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# Teams games tournament in primary EFL classrooms: Explanatory writing and observed engagement

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**Abstract**
Social interdependence theory suggests that shared goals and individual accountability can support participation and writing development. However, evidence remains limited on how Teams Games Tournament (TGT) relates to individual explanatory writing and classroom engagement among primary learners of English as a foreign language. This study compared writing performance and observed engagement under TGT and conventional instruction in an Indonesian primary school. A quantitative quasi-experimental design involved 58 sixth-grade students in two intact classes: 28 received TGT, and 30 received conventional instruction across three lessons during regular classroom instruction. Data comprised individual writing pretests and posttests, observations using an eleven-indicator checklist, and a supplementary questionnaire administered only to the TGT class. Data were examined using descriptive statistics and a posttest comparison. Mean writing scores increased from 62.35 to 87.17 in TGT and from 63.93 to 66.13 in the comparison class, yielding a descriptive difference in mean changes of 22.62 points. Discussion, questioning, and classroom responses were more widely observed in TGT, whereas routine task completion showed smaller differences. Most TGT students reported positive experiences, although perceived writing benefits and emotional comfort were uneven. With one class per condition and no delayed assessment, these patterns cannot establish causal effectiveness or lasting gains. The findings suggest connecting team preparation and academic games with individual composing and feedback, while monitoring participation and emotional comfort separately. Such alignment may help teachers use cooperative activities to support the demands of explanatory writing without treating visible participation as sufficient evidence of individual learning.

**Keywords:** Teams games tournament, explanatory writing, classroom engagement, cooperative learning, primary EFL learners

## Introduction

Learning to write in English requires primary school students to develop ideas while learning how to express them in another language. They need to decide what to include, organize information, and choose words and sentence structures that convey their meaning. Writing instruction therefore needs to support both composing and language development. Aitken *et al.* (2026) [1] found that writing interventions improved writing outcomes among school-aged English language learners in the United States. Their findings establish the value of instructional support, while leaving teachers in foreign language settings to consider how such support can be adapted to their classrooms.

These demands become particularly clear when students write explanatory texts. An explanation must show how a process unfolds or why a phenomenon occurs. Students need to connect relevant information through a logical sequence and make relationships between events clear. Zohbie and Bhowmik (2024) [23] argue that genre-based instruction can help elementary English learners understand how text organization and language choices serve a communicative purpose. For explanatory writing, this perspective suggests that teaching should connect the structure of an explanation with the language needed to express processes and causes. Students also need opportunities to work through these choices before writing independently.

Cooperative learning offers a way to organize this preparation. In reviewing its theoretical foundations, Yang (2023) [21] identifies shared goals, supportive interaction, and individual accountability as central features of productive group work. Teams Games Tournament (TGT) combines team preparation with academic games and tournament activities (Haryono & Tukiyo, 2022) [8]. Applied to writing, this arrangement may give students opportunities to discuss content and check their understanding of text features before composing their own texts. The proposed benefit depends on connecting the team activities to the writing task, so that answering game questions helps students prepare to write.

Studies of collaborative writing help explain how peer interaction may support this preparation. Lázaro-Ibarrola and Hidalgo (2024) [11] found that primary EFL learners writing in pairs produced more accurate texts than individual writers, without a statistically significant difference in holistic writing scores. Pair discussions focused largely on generating ideas and resolving language problems. Research has also examined subsequent individual performance. Villarreal and Martínez-Sánchez (2024) [18] reported benefits for accuracy in young learners' individual texts after collaborative writing, while fluency declined and overall rubric scores changed little. These findings suggest that the benefits of collaboration can differ across aspects of writing. These studies concern joint text production, which differs from the team preparation followed by individual composing examined here.

The games and competition in TGT provide a further reason to examine how students respond to the instruction. Sailer and Homner (2020) [16] found positive average effects of gamification on cognitive, motivational, and behavioral

outcomes, although motivational and behavioral effects were less stable in studies with stronger methods. Slamet and Meng (2025) [17] likewise reported positive cognitive and attitudinal outcomes when gamification was integrated into collaborative learning. These findings support investigating the combination of cooperation and game elements. Because the syntheses cover varied subjects and educational levels, however, they provide a broad rationale rather than direct evidence about primary students' explanatory writing.

