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Learning Journal Strategy to enhance students' writing ability

Shaumiwaty

Tadris Bahasa Inggris, Fakultas Tarbiyah, IAIN Takengon, Jalan Yos Sudarso/A. Dimot No. 10, Aceh, Indonesia

Corresponding author: Shaumiwaty26@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to find out the students' writing ability by using learning journal strategy. To do that, the experimental design with one group pretest and posttest design was used. The population in this research was 218 students of eight grade (VIII) of Secondary students on MTsN Takengon I. As the research sample, it was chosen two classes, i.e. VIII¹ as the experiment class and VIII² as the control class. The pre-test was given and it was followed by treatments in four meetings to the control class students. The data were analyzed using t-test to reveal whether there was a significant difference in the students' writing ability of descriptive text among the eight grade students of MTsN Takengon I. The results of this study indicate that the t-test was 2.10 and t-table was 1.07. Therefore, Ho is rejected and Ha is accepted because the t-test is higher than the t-table.

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1. Introduction

The learning activities can be considered successful if it promotes positive interaction between students and teachers as facilitators. Writing skill is considered as the most difficult skill to master for second language learners. In fact, most teachers still perform monotonous model, teacher-centered learning, which may hinder the learning process, and it raises the difficulty among students to understand the subject matter. Thus, teacher should consider the use of effective strategies and tools (Nosratinia & Adibifar, 2014). In addition to this, writing is of the most difficulties ability for students to master. At advanced level, writing involves more than just a system of language; it also challenges our cognitive for memory and thinking (Kellogg, 2008). Research also reports that successful learner are those who more frequently apply learning strategies (Mistar, Zuhairi, & Parlindungan, 2014)

Moreover, research studies on second language writing have proposed many teaching approaches for teaching writing, such as the use of feedback to encourage students in second language writing (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Kuntariati & Lailiyah, 2016), that focuses on proses-

based writing. Also, the use of self-regulated strategy that promotes students' confidence in writing through the model based on their need and character is an effective teaching strategy for intermediate level students (Liberty & Conderman, 2018). In addition, with the development of technology, teachers might apply Internet-based teaching writing (Cahyono & Mutiaraningrum, 2015), or use social media (Sabaruddin, 2019) in teaching second language writing. Needless to say, teachers' support is playing a vital role in developing students' ability in writing.

However, many teachers or instructors still apply conventional teaching approach (Ka-kan-dee & Kaur, 2015). In Indonesia, the teaching of writing is challenged. This is due to teachers' limited understanding of writing approach; thus teachers tend to use limited strategies (Suriyanti & Yaacob, 2016). Besides, the cultural difference is influenced the writing product that sounds less English, and the number of students in a class also affected the effectiveness of teaching process (Ariyanti, 2016).

Many students admit that they experience constrains to write and they think that writing as a complicated process. Actually, some students know what to write, but they find it difficult on how to start and express their ideas. It appears that it is a problem for both teachers and students when they are asked about how to learn writing. There are many perceptions that writing will be through complicated process. Therefore, the teacher should know the proper techniques and strategies in teaching and learning writing skills.

The students of junior high at MTsN Takengon I also share a similar feeling on their difficulty in writing. The observation results in this school showed that the teaching used teacher-centered learning in which the teacher dominated the learning process. The students only listened and recorded the material delivered by the teacher. When the teacher invited students to ask questions about the material that might not be understood, the students looked quiet and did not give any responses. In another class, the teacher taught using the discussion method, but it seemed ineffective since the grouping was done by the students themselves. It made the groups homogeneous and the low ability students found it hard to complete the assignments when they gather with other low students in a group.

Gebhard (2006) stated that in learning writing process the teachers' part is to give time for students to use workable strategies for getting started to rise writing ideas. To do so, the teacher can start the writing process with prewriting. Prewriting phase is to motivate ideas (Brown, 2001). In addition, as said by Graves in Widiati & Widayati (1997), students can construct creative and adsorbing texts when teachers permit them time and opportunity for generating ideas.

