

IMPROVING WRITING ABILITY OF THE EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS BY USING DIARY WRITING

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Abstract

This research was carried out in order to prove that the use of diary writing is effective in improving the students' writing ability of the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 6 Palu. The research used quasi experimental research design which has involved two sample groups. There were an experimental group and a control group. The research population was the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 6 Palu. The sample of this research was selected by using purposive sampling technique. The sample of this research was Class VIII Unggulan 2 as the experimental group consisting 21 students and Class VIII Unggulan 1 as the control group consisting 22 students. In collecting the data, the researcher used test. The tests were conducted twice which was pre-test and post-test. Having analyzed the data, it reveals that there were different scores obtained by the control group and the experimental group. In other words, the t_{counted} (7.94) is higher than t_{table} (0.05). The result indicated that writing diary technique can be used to improve writing skill of the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 6 Palu.

Keywords: writing ability; diary writing; mechanic of writing

INTRODUCTION

There are four language skills that the students have to master when they are learning English, namely listening, reading, speaking, and writing. These skills are divided into two groups which are receptive skills and productive skills. Receptive skills are speaking and listening while productive skills are speaking and writing. As a productive skill, writing skill cannot be disregarded in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Writing is an activity which the researcher pours their thoughts, feelings, and ideas in written form to communicate with themselves and other people.

Al-Jawi (2011) points out that people often communicate through writing. Many people like speaking because in speaking, the speaker is spontaneous and unplanned. Furthermore, Al-Jawi (2011:1) argues "We acquire the ability to speak at home without systematic instruction. However, in writing we need to be thought how to write first. It is

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usually in school that the students learn to write”. That is why English teachers must teach writing to the students, so the students can communicate to the others well by mastering the writing skill.

Writing is very important for students at schools. When they can write well in English, not only can they improve their writing skill, but also they can improve other skills like speaking, reading, and listening. Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983:149) explain, “Writing should reinforce and help extend the listening, speaking, and reading abilities”. It can be concluded that by mastering writing can help the students to master the other skills.

Talking about writing, it means talking 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. Asking them to start their writing by expressing their thoughts, feelings, ideas, experiences, or anything happening in their daily life in written form can facilitate them to write. That is why writing diary will be helpful to build the students’ positive response and interest in learning English because they assume to write freely without any pressure and a lot of fun in diary writing.

The researcher chose the diary writing as a medium to improve the writing ability of the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 6 Palu. She chose it because to make the correct and good writing is not easy for those who are still in the early stage in English. Based on the researcher’s preliminary observation she found out that most students got difficulties in writing especially in grammar and in the use and mechanics. In grammatical use, they were not skillful enough to construct the sentences in the form of simple past tense, while in the use of mechanics of writing; most of them disregard the punctuation and the capitalization.

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

Based on the problems above, the researcher focused on the students’ problems in mechanic of writing and how to develop the students’ 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 writing ability of the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 6 Palu?*

METHODOLOGY

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 post-test. However, only did the experimental groups receive the treatment by using writing diary. The design by Hatch and Farhady (1982:22) is as follows:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathbf{G_1 = T_1 X} & & \mathbf{T_2} \\ \mathbf{G_2 = T_1} & & \mathbf{T_2} \end{array}$$

Where:

- G₁ = experimental group
- G₂ = control group
- T₁ = pre-test for experimental/control group
- T₂ = post-test for experimental/control group
- X = treatment

According to Ary et al (2010:148), “A population is all members of any well-defined class of people, events, or subject.” In this research, the population was the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 6 Palu that consisting of twelve classes.

Ary et al. (2010:148) define “A sample is a portion of a population or the small group that is observed”. They further state probability sampling is the kind of sampling in which every element in the population has a nonzero chance of being selected, while nonprobability sampling involves nonrandom procedures for selecting the members of the sample. Nonprobability sampling has some types. One of those types is purposive sampling.