Evidence from Indonesia brings this discussion closer to English writing classrooms. Haryono and Tukiyo (2022) [8] reported a positive association between a mobile learning-based TGT model and junior secondary students' recount writing ability. Their study provides relevant evidence for connecting TGT with writing, but recounts and explanations place different demands on learners. A recount presents past events, whereas an explanation makes a process or causal relationship understandable. Differences in learner age and the use of mobile learning also limit how directly those findings apply to primary classrooms. The instructional value of TGT therefore needs to be considered in relation to the learners, genre, and classroom activities involved.

Writing performance is one part of this classroom picture. Engagement can show how students participate in the learning opportunities that precede individual writing. Hiver *et al*. (2024) [9] describe language learning engagement as a multidimensional, context-dependent construct and identify substantial variation in its definitions and measurement. Discussion, questioning, task completion, and resource use can provide observable evidence of participation during writing lessons. Such observations can complement writing scores by showing which activities involve students and how participation varies across lessons. They offer a partial view of engagement, however, and need to be interpreted separately from students' writing performance.

Taken together, the literature leaves a specific issue for classroom investigation: how individual explanatory writing develops during TGT instruction, alongside the participation observed in those lessons. Studies of collaborative writing address joint text production and, in some cases, later individual accuracy, while the Indonesian TGT study concerns mobile learning and secondary-level recount writing (Haryono & Tukiyo, 2022 [8]; Lázaro-Ibarrola & Hidalgo, 2024 [11]; Villarreal & Martínez-Sánchez, 2024) [18]. The distinction matters because successful team activity and accurate collaborative texts do not establish improvement in an individual's complete explanation. A comparison focused on individual writing and observed participation can clarify what a brief TGT sequence offers in a primary EFL classroom.

This study, therefore, compares English explanatory writing performance and observed classroom engagement in two sixth-grade classes at a public primary school in one district in Indonesia. Fifty-eight students received either TGT instruction or conventional instruction over three lessons. Individual pre-test and post-test scores describe changes in writing performance, while classroom observations document participation during instruction. The study aims to provide evidence about how team preparation and academic games accompany individual writing in this setting. Two research questions guide the investigation: (1) How do pre-test-to-post-test changes in explanatory writing scores compare between students receiving TGT instruction and those receiving conventional instruction? (2) What similarities and differences in observed classroom engagement are evident between the two classes across the three lessons?

## Research Method

### a. Research design

The study used a quantitative quasi-experimental design involving two intact classes. A pre-test & post-test comparison examined English explanatory writing under Teams Games Tournament (TGT) and conventional instruction. This design was relevant to the first research question because writing was assessed before and after instruction in both classes. Classroom observations addressed the second research question by documenting engagement during the three instructional meetings. Engagement was not assessed through a separate pre-test and post-test. The observation component, therefore, provided a descriptive comparison during instruction rather than a measure of change from a common baseline. Because one existing class received each condition, the study could not fully distinguish instructional differences from class characteristics.

### b. Setting and participants

The research was conducted in a school in one district in Indonesia. The reported accessible population comprised 58 sixth-grade students in two existing classes. All were included through total population sampling: Class VI A formed the TGT group with 28 students, and Class VI B formed the comparison group with 30 students. Students were not individually randomised. The classes were described as having similar prior academic performance, although the referenced supporting appendix was unavailable in the study documentation. The procedure for deciding which class received TGT is also unspecified. One regular school teacher taught both classes, while the researcher designed the instructional activities and observed their implementation.

### c. Instruments and available quality evidence

Writing performance was assessed through explanatory writing tasks administered as a pre-test and post-test. The analytic rubric covered content, organisation, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics, with maximum scores of 30, 20, 20, 20, and 10, respectively, giving a maximum total of 100. Its descriptors addressed topic relevance and development, logical text organisation, word choice, sentence construction, and writing conventions. Detailed performance descriptors were available, but the writing assessor, number of assessors, scoring moderation procedure, and reliability estimates were not documented. The available records did not specify task prompts, required text length, assessment duration, or the equivalence of the pre-test and post-test tasks.

