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The Effect of Using Diary to Improve Students' Writing

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the effect of using a diary as a medium to improve students' skills in writing a recount text. This study used quantitative methods using quasi-experimental research with non-equivalent control group design. The samples used in this study were 37 students in the experimental class and 38 students in the control class. Data were collected by conducting pre-test and post-test. This research used non-parametric tests (Wilcoxon) because the data were not normally distributed. Then the result of the hypothesis should be lower than 0.05. Based on the result from the hypothesis, the data analysis showed that the value of Asymp.Sig (2-tailed) was 0.000. It can be concluded that the working hypothesis (H_a) is accepted, while the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. Also, the mean score of the post-test in the experimental class (which was 76.22) was higher than that of the post-test in the control class (which was 63.39). It means that the use of a diary in writing activities brought benefits to the students' writing skills. Moreover, the students became more creative, fluent, and enthusiastic in learning and expressing themselves.

Keywords: *Using Diary, Writing Skill, Recount text.*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a process that requires many aspects, not only ideas but also vocabulary, grammar, and punctuation to express ideas (Bazir, 2016). According to Brown's description in Autila (2017), good writing skills have to do with natural, coherent, and grammatically correct sentences. As suggested by many studies, these skills are not shared by all students in Indonesia because many of them still lack the ability to arrange sentences into correct grammatical order and in a logical manner. Writing is also considered a complex field because it requires many skills. Suryaman (2019) states that what makes writing not an easy activity is because it also requires topics, materials, and activities that encourage the engagement and development not

only grammatically, but also theoretically and conceptually. In addition to the demand for complex writing skills, the students also need a large vocabulary to support their needs in elaborating an idea and doing writing activities so that they can perform their writing skills in English well. Therefore, to improve writing skills, students need to pay attention to various aspects of the language, such as the language features (including the appropriate structure of the language and the proper word choices), and idea development (such as sentences and paragraphs development of the text). And this complex and challenging process might diminish the students' interest in writing activities at school, the issue that every teacher should anticipate.

Based on the observation and interview with the English teachers at MAN 2 Kota Tangerang, the writers found several obstacles that were faced by students at school regarding writing. The factors that influence it are students' difficulty in understanding grammar, lack of vocabulary mastery, students' inability to get something to write about, and students having no confidence in the results of their own writing. The pandemic era even worsens the condition. There are several reasons why students find it hard to master the learning materials. The first is from the economic point of view. Their parents' income has decreased or they lost their jobs due to this pandemic. As a result, not all students can afford to buy an internet quota (a data package) to access or download the learning sources, or to attend video conference meetings. The second cause is bad signals, which interfere with the students' learning. They cannot hear the teachers or their friends so they cannot optimally understand the materials presented by the teachers or the discussion with the classmates. Or, they just cannot download the materials or upload the assignment because of a bad connection. Then, the limited meeting time also brings an impact on both students and teachers. The teachers do not have sufficient time to meet and explain the materials directly to the students, so they must make use of the limited time effectively. As for students, limited meeting time results in the lack of understanding of the materials delivered by the teacher, and explanations via text message, video, and presentation files cannot always clarify the misconception. In order to find solutions to improve students' writing skills and enthusiasm, teachers must use new media in the teaching process.

Recount text which retells past events or experiences is one of the genres that can be used as a reference for learning writing (Dialog & Issn, 2018). It provides a clear development which consists of orientation, a series of events, and re-orientation. Since it is used to convey information about a series of events that have happened, a recount text is usually ordered based on the sequence of events (Ligito & Widiati, 2008). Diary writing can be used as an effective medium to learn recount writing and share knowledge. Hayati (2009) said that the use of effective media can help explain the materials easily, so it will help students understand and learn the materials at ease. According to Murcia (2001), learning media serves as a motivator in the language teaching process, so it will make the students get more enthusiastic about learning and not feel bored. Therefore, the role of a diary as learning media is essential and must be sought to make students interested and excited in learning.