The researcher used purposive sampling technique to determine the sample of this research. According to Ary et al. (2010), in purposive sampling, sample elements judged to be typical, or representative, are chosen from population. In SMP Negeri 6 Palu, especially in excellent class program that consists of seven classes, the students needed to write a journal or a diary after finishing every chapter of English subject. The two classes that the researcher chose as a sample were VIII Unggulan 1 and VIII Unggulan 2 because these classes almost finished their material. The researcher chose VIII Unggulan 1 as the control group and VIII Unggulan 2 as the experimental group. The researcher divided it based on their pre-test.

Therefore, the purpose of choosing the sample on this research was to find out whether this technique can improve their writing ability or not.

According to Ary et al (2010:37), “A variable is a construct or characteristic that can take on different values or score. The independent variable is the use of diary writing, while the dependent one is the ability of the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 6 Palu in writing.

In conducting this research, the researcher only used test as the research instrument. The test itself was divided into pre-test and post-test. The pre-test was conducted to measure the students’ prior knowledge before the researcher applied the treatment. Therefore, the researcher gave the post-test to the students to assess their performance or their achievement in using diary writing in writing text.

The followings are the procedures of collecting the data in this research. There are two kinds of test: pre-test and post-test. The pre-test was given before treatment while the post-test is given after the treatment. Both were expected to measure the students’ achievement in writing ability and to find out the effectiveness of the technique given. Before conducting the treatment to the students, the researcher gave a pre-test in order to find out the students’ ability in writing. In this part, the students wrote short diaries about anything happened. It could be stories about their holidays or about their experiences. After doing the pre-test, the researcher applied the treatment in order to improve students’ writing ability though diary writing. The treatment was conducted for eighth meetings. The post-test was given after the researcher conducted the treatment. The purpose of this post-test was to find out the students’ ability in writing text through diary writing. The post-test was given in order to find out whether the technique in the treatment would be successful or not.

To find out the ability of the students, the researcher firstly computed the individual score by using formula proposed by Purwanto (2008) as follows:

$$NP = \frac{R}{SM} \times 100$$

Where:

<i>NP</i>	=	students score
<i>R</i>	=	score obtained
<i>SM</i>	=	maximum score
100	=	constant number

Then the researcher computed the mean score by using the formula (Hatch and Farhady, 1982:55) as follows:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

Where:

\bar{x} = mean scores
 $\sum X$ = total individual score
 N = total of students

After getting the mean score of both experimental and control groups, the researcher computed the mean score of the deviation. The researcher used a formula (Arikunto, 2006:312) as follows:

1. The formula used for the experimental group is:

$$\sum_x 2 = \sum_x 2 - \frac{(\sum x)^2}{N}$$

2. The formula used for the control group is:

$$\sum_y 2 = \sum_y 2 - \frac{(\sum y)^2}{N}$$

The last, the researcher analyzed the data to find out the significant difference or testing hypothesis by using the t_{counted} formula proposed by Arikunto (2006:311) as follows:

$$t = \frac{M_x - M_y}{\sqrt{\left(\frac{\sum x^2 + \sum y^2}{N_x + N_y - 2}\right) \left(\frac{1}{N_x} + \frac{1}{N_y}\right)}}$$

Where:

t = significance difference between experimental and control groups
 M_x = mean score of deviation of experimental group
 M_y = mean score of deviation of control group
 $\sum_x 2$ = sum of square deviation of experimental group
 $\sum_y 2$ = sum of square deviation of control group
 N_x = number of students in experimental group
 N_y = number of students in control group

FINDINGS

In this chapter, the researcher presents the use of diary writing in the teaching and learning process. This technique was applied to improve the students' skill of SMP Negeri 6 Palu in writing recount text. The researcher presents the data obtained through the research instrument which was test. There were two tests conducted which were pre-test and post-test.