Engagement was recorded using an observation checklist with 11 indicators intended to represent behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement. The results checklist included participation in discussion, timely task completion, asking questions, homework completion, responding during lessons, appearing alert, showing no visible anxiety, using notes or learning aids, demonstrating understanding, independent problem solving, and asking analytical questions. Indicators were recorded using binary presence or

absence judgements. The observer counted students displaying each behaviour and expressed the count as a percentage of the class. These were class-level summaries of observed behaviours; individual engagement scale scores were not reported.

A supplementary questionnaire contained 15 yes/no statements about the TGT students' participation, perceived writing development, and emotional responses. Responses were summarised by item as counts and percentages. The questionnaire provided perceptions of the learning experience rather than an independent assessment of writing performance. Available quality-related documentation comprised the writing rubric, observation and questionnaire blueprints, and reported observer training. No pilot results, expert validation records, questionnaire reliability coefficients, or inter-observer agreement estimates were supplied. These omissions limit what can be claimed about measurement quality.

### d. Instructional and data collection procedures

Before classroom implementation, the researcher discussed the lesson sequence and the two instructional conditions with the teacher. Preparation covered group formation, question cards, worksheets, game and tournament procedures, and scoring. The researcher and teacher prepared instructional materials and assessment instruments together. At least two rehearsal sessions were reported to familiarise the teacher with the TGT sequence. During implementation, the teacher delivered instruction, and the researcher attended as an observer.

The intervention comprised three meetings. The writing pre-test preceded the first meeting, and the post-test followed the third. In the TGT class, students worked in heterogeneous teams described in the instructional scenario as containing four or five members. The teacher introduced explanatory texts, including their purpose, structure, and examples. Teams discussed questions about the material, and representatives answered questions for points. Correct answers contributed to team scores, with the highest-scoring team identified as the winner. Students also wrote explanatory texts individually. The scenario included reading selected texts aloud, peer responses, teacher clarification, and writing homework.

The comparison class studied explanatory texts through teacher explanation, examples, individual writing, and teacher guidance. Selected students read their work, and the teacher provided feedback and further discussion. Homework also involved explanatory writing. Thus, the comparison condition included writing practice and feedback. The researcher observed engagement in both classes across all three meetings. The supplementary questionnaire concerned the TGT group's experiences; its exact administration time and delivery procedure were not specified.

### e. Data analysis

For the first research question, writing scores were summarised using sample sizes, means, standard deviations, and minimum and maximum values. Changes in class means were described by comparing pre-test and post-test summaries. The reported inferential analysis was an independent-samples t-test comparing post-test scores between classes. The reported analyses included Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk normality tests and Levene's test, followed by equal-variance and unequal-variance t-test outputs. Statistical decisions used a significance level of .05. No inferential test of between-class differences in individual change scores or analysis adjusting for pre-test scores was documented. The post-test, therefore, did not directly test a difference in gains.

For the second research question, observed frequencies and percentages were presented for each indicator in each meeting, followed by average percentages across the three meetings. This supported descriptive comparisons between classes and across lessons. An independent-samples t-test for engagement was also reported, but its underlying observations and their independence were not adequately documented. Its interpretation consequently remains unresolved. Questionnaire responses were analysed descriptively as item-level frequencies and percentages. No analysis linking individual engagement to writing gains or testing mediation was reported.

## Results and Discussions

### a. Larger Writing Gains in the TGT Class

The TGT class showed a larger increase in explanatory writing scores over the three lessons than the comparison class (Table 1). Its mean score increased by 24.82 points, compared with 2.20 points in the conventional class. The difference between these mean changes was 22.62 points. Although the TGT class began 1.58 points below the comparison class, its post-test mean was 21.04 points higher. These descriptive results indicate a greater short-term improvement in the TGT class's assessed writing performance.

**Table 1:** Explanatory Writing Scores Before and After Treatment.

| Class | *n* | Pre-test *M* (*SD*) | Post-test *M* (*SD*) | Mean change |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| TGT | 28 | 62.35 (19.28) | 87.17 (9.69) | +24.82 |
| Conventional | 30 | 63.93 (19.46) | 66.13 (16.89) | +2.20 |

The reported Welch test indicated a difference between the post-test means, $t(46.82) = 5.864$, $p < .001$. Calculated from the reported sample sizes and rounded post-test means and standard deviations, Hedges' g was approximately 1.49. This standardised difference describes the observed post-test contrast; it does not estimate the difference in writing gains. No inferential analysis of individual change scores or adjustment for pre-test performance was reported. Moreover, the student-level test did not account for shared classroom membership. With one intact class in each condition, class characteristics and instructional condition cannot be separated, so the reported p-value does not provide a secure basis for attributing the contrast to TGT.

