

IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING THROUGH DIARY WRITING

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Abstract

Writing is one of English skills which is categorized as the most difficult skill for second language students. In Indonesia, university students who learn English still find some difficulties in writing. To help the students in facing their problem, the researcher decided to use diary writing as a medium. By using the medium, the writer wanted to know the students' writing improvement. The researcher used quasi experimental research to find the students' writing improvement. There were two samples of this research. They were literature students as the control group and education students as the experimental group. The writer applied the technique as the treatment to the experimental group. Before the researcher applied the treatment, the researcher gave a pre-test to the students of literature and education to know their writing ability. After the researcher applied the treatment, the researcher gave a post-test to both groups. The result showed that there was improvement on students' achievement. It was proven by the value of significant which was 0.005. It was lower than 0.05. Then, it was concluded that diary writing improved the students' writing.

Keywords: students' writing, diary writing

Introduction

English is the first foreign language in Indonesia. As the first foreign language, many universities tried to provide it as one of the majors which is categorized as the favorite major. They provide not only English education but also English literature department. To be acknowledged as having mastery in English, the language students should master the four language skills which are divided into receptive skills, such as listening and reading, and productive skills, such as speaking and writing. It means that they should be able to use it either receptively or productively. However, in the real life communication, being able to speak in English is not enough. It is because not all communication activities can be held in the form of spoken language, but they sometimes need written form. Al-Jawi (2011) points out that people often communicate through writing. Writing is the most important skill. When students can write well in English, they not only can improve their writing skill, but also they can improve other skills.

In mastering writing, even in the highest level of education, the students still find many difficulties. When they are asking to write, they are thinking about how to get ideas, how to develop them into sentences, and how to make a good construction of those sentences. The lack of idea or limited knowledge on something new can fall the desire and even the enthusiasm to write. Ningrum et al (2013) states that writing is a complex skill to learn and to teach, as it necessitates the acquisition of many other skills.

In the classroom, when the first semester students of education were asked to write by developing their thoughts, ideas, experiences and even anything happened in

their daily life they found difficulties. Some of them were extremely unconfident and reluctant to write due to some reasons. The main reason was that they thought they had nothing to write and when they had already got the ideas of what to write about, the lacks of vocabulary, grammar, and sentence organization made their ideas could not be properly conveyed. Therefore, most of them seemed to be frustrating when they have to write about something. Most of them even judged themselves that they were not good at writing. They thought that they do not have talents in writing. Actually, those kinds of thoughts often burdened themselves and influenced their attitudes towards writing. So, the result was that they tried to avoid writing, and when they did writing, they did not give their best.

Based on the phenomena above, the researcher found the technique which could encourage and motivate them in the writing class, and also could improve their writing skill. Langan (2011) states that as writing is a skill, it makes sense that the more they practice to write, the better their writing will be. That was why diary writing was helpful to build the students' positive response and interest in learning English because they assumed to write freely without any pressure and a lot of fun in it.

The researcher assumed that diary writing could be the way to solve the students' problem in writing. By applying it, the students could feel free to express their ideas, feelings, or anything happening in their life in written form. Besides, it could improve their vocabulary and control their grammar and their mechanics of writing. Therefore, they could master English better.

Based on the problems above, the researcher focused on the students' problems in mechanic of writing and how to develop their ideas in a grammatical sentence. The objective of this research was to find out whether diary writing can improve the students' ability in writing or not. Based on the background above, the researcher formulated the research question: *Can the use of diary writing improve the writing ability of the first semester students of education department?*

Finding and Discussions

An experiment is a scientific investigation in which the researcher manipulates one or more independent variables, controls any other relevant variables, and observes the effect of the manipulation on the dependent variable (Ary et al, 2010). In this research, the researcher applied quasi-experimental research design. The samples of the research were divided into two groups: an experimental group and a control group. Both groups had pre-test and posttest. However, only the experimental groups received the treatment by using diary writing.

The study was conducted in English department of certain university in Semarang. There were two groups of participants. They were group A and group B. The students in those groups were requested to do the pre-test before the researcher conducted the treatment. Group B was the group which received the treatment of diary writing while group A was the group which did not receive the treatment of diary writing. As the final test, the students were requested to do the post-test. Both the pre-test and post-test were about writing test dealing with the students' experience in doing the mid-term test.