The researcher conducted the pre-test for the experimental group on Wednesday, September 10th, 2014 and for the control group on Friday, September 12th, 2014. In the pre-

test, the researcher asked the students in both classes to write a diary. By using the assessment stated previously the researcher scored the students' pre-test.

After computing the students' score, the researcher computed the mean score of the experimental group in the pre-test by using the formula:

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{x}_x &= \frac{\sum X}{N} \\ &= \frac{556.51}{21} \\ &= 26.50\end{aligned}$$

From the result shown, the mean score of the pre-test of the experimental group is 26.50.

After computing the students' score, the researcher computed the mean score of the control group in the pre-test by using the formula:

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{x}_x &= \frac{\sum X}{N} \\ &= \frac{833.25}{22} \\ &= 37.87\end{aligned}$$

The mean score of the control group is 37.87

The purpose of the post-test is to find out the improvement of the students after they had the treatment. In the post-test the researcher asked the students to write their diary. It was the type of exercise to the pre-test. The computation of the post-test mean score of the experimental group is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{x}_y &= \frac{\sum X}{N} \\ &= \frac{1744.27}{21} \\ &= 83.60\end{aligned}$$

Then, after calculating the mean deviation of the experimental group, the researcher calculated the sum of the square deviation by using the formula below:

$$\begin{aligned}\Sigma x^2 &= \Sigma x^2 - \frac{(\Sigma x)^2}{N} \\ \Sigma x^2 &= 49857.05 - \frac{(911.02)^2}{21} \\ \Sigma x^2 &= 49857.05 - \frac{982120.64}{21}\end{aligned}$$

$$\Sigma x^2 = 49857.05 - 46767.65$$

$$\Sigma x^2 = 3089.4$$

After computing the deviation score between the pre-test and the post-test of the experimental group, the researcher computed the mean deviation of the students' score presented as follows:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\Sigma X}{N}$$

$$\bar{X}_1 = \frac{\Sigma X}{N}$$

$$\bar{X}_1 = \frac{911.02}{21}$$

$$\bar{X}_1 = 43.38$$

Table 1
The Students' Score Deviation (x^2) of Pre-Test and Post-Test
of the Experimental Group

No.	Initials	Students' Scores		X	
		Pre-test X_1	Post-test X_2	$X_1 - X_2$	X^2
1.	SS	22.22	55.55	33.33	1110.88
2.	DRNT	33.33	88.88	55.55	3085.80
3.	CSK	22.22	88.88	66.66	4443.55
4.	JRN	11.11	33.33	22.22	493.72
5.	ATR	33.33	55.55	22.22	493.72
6.	TD	55.55	88.88	33.33	1110.88
7.	NPA	55.55	88.88	33.33	1110.88
8.	IY	22.22	33.33	11.11	123.43
9.	IWRP	11.11	88.88	77.77	6048.17
10.	IBDP	22.22	88.88	66.66	4443.55
11.	MFA	11.11	44.44	33.33	1110.88
12.	MH	22.22	88.88	66.66	4443.55
13.	NAKS	11.11	88.88	77.77	6048.17
14.	NMIA	11.11	55.55	44.44	1974.91
15.	RA	11.11	66.66	55.55	3085.80
16.	MA	55.55	77.77	22.22	493.72
17.	MFF	33.33	66.66	33.33	110.88
18.	NK	11.11	88.88	77.77	6048.17
19.	MF	33.33	66.66	33.33	1110.88
20.	MR	66.66	66.66	0	0
21.	IMBAP	11.11	55.55	44.44	1974.91
Total				911.02	49857.05

Table 2
The Students' Score Deviation of Pre-test and Post-test
of the Control Group