Regarding to Learning Journal strategy, Moon (1999) stated that Learning Journal is a kind of communication that accepts students to put down and arranged their knowledge by writing. It motivates them to learn how to combine and review, to performance asses, and target for future learning based on their past knowledge. Thus, students are able to manage to learn and, of course, expand themselves as self-supporting learners. Moreover, she mentioned that journals are collections of material that emphasize the writer's reflection process. The journal is written in a certain time, or era, not in "one way". The writer is placing the learning journal that there is an overall intention (or who have given particular duty) to improve the learning. The aim is to enhance the students to write their ideas logically based on their previous learning knowledge.

Learning journal is basically a means for reflection. For teachers, it has been be an important aspect of learning that involves a deep orientation for the students' progress. This process seems to only occur when students' environment is conducive for reflection, especially when there is an incentive for reflection with some guidances or special emphasis on those conditions. Thus, learning journal represents the emphasis on the right conditions. It is expected that journal writing can have valuable impacts, either during or at the end of the process, or as a result of both (Moon, Jennifer: 2006).

In view of this explanation, learning journal is a strategy that helps them to reflect on their learning. It means that their journal should not only present descriptively as an account of what they are doing, but also provide changes to transfer their knowledge processes, especially why and how they do, what they do, and they know and their perception about what they do.

Previous studies related to this is found. Chamisah (2013) studied the benefit of using

cooperative learning approach for teaching writing at university level. The result revealed that the student became easier to develop ideas to write by using cooperative learning. This occurs because students are able to work together. Thus, they might transfer information and knowledge to others, and they receive the ideas each other to build in write down their communication.

Another study was conducted by (Shirotha, 2016) about the use of corrective feedback on students' writing. The result indicated that 35 students have significant progress in their writing accuracy. In addition, the corrective feedback strategy in writing also elicits the autonomous learning writing process. Besides, this study investigated differences in teaching writing strategy.

2. Method

The study can be categorized as an experimental research. The writer used one group pretest and post-test design. The research population was the eighth-grade students totaling around 218 students. The sample in this study consisted of 2 classes. The experimental class VIII¹ with 30 students and the control class VIII² with 30 students. To take the first data, the writer gave pretest. Only in one group were treated. Furthermore, it was to know the students' ability to write after being taught using learning journal strategy.

To collect the data, the writer used a test as instrument to measure students' achievement in writing by giving written test, pretest and posttest. The students wrote text individually. The writer used some criteria to analyze the tests using the Waegle's scoring rubric from Effendi & Riyono (2017). The scoring rubric is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Waegle's Scoring Rubric in Effendi & Riyono (2017)

Component	Indicators	Score
Grammar	A few grammatical inaccurate	4
	Some grammar inaccurate	3
	Numerous grammatical inaccurate	2
	Frequent grammatical inaccurate	1
Organization	Most of the sentences are related to main idea	4
	Some sentences are related to main idea	3
	Few sentences are related to main idea	2
	The sentences are not related to each other	1
Content	Relevant to the topic and easy to understand	4
	Rather relevant to the topic and easy to understand	3
	Relevant to the topic but not quite easy to understand	2
	Quite relevant but it not easy to understand	1
Vocabulary and mechanic	A few errors in choice of words, spelling, and punctuation	4
	Some errors in choice of words, spelling, and punctuation	3
	Occasional errors in choice words, spelling, and punctuation	2
	Frequent errors in choice of words, spelling, and punctuation	1

To collect the data the writer used observation and achievement test by giving a written test. Two kinds of tests used pretest and posttest. Pretest was given before the implementation of learning journal strategy to know the score of writing. The students wrote one paragraph about their experiences. Posttest was used to know how learning journal strategy was effective to teach writing. The post test was given after the implementation of learning journal to estimate

the students' writing ability after being taught by using learning journal strategy. The test consisted of one paragraph from students' experiences, and the test used was same as in the pretest.

