental group

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Con_post_test - Exp_post_test	-3.750	1.997	0.446	-4.684	-2.816	-8.399	19	0.000

Source: Primary data

According to Table 4, there is a significant increase in the experimental group after implementing the round table technique in paragraph writing as the significant value of the post-test marks of both groups is 0.000. If the $p\text{-value} < 0.05$, there is a difference between the post-test marks of the control and experimental group. Depending on the significant value (0.000) of both groups indicates that the significant value is lower than the $p\text{-value}$. Thereby, it statistically depicts a significant difference between the marks of both groups. Thus, it may be postulated that implementing the round table technique in paragraph writing for the experimental group has made a difference. Since there is a significant difference in post-test results between the control group and the experimental group, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, and H_1 is therefore accepted. Therefore, the roundtable technique has a positive impact on paragraph writing.

Qualitative data were analyzed thematically, and two themes were identified by the researcher to answer the second research question.

Table 5: Response analysis of learners' perceptions after implementing the round table technique

Main theme	Sub-theme	Code
01) Developing writing when writing a paragraph	01.1) Awareness of grammar, vocabulary, content, organization, and mechanism of writing.	“Actually, this technique was helpful to know about new grammar points and recall grammar points.” (Int. 2) “Through this technique, we were able to discuss the correct ways of using capitals and punctuation marks in the paragraph” (Int. 4) “This technique helped structure our paragraph correctly by discussing with others.” (Int.6)
	01.2) Incorporated with all four stages of writing: Pre-writing, drafting, editing, and revising.	“We could learn our mistakes while editing the passage ourselves, and it was a good experience” (Int.8) “We could learn grammar and correct vocabulary because when we rechecked the paragraph, we tended to discuss each sentence and try to check whether they were correct or wrong” (Int. 6)
02) Cooperative writing technique	02.1) Improving social skills	“I like this technique because, in this technique, we could work together and share many ideas related to the topic.” (Int. 3) “Once, one of our members was in an upset mood in writing the paragraph, but all of our team members helped him to write. That was a pleasure for me.” (Int. 1)
	02.2) Creating a learner centered classroom	“I like this technique because we altogether discussed ideas, wrote words, checked grammar ourselves just like we were the teachers.” (Int. 7) “I would be able to learn from my friends, especially when checking grammar mistakes ourselves.” (Int. 5)

Source: Primary data

According to the Table 5, the positive responses of the interviewees validate that there is a positive impact of the round table technique in paragraph writing as it develops writing skills by being a cooperative writing technique.

4. Discussion

Results of the quantitative analysis revealed that the participants who received experimental treatments made significant progress on their post-tests compared to the participants in the control group. Due to this reason, the author's alternative hypothesis (H1) was accepted. It reveals a positive impact of the roundtable technique in the improvement of paragraph writing of the learners. According to previous literature cited in this study, using the round table technique to write paragraphs has been proven to be a positive impactful technique for ESL learners (Khurayyah, 2019; Rosmiyati & Novianti, 2022; Sepianita, 2010). Rosmiyati and Novianti (2022) conducted a similar study to investigate the impact of the round table technique on improving ESL learners' writing skills in narrative text. The result of the study proved the positive impact of applying the roundtable technique in paragraph writing through the increment of the students' scoring achievement. Similarly, this study indicated that incorporating the round table technique into paragraph writing has a positive impact.

In addition, participants' perceptions towards applying the round table technique in paragraph writing were positive. Furthermore, the qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interviews revealed that learners in the experimental group considered applying the roundtable technique to paragraph writing helped to develop their writing by developing writing components (grammar, vocabulary, organization, content, and mechanism) while incorporating all four stages of writing. This conforms with the previous literature (Fauziah et al., 2020; Fitri et al., 2017; Flora et al., 2020).

According to Flora et al. (2020), using the round table technique enabled learners to write descriptive text well. During the pre-writing activities, the learners became accustomed to brainstorming and listing the words or phrases related to the discussed topic. Consequently, this pre-writing and drafting stage allows learners to explore novel vocabulary and elaborate their ideas with appropriate supporting data in the content. Furthermore, the revising and editing stages enabled learners to focus more on grammar, spelling, punctuation, and paragraph order. Similarly, in this study, the round table technique allows the learners to share and gather their ideas in every step of writing. Consequently, the writing components (vocabulary, grammar, content, mechanism, and organization) gradually improved; Kagan (2009) stated that the round table technique provides advantages for developing content and vocabulary and correcting grammatical and spelling errors.