The fact that writers of a diary can express their ideas freely can make the students more motivated because they can share their own feelings, thoughts, and experiences they want. This can support the condition that the students need in order to improve their enthusiasm and writing skills, especially in developing vocabulary and indirectly learning to write sentences well (Klimova, 2015). Both students and teachers can also use this kind of informal writing to allow the students to reflect on what they have learned, the way they have studied, and the difficulties faced in writing formal English. Even though they are allowed to write anything, from any personal experiences and events to more educational topics such as when doing a reflection, they still must make the readers (or themselves) understand what they are sharing. So, involving diary writing activities in a language learning class is a great option because it can help students learn to write more effectively. In relation to this study, the researchers are interested in conducting a quasi-experimental method as a technique for retrieving data and comparing an experimental class and a control class, related to diary writing activities.

Dewi (2020) conducted a study entitled "*The Influence of Diary on the Students' Narrative Writing Skills Quasi-Experimental Study at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta*" which aims to determine the effect of diary writing as a medium in developing students' narrative skills. The result of that research showed that a diary

can be the learning medium used as an alternative for developing the students' narrative writing skills. Diary writing is considered interesting and makes the students more enthusiastic about learning the target language. Therefore, the writers are interested in conducting research using a diary as learning media. The difference between the writers' research and previous research is the selected genres. While the researcher of the previous study uses the type of narrative text to improve students' writing skills, the researchers in this study use the type of recount text to improve students' writing skills. The writers hope that the students can have new learning experiences through diary writing activities and that the use of a diary in language learning can attract the students' interest and improve the students' writing skills.

Based on the explanation, the writers were then interested to conduct research on the effect of using a diary to improve students' writing skills at the tenth grade of MAN 2 Kota Tangerang in the Academic year 2021/2022. This study aimed at determining any effects of using a diary as an attractive medium to improve students' writing skills.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, the writer conducted experimental research. According to Frankel, et al, (2012), the use of experimental research is one of the most influential research methodologies that can be used by researchers. This research is the best way to make a cause and effect relationship between variables. Creswell (2014) states that experimental control is the best of quantitative designs to be used in determining cause and effect. Based on the above statement, this type of research was included in the type of quantitative research. According to Sugiono (2013), the nonequivalent control group design is almost the same as the pretest-posttest control group design, only in this design the experimental group and the control group were not chosen randomly. The writer chose this design because the writer intends to find out the effect of using a diary on the improvement of students' writing skills, and there were other objectives which consist of giving a pre-test and post-test for the experimental class and control class.

The target population in this study were all the tenth grade students at MAN 2 Kota Tangerang in the academic year 2021/2022. The total of students is 266 consisting of 7 classes, there are 3 classes of X IPA students, there are 3 classes of X IPS students and there is 1 class of X RELIGION students. Sekaran (2003) further states that the sample is part of the population consisting of several selected members. Based on the data above, the writer determines two classes, namely X IPA 1 as the experimental class and the control class is X IPA 2 which was selected as the sample. In this research, the writer used purposive sampling. Sugiono (2013) states that purposive sampling is a technique of determining samples with certain considerations. The reason the writer chose this sample was because it was based on the same proficiency, namely the level of vocabulary mastery, the level of writing skills, and also the sample was in accordance with the research objectives. The writer chose a class from the tenth grade as the sample. So, the writer chose two classes to be the participants, namely 37 students from X IPA 1 and 38 students from X IPA 2, a total of 75 students based on purposive sampling involved in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. *Results*

1. **The Discrepancy Score Between the Pre-Test and Post-Test in the Experimental Class**

The writers analyzed the students' descriptive writing skills data with the statistical results of SPSS 22. The data were taken from the students' answers in the pre-test and post-test. Based on the results of the written test given to class X IPA 1 or the experiment class before and after being taught using a diary, the pretest score was at minimum 34 points and the maximum score was 83, with a mean of 54.05 and a standard deviation of 14.632. On the other hand, the minimum post-test score was 33 and the maximum score was 91, with a mean of 76.22 and a standard deviation of 10.932. It can be seen in the descriptive statistics table as follows:

Test	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std.Deviation
Pre-test	37	34	83	2000	54.05	14.632
Post-test	37	33	91	2820	76.22	10.932

Table 1. Descriptive Statistic of Experimental Class

It can be seen that even though the minimum score of the post test in the experimental group was lower than that of the pre-test, the average score of the post test was much higher than that of before the treatment concerning diary writing was applied.

