

The Effect of Dialogue Journal Writing on Students' Writing Ability

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Abstract-Writing is a complex task and considered as one of the most difficult skills in learning English. Writing is the best way to practice language because it can be used to communicate, explore other subjects, and show students social identities. As explicit literacy skills are modeled through dialogue, the engagement of students needs to be considered. This study aimed at investigating the use of using dialogue journal Writing (DJW) in improving students' ability in writing argumentative text. This study, which followed the experimental design, was conducted in a class of 30 students at a university in Indramayu. During one semester, the dialogue journal writing (DJW) was used as the treatment to teach writing. Questionnaire was given to students to express their perception to the use of dialogue journal in their classroom. The writing scores of the pretests and posttests were compared using a *t* test to determine if there is any significant improvement in the students' writing performance after using dialogue journal.

Keywords: *dialogue journal, students' perception, writing*

I. INTRODUCTION

Writing is central to our personal experience and important skill to be taught and be mastered by students (Harmer, 2007; Hyland, 2002). Writing is the best way to practice language because it can be used to communicate, explore other subjects, and show students social identities (Medwell et. al., 2009; Hedge, 2005). While Linse (2005: 98) argues that writing is a combination of process and product. It is a productive skill and, as such, the way we treat it in class has some similarities with the teaching and learning of speaking (Akakura, 2012; Pollard, 2008; Medwell et. al., 2009: 80).

According to Brown (1994: 324) writing is, in fact a transaction with words where you free yourself

from what you presently think, feel, and perceive . It is composed by people's ideas with using many ways in arranging it. To help students express what they want to say slowly in written, and writing is the new experience to learning language especially english. We can make something interesting to be written by students with using what they like to write. The teacher only guides them to write well and freely. What they could write is what they have practiced always. Therefore, teacher's role is dominate and has role important to get the purposes of improving students writing skill in this case, with motivating them to write freely using free topic with specific technique. Harmer, (2007:112) says writing is used as an aide-memory or practice tool to help students practice and work with language they have been studying. Writing is the best way to practice language. To help students express what they want to say slowly in written, and writing is the new experience to learning language especially english.

Unfortunately, for most people writing is an extremely difficult task and is not easy to learn even if it is foreign language because they are trying to grapple in their language with new ideas and new ways of looking at them (Alwasilah, 2001; Harmer, 1989; Byrne, 1982), so that the most important one is using the right way in teaching it. Therefore, the students will be easier and interested in learning writing. Furthermore, Byrne (1982: 6) says the problems appear are not only in general writing, but in composing a text. As Harmer (1989) confirms in the teaching of writing we can focus on the result of that writing or on the writing process it self. In learning writing, students should get the mood to write paragraph, so that they can make of writing or get good process in their writing (see also Brand, 1991).

Several studies have been examined the efficacy of Dialogue Journal Writing on students' learning or affective factors. A study conducted by Khatib, Marefat and Ahmadi (2012) found that

dialogue journal improves students' critical thinking abilities as opposed to using ordinary English writing tasks. Dialogue journals are beneficial to emergent readers and writers (Bloem, 2004; Alexander, 2001), and to reduce students' anxiety (Foroutan, 2012). Journal writing had a significant positive effect on students' grammar knowledge and enhanced their confidence in writing (Rokni and Seifi, 2013; Hemmati & Sultanpour, 2012; Erkan, 2011; Hsu, 2006). One of the benefits of Dialogue Journal Writing to L2 language learners is the development of writing fluency (Holmes & Moulton, 1997; Peyton, 1993, 2000).

Aims

The study aims at finding out;

1. The effect of Dialogue Journal Writing (DJW) on students' writing ability.
2. Students' perception on the use of Dialogue Journal Writing (DJW) in writing classroom.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Writing*

While Linse (2005: 98) argues "writing is a combination of process and product." And according to Pollard (2008: 49), writing is a productive skill and, as such, the way we treat it in class has some similarities with the teaching and learning of speaking. Medwell et. al. (2009: 80) argued that writing is a cross-curricular skill, which allows children to express and explore other subjects. Those mean that writing is a process and also a product. According to Brown (1994: 324) "writing is, in fact a transaction with words where you free yourself from what you presently think, feel, and perceive ". It is composed by people's ideas with using many ways in arranging it. We can make something interesting to be written by students with using what they like to write. The teacher only guides them to write well and freely. What they could write is what they have practiced always. Therefore, teacher's role is dominate and has role important to get the purposes of improving students writing skill in this case, with motivating them to write freely using free topic with specific technique.