A plausible instructional explanation concerns how the TGT sequence connected shared preparation with individual composing. Students first encountered explanatory text features, discussed questions in teams, and then wrote their own texts. This sequence gave them opportunities to consider the content and organisation of an explanation before composing independently. Zohbie and Bhowmik (2024) [23] argue that genre-based instruction can support elementary English learners by connecting language choices with text purpose and organisation. This perspective helps interpret the instructional sequence, although the study did not evaluate genre-based pedagogy as a separate treatment. More broadly, Aitken *et al.* (2026) [1] found benefits from writing instruction among English language learners in US

schools. That synthesis supports the value of writing support but provides no direct benchmark for the size of the present classroom contrast. Wiley Online Library

Research with young EFL learners also helps clarify what peer preparation might offer. Lázaro-Ibarrola and Hidalgo (2024) [11] found that pairs produced more accurate texts than individual writers and devoted much of their discussion to generating ideas and resolving language problems. However, their holistic writing scores did not differ significantly. Villarreal and Martínez-Sánchez (2024) [18] examined subsequent individual texts and reported benefits for accuracy, while fluency declined and overall rubric scores changed little. Together, these findings suggest that collaboration can support particular aspects of writing without producing uniform improvements across measures. In the present study, the assessed outcome was an individual explanatory text after team activities. Only total writing scores were available, so the results cannot establish which writing components changed or whether ideas and language discussed in teams appeared in students' later texts. doi.org

The direction of the findings also agrees with Haryono and Tukiyo's (2022) [8] reported positive association between mobile learning-based TGT and recount writing among Indonesian junior secondary students. Differences in age, genre, delivery format, and analysis limit direct comparison. In the present study, the conventional class also received explanations, examples, individual writing practice, teacher guidance, and feedback. The observed advantage therefore concerns the TGT sequence relative to another form of supported writing instruction. Because team preparation, games, peer responses, and competition were delivered together, the results cannot identify the contribution of any single element. A practical implication is to link team questions closely to the content and organisation required in students' individual texts, while retaining individual writing as the basis for assessing performance. English Review: Journal of English Education

The spread of scores changed alongside the class means. The TGT standard deviation decreased from 19.28 to 9.69, whereas the comparison class standard deviation decreased from 19.46 to 16.89. TGT post-test scores were thus more concentrated, but this pattern does not identify which students improved most. Individual trajectories would be needed to determine whether initially weaker writers gained more, and score distributions would be needed to assess a possible ceiling effect on the 100-point scale. Unverified task equivalence and undocumented scoring reliability also leave uncertainty about how much of the observed change reflects writing development. With only an immediate post-test after three lessons, the findings describe short-term performance and provide no evidence about retention.

### b. Classroom interaction showed clearer differences than routine task completion

The observations showed a clearer contrast between classes in classroom interaction than in routine task completion (**Table 2**). Discussion participation and classroom responses increased across the three lessons in both classes, with higher proportions recorded in TGT. By the third lesson, 92.9% of TGT students participated in discussion, compared with 63.3% in the conventional class. The corresponding proportions were 89.3% and 53.3% for classroom responses, and 78.6% and 50.0% for asking when material was unclear. These figures describe how widely each behaviour was observed within the two classes, without indicating the frequency or quality of each student's contribution.

**Table 2:** Students displaying each observed behaviour across three lessons

| No | Observed indicator | TGT (*n* = 28) M1 / M2 / M3 | Conventional (*n* = 30) M1 / M2 / M3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Participating in discussion | 21 / 24 / 26 | 15 / 17 / 19 |
| 2. | Completing tasks on time | 20 / 22 / 23 | 22 / 23 / 24 |
| 3. | Asking when material was unclear | 18 / 20 / 22 | 12 / 14 / 15 |
| 4. | Completing homework | 20 / 22 / 23 | 20 / 21 / 22 |
| 5. | Giving classroom responses | 21 / 23 / 25 | 13 / 15 / 16 |
| 6. | Not appearing sleepy | 23 / 25 / 26 | 14 / 16 / 17 |
| 7. | Showing no visible task or test anxiety | 20 / 19 / 18 | 23 / 22 / 22 |
| 8. | Using notes or learning aids | 12 / 17 / 19 | 11 / 13 / 14 |
| 9. | Showing deeper understanding | 13 / 18 / 20 | 10 / 11 / 13 |
| 10. | Solving problems independently | 18 / 21 / 22 | 15 / 17 / 18 |
| 11. | Asking analytical why or how questions | 7 / 16 / 18 | 8 / 10 / 11 |