The researcher categorized the students' writing based on the writing scoring criteria proposed by Heaton and Grid as cited in Rahayu (2014). They are about coherence, grammar, vocabulary and content. After the researcher got the score of the students' writing, the researcher classified them into the scoring guidance proposed by Harris as cited in Rahayu (2014). The results of the pre-test and post-test are as follows:

The pre-test result of control and experimental group

No	Score	Grade	Number of Students	
			Control	experimental
1.	91-100	excellent	0	0
2.	81-90	very good	0	0
3.	71-80	Good	2	1
4.	61-70	Fair	4	3
5.	51-60	Poor	10	16
6.	0-50	very poor	8	5
Total			24	25

The post-test result of control and experimental group

No	Score	Grade	Number of Students	
			Control	experimental
1.	91-100	excellent	0	0
2.	81-90	very good	2	8
3.	71-80	good	11	16
4.	61-70	fair	11	1
5.	51-60	poor	0	0
6.	0-50	very poor	0	0
Total			24	25

In order to support the study, the test was used to get the data. In this study, the researcher used SPSS software to analyze the data in order to find out the score result between pre-test and post-test in experimental class and pre-test and post-test in control class. The comparison of pre-test result in experimental and control groups can be seen in the following table:

Independent Sample t – test between pre-test in control and experimental group

Group Statistics

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score Control	24	57.2917	8.20646	1.67514
Experimental	25	57.6000	7.51665	1.50333

Mean was the average of the result, 57.60 was the mean score of experimental class for the pre-test whereas 57.29 was the mean score of control class for pretest. Standard deviation was a measure of the spread of the score on a test, the function was to measure how close the result of each students to the mean. The standard deviation for experimental class was 7.517 meanwhile the standard deviation for control class was 8.206, the result proved that standard deviation was closed to the mean because the result was positive.

Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means
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								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Score	Equal variances assumed	.434	.513	-.137	47	.891	-.30833	2.24669	-4.82809	4.21143
	Equal variances not assumed			-.137	46.230	.892	-.30833	2.25080	-4.83834	4.22168

The value of Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.891.

The function of this table is to indicate the homogeneity of the students. If the result higher than 0.05 it meant that the data was homogeny on the other contrary, if the data lower than 0.05 it meant that the data was not homogeny. It can be proved by the result F= 0.434 and Sig 0.513. From the result of (F) and (Sig) so, it can be concluded that the data was 62 homogeny because the result was higher than 0.05. Then, sig 2-tailed is two- way of the test which was to measure whether the hypothesis is accepted or not. If the result is higher than 0.05 it means that the hypothesis is not accepted. On the other hand, if the result is lower than 0.05 it means that the hypothesis is accepted. It can be proved by the result of sig 2-tailed was $0.891 > 0.05$, from the result the hypothesis was not accepted because the result was higher than 0.05 and there is no significance between two classes. It could be said that the students' ability in writing before being they were given the treatment was equal. Moreover, the mean difference for both groups was 0.308.

The comparison of post-test result in experimental and control groups can be seen in the following table:

Independent Sample t – test between post-test in control and experimental class.

		Group Statistics			
Group		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score	Control	24	74.1667	6.70280	1.36820
	Experimental	25	79.2000	5.13971	1.02794

The result showed that 79.20 was the mean score of experimental group whereas 74.17 was the mean score of control group in post-test. Standard deviation is a measure of the spread of the score on a test, the function is to measure how close the result of each students to the mean. The standard deviation of experimental group was 5.140 meanwhile the standard deviation of control group was 6.703, the result proved that standard deviation closed to the mean because the result was positive.

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Score	Equal variances assumed	1.975	.166	-2.957	47	.005	-5.03333	1.70210	-8.45751	-1.60915
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.941	43.126	.005	-5.03333	1.71133	-8.48427	-1.58240

The value of Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.005.

From the result of (F) and (Sig), it can be concluded that the data was homogeny because the result was higher than 0.05. Then, sig 2-tailed is two-way of the test which was used to measure whether the hypothesis is accepted or not. If the result is higher than 0.05 it means that the hypothesis is not accepted on the other hand, if the result is lower than 0.05 it means that the hypothesis is accepted. It can be proved by the result of sig 2-tailed was $0.005 < 0.05$. From the result, the hypothesis was accepted because the result was lower than 0.05 and there is significance between two classes. It could be said that the students' ability in writing after they were given the treatment was difference. The mean difference for both groups was 5.033.

From the discussion above, the result showed that the students in experimental and control groups were in same level in the beginning. The result of Independent Sample t-test on post-test showed that there was significance difference in the students' writing achievement between the experimental and control group. The experimental group got higher than the control group, the result for experimental was 79.20 while the control group was 74.17. In another word, H_0 was rejected and H_1 was accepted. There was significance difference of the students' writing ability between students who were taught by using diary writing and those who were taught without diary writing.

Conclusion

The conclusion of the research was that diary writing could improve students' writing ability. It could be proven from the results of the mean score of experimental and control group in the pre-test and post-test, and sig. (2-tailed) $\alpha = 0.05$. The mean result of pre-test in experimental group was 57.60 and the mean result of pre-test in control group was 57.29. While, the mean result of post-test in experimental group was 79.20 and the mean result of post-test in control group was 74.17. Then, the computation result sig. (2-tailed) result was lower than 0.05 ($0.005 < 0.05$). Hence, the students' achievement after they got the treatment was not homogeneous because H_0 was rejected and H_1 was accepted.

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