According to Maxom (2009: 93) Writing activities are usually solitary affairs. It's pretty straight forward to set students an essay task, for example, and ask them to include particular words or phrases. And based on Halliday (1992: 39), writing evolves in response to needs that arise as a result of cultural changes. Writing as process also means as the sequence of language learning and exploring ideas and those can create

product of communication that can connect the writer and the reader.

Improving writing skill can be done with many ways with noticing important aspects of it. According to Hyland (2002: 23) "the main contours of three positions which together have contributed to the hugely influential process writing movement is focuses on the personal creativity of the individual writer, the cognitive processes of writing, and the writer's immediate context". A good or bad result of what they write will depend on the individual and what they have known. So that's why, to improve writing, we need many resources to learn, so that we will understand about the steps and the rule of it. Percy (1981: 6) stated that the act of writing is a time for writer to reflect to play around with ideas, to gain new and deeper insight into what he or she feels and believe; it's a time for him to polish. According to Walpole (1980: 7), "writing requires that you create a context for your ideas and explain those ideas as clearly and precisely as seems necessary to establish communication with your reader." He stated, "Focuses on writer and describe writing in terms of the processes used to create text" (Hyland, 2002: 5). It is ways of people to express their idea in written. Therefore, we can state writing as a process of composing text. In this case, writing is the composition of the events or what have happened. The writing ability in context of recount text is used as the parameter of the target in writing.

B. *Dialogue Journal*

According to Cole, Raffier, Rogan and Schleiner (1998), journals are closely affiliated with three fundamental paradigms in education which focus on (1) process, (2) learner, and (3) reflection. First, writing can activate teacher learners' thinking and enable them to make connections between the issues, explore ideas, generate new ideas and discover meaning during the learning process. Second, journal writing places the focus on the teacher learners themselves, since it is based on the premise that individual learners are thus actively constructing knowledge, at the same time personalizing the learning process. Lastly, journal writing makes reflection likely, because as teacher trainees write about their views of different issues, talk about their problems and concerns and share their ideas, they discover new meaning and have their horizon broadened.

Foroutan (2012) argues that "one of the best ways to view learning from learners' perspective is through journals, particularly dialogue journals with the teacher". Dialogue journal writing not only provides a means for the teacher educator to create and sustain caring relations with the teacher learner (Hsu, 2006;

Johnston, 2000), but it also make sure that quite voices in the classroom can be heard outside the classroom.

III. METHODOLOGY

Relevant to the purposes of the study mentioned in the previous section, this study involves the collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study (Dornyei, 2007) and employs strategies of inquiry that involve collecting data either simultaneously or sequentially to best understand research problems. The data collection also involves gathering both numeric information as well as text information so that the final database represents both quantitative and qualitative information.

The quantitative data of this study in the form of students' scores in writing collected through writing test and they were analyzed statistically, following this process, qualitative data in the form of students' perception toward Dialogue Journal Writing and finally the entire analysis both in quantitative and qualitative data will be interpreted.

To answer the first research question, quantitative approach will be employed, the researcher tests a theory by specifying narrow hypotheses and the collection of data to support or refute the hypotheses. An experimental design is used in which students' writing ability are assessed both before and after an experimental treatment. The data are collected on an instrument that measures students' writing ability, and the information collected is analyzed using statistical procedures and hypothesis testing. As Frankel and Wallen (2005) say that experimental research is one of the most powerful research methodologies that researcher can use. Qualitative approach will be employed to establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the views of participants. This means identifying

a culture-sharing group and studying how it developed shared patterns of behavior over time Frankel and Wallen (2005). One of the key elements of collecting data is to observe participants' behaviors by participating in their activities.