**Note:** M1 - M3 = instructional meetings 1 - 3.

The instructional arrangement offers a plausible explanation for this pattern. Team discussion and representatives' answers created explicit opportunities to contribute before individual writing. Yang's (2023) [21] review of cooperative learning identifies positive interdependence and individual accountability as central principles: shared goals can give learners a reason to support their peers while remaining responsible for their own learning. For primary EFL classrooms, Kos (2025) [10] further argues that productive collaboration requires learners to engage with others' ideas, offer help, and practise strategies for working together. However, the checklist did not record the quality of peer support or adjust participation for the number and duration of opportunities. Larger observed shares may therefore reflect both students' responses to TGT activities and the opportunities built into them (Rodríguez-Triviño *et al.*, 2022; Yang, 2023) [15, 21].

Routine task completion showed a smaller contrast. In the third lesson, 23 of 28 TGT students (82.1%) and 24 of 30 comparison students (80.0%) completed tasks on time, a difference of 2.1 percentage points. Homework completion increased in both classes, reaching 82.1% in TGT and 73.3% under conventional instruction. Task completion was therefore common in both classes despite differences in classroom interaction. These descriptive contrasts have not been tested for statistical differences or equivalence.

The indicator labelled "not appearing sleepy" also showed a large contrast. Its frequency increased from 23 to 26 students in TGT and from 14 to 17 in the comparison class, reaching 92.9% and 56.7%, respectively. Research on

gamification offers a broad context for interpreting this observation. Sailer and Homner (2020) [16] found positive average effects on cognitive, motivational, and behavioural outcomes, although motivational and behavioural effects were less stable in studies with stronger methods. Slamet and Meng (2025) [17] also reported positive cognitive and attitudinal outcomes when gamification was integrated into collaborative learning. These syntheses support examining game elements alongside cooperation, but neither validates an observer's judgement of sleepiness as a measure of interest or sustained attention. The present indicator is best interpreted as a limited observation of visible wakefulness (Puspitasari & Arifin, 2023; Sailer & Homner, 2020) [16].

This distinction between observable behaviour and engagement is especially important with young learners. In Vietnamese public primary schools, Dao *et al*. (2026) [5] found that teachers' assessments of engagement emphasised active participation and emotional displays. Hiver *et al*. (2024) [9] likewise identified substantial variation in how engagement was defined and measured in language research. These studies highlight the need to specify what each indicator can capture. In the present checklist, visible participation offers partial evidence of engagement, while interest, understanding, and emotional comfort require further evidence. Indeed, the proportion showing no visible task or test anxiety was lower in TGT across all three lessons. The overall profile should therefore be interpreted as differentiated participation rather than a uniformly favourable engagement pattern (Dao *et al*., 2024; Yuan & Dao, 2026) [5, 9].

The previously reported overall engagement test, $t(20) = 2.952$, $p = .008$, requires separate caution. Its degrees of freedom and unit of analysis were not reconciled with the class sizes of 28 and 30, and the independence of the observations used in the test was not established. It is therefore retained as an unresolved result rather than evidence of statistically higher individual engagement. Indicator-level descriptions therefore provide the more defensible answer to the second research question. With no pre-intervention engagement assessment and only one class per condition, the observations describe participation during the three lessons and cannot establish a causal improvement in engagement.