Data analysis technique employed was t-test referring, to Arikunto (2006) with the following formula:

$$t = \frac{Mx - My}{\sqrt{\left[\frac{x^2 + x^y}{nx + ny - 2} \right] \left[\frac{1}{nx} + \frac{1}{ny} \right]}}$$

Where:

- t = T-test
- x = experiment class
- y S = control class
- Mx = mean of the experiment class
- X2 = deviation score from the experiment class
- Nx = sample of the experimental class
- My = Mean of the control class
- Y2 = deviation score of the the control class
- Ny = sample of the control class

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Result

Those are the results of the pretest and post-test. Both the experimental and the control class were given a score which was then accumulated in the form of grades as presented in Tables 2 and 3. Table 1 and 2 explain that the pretest score for the experimental class where: the posttest was 2330, the hence deviation was 775, and the squares deviation was 1800. From the conclusion above, the scores were calculated as follows:

$$M_x = \frac{\sum X}{N_x}$$

$$= \frac{775}{30}$$

$$= 25,8$$

$$X^2 = d^2 - \frac{(d)^2}{N_x}$$

$$= 19800 - \frac{(775)^2}{30}$$

$$= 19800 - \frac{6006}{30}$$

$$= 19800 - 200,2 = 19599$$

$$M_y = \frac{\sum Y}{N_y}$$

$$= \frac{445}{30}$$

$$= 14,8$$

$$Y^2 = d^2 - \frac{(d)^2}{N_y}$$

$$= 6921 - \frac{(445)^2}{30}$$

$$= 6921 - \frac{1980}{30}$$

$$= 6921 - 66 = 6855$$

Based on the above calculations it can be concluded that:

- MX = 25.8 (Mean of the experimental class)
- X2 = 19599 (Score of the experimental class)
- NX = 30 (Number of experimental classes)
- MY = 14.8 (Mean of the control class)
- Y2 = 6855 (Deviation of the control class)
- NY = 30 (Number of the control classes)

Table 2. The result of experimental class

No	Name	Pre-test (X ¹)	Post-test (X ²)	Deviation (d)	Squared deviation (d ²)
1	AM	50	80	30	900
2	A MA	50	75	25	400
3	A F	60	80	20	400
4	D G	40	70	30	900
5	GA	50	75	25	625
6	HM	60	80	20	400
7	L	50	75	25	625
8	M K	45	70	25	625
9	R P M	60	85	25	625
10	A P	40	75	35	1225
11	E M	50	75	25	625
12	F I A	40	70	30	900
13	FF	50	80	30	900
14	H P	60	85	25	625
15	I L	50	85	35	1225
16	I S S	45	75	30	900
17	I J	55	80	25	625
18	I K T	60	85	25	625
19	M A	60	80	20	400
20	MD	45	75	30	900
21	ND	60	80	20	400
22	N R F	50	75	25	625
23	N M	60	80	20	400
24	R R	40	75	35	625
25	R M	60	80	20	400
26	SAK	45	70	25	625
27	S A	50	75	25	625
28	S W	50	75	25	625
29	Y	60	85	25	625
30	W R	60	80	20	400
	Total	1555	2330	775	19800
	Average	51,8	77,6		
	Min	45	70		
	Max	60	85		

Table 3. The result of control class

No	Name	Pre-test (X ¹)	Post-test (X ²)	Deviation (d)	Squared deviation (d ²)
1	A	55	70	15	225
2	A Y	50	65	15	225
3	A A	50	70	20	400
4	F P	50	70	20	400
5	M P	60	75	15	225
6	M A	55	70	15	225
7	M D	57	70	13	169
8	M T	50	70	20	400
9	M K	50	70	20	400
10	RF	45	60	15	225
11	Sz	60	70	10	100
12	S A	70	80	10	100
13	T IP	50	65	20	400
14	T Y R	55	70	15	225
15	A S	50	65	15	225
16	D P S	60	75	15	225
17	D I	50	70	20	400
18	H	50	60	10	100
19	I M	70	80	10	100
20	K A	50	65	15	225
21	KR	45	60	15	225
22	L A	55	70	15	225
23	L R	45	60	15	225
24	M N	50	65	15	225
25	M	48	60	12	144
26	RA	50	65	15	225
27	RY	60	75	15	225
28	R	50	65	15	225
29	RS	52	60	8	64
30	RR	58	70	12	144
	Total	1600	2040	445	6921
	Average	53,4	68		
	Min	45	60		
	Max	70	80		