A. Participants

The population in this study is the students of English Education Study Program of Wiralodra University. Meanwhile, the sample of this study is the fourth semester students of English Education Study Program of Wiralodra University. This study was conducted with 30 students during their school experience in English Department at a university in Indramayu, West Java. There were 25 female, and 5 male students. The dialogue journaling was conducted for 14 weeks.

B. Object of the Study

There are two main cases dealing with this study. First case deals with the lack choice in the process of teaching writing and giving feedback to the students. Second case deals with students' different perception in writing that influence the way they perceive teaching learning process in the classroom. Therefore, the object of the study focuses on the use of Dialogue Journal Writing on students' writing performance.

IV. RESULTS

To achieve the aims of the study, the mean score of pre-test and post-test are computed and t-test for independent samples are used to find if the differences between the means are statistically significant or not. As illustrated in figure 1, the mean scores of post-test is significantly higher (78,43) than pre-test (66,80)

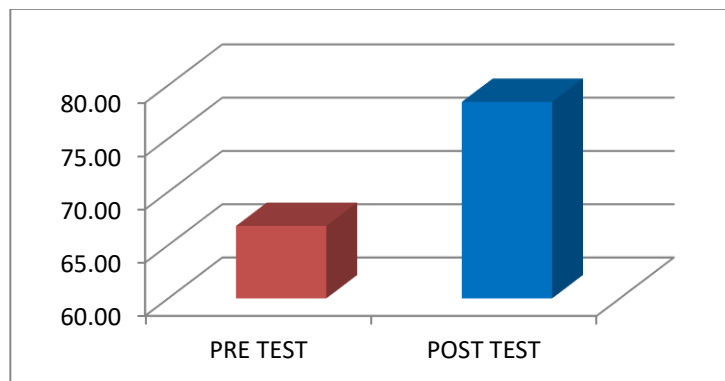


Figure 1: The result of pre-test and post test

The analysis of dialogue journal entries showed students' views and thoughts about the use of dialogue journal in teaching writing in their class.

The table below shows detailed information about the contents of dialogue journals.

Table 1. Students' perception on the content of dialogue journal in writing class

Students' Perception	N	F
Positive	20	66,4
Both positive and negative	9	30
Negative	1	3,3
Useful	30	100

Most of students had positive opinion about the use of dialogue journal in their class. Some students think that the use of dialogue journal had both positive and negative effect toward their writing ability. There was only one student who think that dialogue journal cannot help her to improve her writing. Nevertheless, all students agree that dialogue journal is useful to build students teacher interaction inside and outside the classroom.

- *I was happy to get written feedback from my lecturer in my journal (Student 10)*
- *Dialogue journal makes me feel free to write because my lecturer is not only concern with grammatical mistakes in my writing (student 2)*
- *It's like diary (student 7)*
- *I like the lecturer more (student 12)*
- *I'm not afraid to write anymore (student 24)*

Table 2. Students' perception of the benefits of dialogue journal in writing class

Perception	N	F
Immediate feedback to questions	25	83,33
Personal contact with the lecturer	29	96,7
Emotional support and motivation	23	76,7
Promoting reflection	20	66,7
Opportunity to express and share ideas	29	96,7

As table 2 illustrates, there are many advantages of the use of dialogue journal in teaching writing. Students felt that the journal was useful because the lecturer gave immediate feedback and guided them with the questions and helped them with their writing. Dialogue journal gave them extra time outside the class to discuss about the writing. Because they have personal contact with the lecturer, students feel motivated in expressing their ideas into a text.

- *I think dialogue journal makes me more aware about my writing because the lecturer will give feedback at my writing and it makes me think twice before I give the journal (student 1)*
- *My lecturer motivates me to write more although my writing is not good (student 11)*
- *I like to share ideas with my lecturer (student 24).*

V. CONCLUSION

The process of writing a dialogue journal served as a process of self-reflection. The result of the study shows that the mean scores of post-test is significantly higher (78,43) than pre-test (66,80) and most students believed that dialogue journal give positive impact on their writing. The students also viewed dialogue journal motivates them to write

because they have personal contact with the lecturer and it gave them opportunity to share the ideas.

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