### c. Cognitive indicators increased unevenly during the TGT lessons

The indicators classified as cognitive engagement showed an uneven pattern across the three lessons (**Table 2**). In TGT, the number using notes or learning aids rose from 12 to 19. Counts for "showing deeper understanding" increased from 13 to 20, and independent problem solving from 18 to 22. The corresponding comparison counts increased from 11 to 14, 10 to 13, and 15 to 18. Analytical questioning rose from 7 to 18 students in TGT (25.0% to 64.3%), compared with 8 to 11 in the conventional class (26.7% to 36.7%). By the third lesson, analytical questioning remained less widespread than discussion participation in TGT, which involved 26 students. These frequencies describe the reach of the recorded behaviours, without establishing their cognitive depth.

The distinction matters because visible activity provides only partial access to students' thinking. Hiver *et al*. (2024) [9] emphasise the need for clear definitions and operationalisation of engagement in language research. Dao *et al*. (2026) [5] similarly show that primary teachers' assessments often emphasise visible participation and emotional displays, leaving other aspects less fully represented. Here, the checklist recorded whether a behaviour was noticed, rather than its duration, elaboration, or relevance to a student's text. Using notes could involve copying or purposeful consultation, while a why or how question could vary greatly in complexity. Likewise, "showing deeper understanding" was an observer judgement whose supporting criteria were not sufficiently documented. The checklist therefore identifies possible opportunities for cognitive engagement rather than a comprehensive measure of it (Hiver *et al*., 2024 [9]; Xu *et al*., 2025).

Studies analysing peer talk provide a more detailed account of these opportunities. Lázaro-Ibarrola and Hidalgo (2024) [11] found that young EFL pairs devoted much of their discussion to generating ideas and resolving language problems. Among adolescent EFL pairs, Bllaca and Villarreal (2025) [3] linked collaborative interaction patterns with the successful resolution of language-related episodes and the quality of jointly written texts. These studies examine the substance of interaction, whereas the present observations counted behaviours during team preparation for individual writing. Without recordings or matched student records, it is unknown whether students who asked more questions also made larger writing gains. Several indicators could involve the same learner, and the learners displaying a behaviour could change across lessons. The class-level co-occurrence of questioning and higher writing scores consequently does not establish that cognitive engagement mediated writing improvement (Astuti *et al*., 2022 [2]; Li, 2023).

### d. Positive experiences coexisted with uneven comfort and perceived writing development

The questionnaire suggested favourable experiences of TGT among many students. Twenty-six of 28 respondents (92.9%) endorsed motivation to join the games, while 25 (89.3%) reported greater enthusiasm. Twenty-five (89.3%) also reported feeling more comfortable learning in groups than alone, and 24 (85.7%) reported enjoying TGT more than their usual method. These item-level responses indicate that the format appealed to many learners. Because the questionnaire was administered only to the TGT class, however, they describe that class's perceptions and cannot establish higher motivation or enjoyment than in the comparison class.

The observations add a less uniformly favourable picture of emotional comfort. The proportion showing no visible task or test anxiety decreased from 71.4% to 64.3% in TGT, compared with 76.7% to 73.3% in the conventional class. Botes *et al*. (2022) [4] found a moderate negative association between foreign language enjoyment and anxiety across studies, indicating that the two constructs are related but not interchangeable. In the present study, favourable questionnaire responses and less favourable anxiety indicators occurred at class level; their overlap within individual students was not examined. Public responses and competition may have created pressure for some learners, but their sources were not investigated. An observer's judgement also cannot establish anxiety intensity, and observations beginning during instruction do not show that TGT caused a change in anxiety (Efendi *et al*., 2025; Fauzi & Masrupah, 2024) [6, 7].

Responses to the competition and task-burden items further qualify the positive account. Sixteen students (57.1%) endorsed feeling challenged to compete healthily, while 12 did not. A separate item asked whether students did not feel burdened by TGT tasks: 20 (71.4%) endorsed it, and eight did not. These statements concern different experiences, and the respondents in each category cannot be assumed to be the same. In particular, non-endorsement of the competition item does not identify students who felt burdened, while non-endorsement of the task-burden item does not establish the source or severity of discomfort. The responses support examining how students experience competition rather than treating enthusiasm as evidence of universal acceptance.