2. The Discrepancy Score Between Pre-Test and Post-Test in the Control Class

The writer analyzed the students' descriptive writing skills data with the statistical results of SPSS 22. The data were taken from the students' answers in the pre-test and post-test. Based on the results of the written test given to class X IPA 2 or the control class before and after being taught using a diary, the pretest score was at a minimum of 25 points and the maximum score was 75, with a mean of 52.92 and standard deviation of 13.530. On the other hand, the minimum post-test score was 34 and the maximum score was 88, with a mean of 63.39 and a standard deviation of 15.649. It can be seen in the descriptive statistics table as follows:

Test	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std.Deviation
Pre-test	38	25	75	2011	52.92	13.530
Post-test	38	34	88	2409	63.39	15.649

Table 2. Descriptive Statistic of Control Class

The result showed that the score of the post test in the control group tended to increase in all items, even in the bottom line.

3. The Discrepancy Score of the Experimental and Control Class

Comparison between the pre-test and post-test results in both groups showed significant differences. It can be seen in the descriptive statistics of different scores between experimental class and control class as shown in the table as follow:

Class	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std.Deviation
Experimental	37	33	91	2820	76.22	10.932
Control	38	34	88	2409	63.39	15.649

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Different Scores Experimental Class and Control Class

Based on the table above, the writers found a discrepancy between the post-test score of the experimental class and the control class. It showed that the mean score of the post-test in the experimental class was 76.22 while the mean score of the post-test in the control class was 63.39. It means that the use of a diary in writing activities brought benefits to the students' writing skills. Moreover, the standard deviation of the post-test in the experimental class was 10.932 while the standard deviation of the post-test in the control class was 15.649. The minimum score of the post-test in the experimental class was 33 while the control class got a slightly higher score of 34. In contrast, the maximum score of the post-test in the experimental class (91) was three points higher than that of the control group (88). The total score of the post test in the experimental group was also higher, which was 2820 points, compared to 2409 points for the post-test score in the control class. These results showed that the implementation of diary writing can help improve the students' writing skills more positively than the conventional activities.

4. Test of Wilcoxon (Statistic Non-parametric)

The data normality was not normally distributed, so the writers used a Statistic Non-Parametric (Wilcoxon) test to find out whether there is a difference (mean) between the two samples. The table can be seen as follows:

	(Experiment Class) Pre-test and Post-test	Control Class (Pre-test and Post-test)
Z	-4.982 ^b	-3.370 ^b
Asimp.Sig. (2 tailed)	.000	.001

Table 4. Test of Wilcoxon

a. Wilcoxon signed ranks test

b. Based on negative ranks

If the value of Asymp.Sig (2-tailed) is lower than 0.05, there is a significant difference in the learning outcomes and the hypothesis Ha is accepted, and if the value of Asymp.Sig (2-tailed) is higher than 0.05, there is no significant difference in the learning outcomes and the hypothesis Ha is rejected. Based on the table above, the experimental class showed a significant value, which was $0.000 < 0.05$, and it could be concluded that Ha is accepted and Ho is rejected. Also, in the control class, the significant value was $0.001 < 0.05$, which means that it could be concluded that Ha is accepted and Ho is rejected. Thus, there is a difference (mean) between the 2 paired samples, which was teaching writing using a diary and teaching writing using conventional methods to improve students' writing skills.