The following is the formula of T-test.

$$\begin{aligned}t &= \frac{M_X - M_Y}{\sqrt{\left(\frac{\sum X^2 + \sum Y^2}{N_X + N_Y - 2}\right)\left(\frac{1}{N_X} + \frac{1}{N_Y}\right)}} \\t &= \frac{25,8 - 14,8}{\sqrt{\left(\frac{19559 + 6855}{30 + 30 - 2}\right)\left(\frac{1}{30} + \frac{1}{30}\right)}} \\t &= \frac{11}{\sqrt{\left(\frac{26414}{58}\right)\left(\frac{2}{30}\right)}} \\t &= \frac{11}{\sqrt{(455)(0,06)}} \\t &= \frac{11}{\sqrt{27,3}} \\t &= \frac{11}{5,22} = 2,10\end{aligned}$$

The t-score obtained from both the pretest and posttest in the experimental class was 2.10. In the hypothesis, the basic theory that indicates that the hypothesis will be accepted if $t_{\text{test}} > t_{\text{table}}$. To prove this hypothesis, it is important to catch out the distribution of frequency (df) based on the formula:

$$\begin{aligned}df &= n_1 + n_2 - 2 \\df &= 30 + 30 - 2 \\df &= 58\end{aligned}$$

So, $t\text{-test} > t\text{-table}$ (significant) with the distribution of degree (df), i.e. $t\text{-test} = 2,10 > 1,07$ (0,05) with df 58.

T-test score of is higher than t-table at a notable level of 0.05 which indicates that the hypothesis (H_a) is receive and the Hypothesis (H_o) is rejected. It means that the learning journal strategies are effective to enhance the students' writing skills.

3.2. Discussion

Based on the findings from this study, it revealed that using learning journal strategies can stimulate and facilitate students in realizing their ideas. It can be seen from the escalation of students' scores.

The results of the experimental class indicate that the learning journal strategies can provide students with a lot of ideas and enhance the students' writing skills. Referring to the analysis results of the T-test, it can be seen that the learning journal has given positive contributions to the students in the experimental class in MTsN Takengon I. this result is in line with a study conducted by Glogger, Schwonke, Holzäpfel, Nückles, & Renkl (2012) that claimed learning journal is potential method in assessing students writing ability.

The process learning writing, an English teacher usually explained to the students about some kinds of texts and give some the examples of those texts. The teacher gives some topics to discuss. At the end of the learning process the teacher corrected the students' writing. However, the teacher always used various strategies and techniques; some students still have problem in writing. To help the students the writer used learning journal strategy as a technique to encourages students' ability in writing.

The students can think and show their analysis based on the experiences that might be seen or observed during the learning process with the learning journal strategies. They do not

only get the ideas from reality, but also from their fantasy, and imagination. The results of learning journals showed that it has developed the students' creativity. This strategy provides opportunities for students to write texts and to express ideas in organized topics.

The process of writing texts can be facilitated with the learning journal strategies that can make students directly feel what they observe from the teacher when they follow the learning process in the classrooms. Therefore, it can be concluded that the learning journals can enhance students' abilities based on the score escalation after the teaching and learning process had finished, (the pretest and posttest results). Also, the learning journal has improved the students' interest in writing.

This study is also in line with the idea that teachers' support is the important factor to the development of students' ability (Coelho, 2020), thus teachers should apply teaching strategies that engage students' motivation (Wediyantoro, 2016; Rachmajanti & Musthofiyah, 2017; Lailiyah, Wediyantoro, & Yustisia, 2019;). In addition, teachers also expected to be creative in using media to teach (Lutviana & Mafulah, 2018).

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

This study investigates students' writing ability using learning journal strategy. The results of this study revealed that there are differences in students' writing outcomes in the classes which applied the journal strategy learning. Thus, the learning journal strategy gives a positive effect on the students' writing ability especially descriptive text based on their experiences. Hence, this study proposes two recommendation for further study. First, it is expected that teacher can apply this learning strategy as one of teaching approach to teach writing skills. Second, further research related to this strategy with another level of education as the subject of research might broaden the evidence of the effectiveness of this strategy.

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