Perceived writing benefits were endorsed less often than the appeal of the learning format. Nineteen students (67.9%) reported easier idea development, 18 (64.3%) better understanding of text structure, and 17 (60.7%) improved sentence construction; 21 (75.0%) reported overall writing improvement. These are item-level perceptions, not estimates of gains in assessed writing components. Li and Zhang's (2021) [12] meta-analysis found a moderate association between language self-assessment and performance, with the relationship varying according to assessment criteria and instruments. This supports examining the correspondence directly rather than assuming it (Norfadila B. *et al*., 2025; Wijaya *et al*., 2025) [14, 19]. Here, responses were not linked to individual writing changes, and the yes/no items asked about perceived improvement rather than proficiency. Neither the lower endorsement of sentence improvement nor a numerical comparison of the 75.0% endorsement rate with the post-test mean of 87.17 can establish a discrepancy between perceived and assessed learning.

**e. Using the combined evidence to inform primary English writing instruction**

Taken together, the writing assessments, observations, and questionnaire describe complementary aspects of the TGT lessons. The TGT class showed a larger descriptive increase in writing scores and wider observed participation in discussion, questioning, and classroom responses. Routine task completion showed smaller contrasts. Many TGT students welcomed the format, although reports of specific writing benefits were less widespread and the comfort indicators were less favourable. These findings show that writing performance, visible participation, and perceptions need to be considered separately when evaluating the classroom experience. Their co-occurrence provides a contextual account of the lessons, without demonstrating that the same students benefited across all measures or that engagement explained their writing gains.

For teaching explanatory writing, the findings suggest considering a sequence that links team preparation to individual composing and feedback. Zohbie and Bhowmik (2024) [23] argue for connecting text purpose, organisation, and language choices in elementary writing instruction, while Kos (2025) [10] highlights the need to teach young learners how to support one another. Applied to TGT, game questions could help students explain a process, justify the order of information, or discuss language choices needed in their own texts. Teachers could also model clarification and explanation during team talk, retain individual drafts for assessment, and provide ways to contribute without relying solely on public competition. These are pedagogical implications informed by the literature and classroom pattern; their separate effects were not tested in this study (Zohbie & Bhowmik, 2024) [23].

The study's contribution is a classroom account of short-term writing performance and differentiated participation during a brief TGT sequence. One intact class per condition prevents the instructional comparison from being separated from class characteristics. The combined activities also prevent attributing the observed pattern specifically to tournament competition. Unverified prompt equivalence and undocumented scoring reliability limit interpretation of writing changes, and no delayed assessment or assessment of another genre was reported. Retention and transfer therefore remain unknown. Future research should include multiple classes per condition and link individual writing records with observations, recorded team interaction, and measures of emotional comfort before and during instruction. This would allow stronger tests of whether particular forms of peer support accompany writing development and whether any benefits persist.

## Conclusion

This study examined short-term changes in English explanatory writing and classroom engagement among sixth-grade students receiving TGT or conventional instruction. The TGT class showed a larger descriptive increase in writing scores and higher post-test performance. Discussion, questioning, classroom responses, and several cognitive indicators were also generally more prominent in that class. However, engagement did not follow a uniformly favourable pattern: differences in routine task completion were smaller, and the indicator of no visible anxiety was lower in the TGT class. Positive questionnaire responses complemented these observations but represented students' perceptions rather than independent evidence of writing improvement.

The study contributes context-specific evidence about writing development alongside differentiated engagement during a brief sequence combining team preparation, academic games, individual composing, and feedback. Its contribution lies in documenting these outcomes together while keeping measured performance, observed behaviour, and learner perceptions distinct. The findings support considering the combined instructional sequence as an option for primary English writing classrooms. They do not establish that competition caused the writing gains or that engagement mediated improvement. One intact class per condition, three lessons, uncertainty about measurement quality, and the lack of analysis linking individual engagement with writing gains limit causal interpretation and generalisation. Durability and transfer beyond explanatory writing also remain unestablished.

For primary English teachers in comparable settings, the main implication is to connect team activities closely to the demands of individual writing. Academic questions and discussion should prepare students to compose, while sufficient time remains available for individual practice and feedback. Teachers should monitor the quality of participation and students' comfort separately, since visible activity and enjoyment do not necessarily indicate deeper learning or reduced anxiety. These implications are most applicable where teachers can prepare suitable materials and attend to both group interaction and individual work. Further research across additional classes and longer

instructional periods should use matched individual writing records, clearer evidence of assessment reliability, and delayed assessment. Examining interaction quality and emotional comfort alongside performance would help determine when the observed pattern is sustained.

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