5. The Hypothesis of the Research

The writers used a non-parametric test, namely the Mann-Whitney U calculation with SPSS 22 because in the normality test it is known that the data results are not normally distributed. Mann-Whitney U test was used as an alternative to the independent sample t-test because the data were not normally distributed during the normality test. The purpose of this test is to compare the pre-test and post-test scores in the experimental class using a diary and the control class using the conventional method. There is a testing of hypothesis test used Mann-Whitney U test:

	Statistic Test	
		Result
Mann-Whitney U		367.000
Wilcoxon W		1108.000
Z		-3.570
Asympt. Sig (2-tailed)		.000

Table 5. Statistic test

a. Grouping Variables :class

If the value of Asymp.Sig (2-tailed) is lower than 0.05, the hypothesis Ha is accepted. In contrast, if the value of Asymp.Sig (2-tailed) is higher than 0.05, the hypothesis Ha is rejected. Based on the table above, the significant value was $0.000 < 0.05$, which meant that it could be concluded that Ha is accepted and Ho is rejected. It proved a significant effect of teaching writing using a diary, compared to teaching using conventional methods to improve students' writing skills.

B. Discussion

This study examined the effect of using a diary in the teaching of writing a recount text among the tenth grade students at MAN 2 Kota Tangerang in the academic year 2021/2022. Prior to the research treatment, the data on students' writing skills from the experimental class and control class were collected using a pre-

test. After getting the results from the pre-test, the researchers then applied the treatment of using diary in writing practices to the experimental group, whereas the control group was treated using any conventional writing methods. Then, a post test was conducted on both groups to determine the effect of learning with and without using a diary to the students' writing ability. Next, the scores obtained from the tests were calculated based on aspects of writing skills to see the comparison.

In the experimental class, the result of the lowest value of the post-test was 33 points while the highest score was 91 points. The mean score of the post-test was 76.22 and the standard deviation score was 10.932. It can be seen from the percentage that 70% of the students achieved KKM scores while 30% of them did not achieve KKM scores. The results of this study indicated that teaching writing skills by using a diary offered a significant improvement, which can be seen from the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. In the control class, on the other hand, the result of the lowest score of the post-test was 34 points while the highest score was 88 points. The mean score of the post-test was 63.39 and the standard deviation score was 15.649. It can be seen from the percentage that 39% of the students achieved KKM scores while 61% of them did not achieve KKM scores. These data showed that the writers' hypothesis was accepted. Moreover, the students in the experimental group were more creative in choosing the words, using the words, and arranging the sentences, more fluent in writing because they were more accustomed to writing, and more enthusiastic in learning because they engaged their personal interests and needs. Thus, these results confirmed that teaching writing skills using a diary gave a more significant effect on the students' writing skills, compared to that using conventional methods. Using a diary to improve students' writing skills gave effective and influential effects.

This conclusion was in line with the previous research by Hermawan et al. (2020), in which the finding of that research reported that learning to write through diary writing could improve the quality of students' recount text, showing an increased score from 71.96 to 76.03. Besides, a study by Dewi (2020) also indicated that a diary could be used as an alternative medium for students to learn to write a narrative text. Hence, practicing writing a diary could help students improve their writing skills.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the formulation of the problem, the research objective, the hypothesis testing, and the analysis result, it could be concluded that there is a significant effect in teaching writing using a diary writing practice. It was proved that the experimental group students' mean score in the post-test is much higher than that in the pre-test. Also, the students became more creative, fluent, and enthusiastic in learning and expressing themselves. Moreover, similar results were also obtained by such previous research by, among others, Hermawan et al. (2020) and Dewi (2020). Thus, teachers should have no doubts in encouraging their students in writing diaries, not only in recount and narrative but also in other possible types of genres.

This study indeed has its own limitations; therefore, further research is encouraged to examine whether the same results can also be obtained if diary writing is applied in other types of genres with different levels of students in different places, under the consideration that students with different backgrounds may perceive the method differently.

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