Another finding found through thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews was that the round table technique was a cooperative technique in paragraph writing to improve learners' social skills and create a learner-centered classroom. This conforms with the previous literature (Nurhasanah, 2014; Parmawati et al., 2021; Primawati, 2019). The study by Primawati (2019) showed students' positive responses after implementing the round table technique, as learners preferred to work with their peers to write a paragraph because, in their group, they could help each other in writing well and were able to know to communicate their ideas clearly and correctly and share opinions about a particular topic and how to accept or reject the opinions. Similarly, the present study also revealed that the round table technique encouraged learners to collaborate in problem-solving by forming a group and involving each student in trying to put their ideas into writing on their own. Thus, this technique requires students to communicate, cooperate, and share with their peers to complete their paragraphs. Furthermore, it is in line with Rusinovci (2015), who states that the role of the roundtable technique is to provide structured guidance for students to write cooperatively in a learner-centered classroom.

The learning theories and paradigms reviewed in this study on the cooperative and learner-centered approaches underpin the study results. As stated in the theoretical framework, Kagan (2009) states that the round table stimulates the learners to work in smaller groups by developing team spirit and incorporating writing within a learner-centered approach. Similarly, in the present study, the round table technique creates a systematic structure for the learners to collaborate in each writing stage. According to Cahyadi et al. (2019), the roundtable technique is a methodical guide for students to write collaboratively in a group. Consequently, the roundtable technique allows students to learn and help one other achieve mutual achievement by working together in a roundtable group that begins with prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. As a result, students can improve their writing components. Furthermore, Kagan (2009) mentioned that the round table technique develops social skills within a learner during writing. This is because this technique encourages students to cooperate in solving a problem by forming a group and involves each student in attempting to put their ideas into writing and asking questions from each other. As a result, learners can work in a learner-centered classroom where they can acquire writing skills independently and logically. Thus, this proves the research findings that the roundtable technique in paragraph writing facilitates cooperative learning while creating a student-centered classroom for the learners.

5. Conclusion

The result of the finding related to the first research question is statistically proven that using the round table technique in paragraph writing has a significant positive impact on learners' paragraph writing. Considering the second research question, the experimental group of students positively perceived the round table in paragraph writing. According to their responses, the researcher discovered two main themes: the round table technique develops writing skills in paragraph writing and creates a cooperative learning environment to write a paragraph. Considering the round table technique in developing paragraph writing, incorporating the round table technique with all stages of writing: Pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing allowed learners to write the paragraph in developing their writing components: grammar, vocabulary, organization, content, and mechanism of writing. Furthermore, as a cooperative writing technique, the round table technique improves the learners' social skills to work co-operatively in writing a paragraph, creating a learner-centered classroom. The findings above imply that the teacher can use the round table technique to teach paragraph writing. Furthermore, using the round table technique assists the learners in their learning process to write a paragraph by developing their writing skills related to grammar, vocabulary, organization, content, and writing mechanisms. It incorporates all four writing stages, which begin with students actively generating ideas for what to write about, and then sharing those ideas with friends before writing in their language about the topic provided by the teacher. Next, students identified the paragraph structure and learned the grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation errors to write a paragraph. Moreover, as a cooperative writing technique, the students can develop their social skills while being assisted in writing paragraphs by participating in steps like drafting, editing, and revising in the learner-centered classroom.

It is recommended to carry out future research for more extended treatment periods to determine whether the longer exposure to the round table technique would impact the paragraph writing of all students of all proficiency levels. Furthermore, it is essential to use observation methods to observe how the students engage in paragraph writing while implementing the round table technique. Additionally, extensive research and pilot studies can be conducted in rural/ urban districts or provincial levels to evaluate and identify the impact and benefits of using the round table technique for teaching and learning other types of

paragraph writing texts, essay writing, and story writing. Besides, it is recommended to incorporate the round table technique to teach other language skills: reading, listening, and speaking.

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