No.	Initials	Students' Standard Score		Y	
		Pre-test	Post-test	Y ₁ - Y ₂	Y ²
		Y ₁	Y ₂		
1.	BR	11. 11	44. 44	33. 33	1110. 88
2.	RH	11. 11	11. 11	0	0
3.	KM	11. 11	11. 11	0	0
4.	MH	22. 22	22. 22	0	0
5.	FF	22. 22	22. 22	0	0
6.	FH	88. 88	66. 66	22. 22	493. 72
7.	MF	22. 22	11. 11	11. 11	123. 43
8.	IPR	22. 22	22. 22	0	0
9.	FNP	11. 11	11. 11	0	0
10.	IR	55. 55	55. 55	0	0
11.	AR	88. 88	88. 88	0	0
12.	DS	88. 88	66. 66	22. 22	493. 72
13.	SM	33. 33	22. 22	11. 11	123. 43
14.	HS	44. 44	77. 77	33. 33	1110. 88
15.	FA	22. 22	33. 33	11. 11	123. 43
16.	IF	33.33	44. 44	11. 11	123. 43
17.	BA	11. 11	22. 22	11. 11	123. 43
18.	ADC	77. 77	33. 33	44. 44	1974. 91
19.	IAR	11. 11	44. 44	33. 33	1110. 88
20.	SA	33. 33	22. 22	11. 11	123. 43
21.	SY	22. 22	66. 66	44. 44	1974. 91
22.	PRP	88. 88	44. 44	44. 44	1974. 91
Total				344. 41	10985. 31

After finding the deviation score between the pre-test and the post-test of the control group, the researcher also calculated the mean deviation of the students' score presented as follows:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

$$\bar{X}_2 = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

$$\bar{X}_2 = \frac{344.41}{22}$$

$$\bar{X}_2 = 15.65$$

Moreover, the researcher analyzed the mean deviation of the control group. She calculated the sum of the square deviation by using the formula below:

$$\Sigma y^2 = \Sigma y^2 - \frac{(\Sigma y)^2}{N}$$

$$\Sigma y^2 = 10985.31 - \frac{(344.41)^2}{22}$$

$$\Sigma y^2 = 10985.31 - \frac{118618.25}{22}$$

$$\Sigma y^2 = 10985.31 - 5391.73$$

$$\Sigma y^2 = \mathbf{5593.58}$$

To see whether there is a significant difference between the means of the two groups in the post-test, the researcher compared them by using statistical formula as follows:

$$t = \frac{Mx - My}{\sqrt{\left(\frac{\Sigma x^2 + \Sigma y^2}{Nx + Ny - 2}\right) \left(\frac{1}{Nx} + \frac{1}{Ny}\right)}}$$

$$t = \frac{43.38 - 15.65}{\sqrt{\left[\frac{3089,4+5593.58}{21+22-2}\right] \left[\frac{1}{21} + \frac{1}{22}\right]}}$$

$$t = \frac{59.03}{\sqrt{\left[\frac{8682.98}{41}\right] [0.09]}}$$

$$t = \frac{34.64}{\sqrt{[211.78][0.09]}}$$

$$t = \frac{34.64}{\sqrt{19.06}}$$

$$t = \frac{34.64}{4.36}$$

$$t = \mathbf{7.94}$$

DISCUSSION

Before giving the treatment, the first thing that the researcher did was conducting the pre-test for the experimental group and the control group. The pre-test was held on Wednesday afternoon on September 10th, 2014 at 12.45 PM. The pre-test for the control group was held on the Friday afternoon on September 12th, 2014 at 13.30 PM. There were 22 students in the experimental group and 21 students in the control group who got the pre-test. The researcher did the pre-test to find out the students' prior knowledge in writing. Besides,

by giving the pre-test the researcher also obtained the first data which can be used as comparison of the students' improvement after the treatment. In the pre-test, the researcher asked the students to write their story in the past and the story itself was based on the students' experiences. After that, the researcher asked them to write their diary in form of recount text.

Related to the result of students' pre-test in the experimental group, it shows that they had some problems in grammar and mechanics of writing such as punctuation and capitalization. The number of students who were correct in grammar was 23.8%, while those who were correct in capitalization were 19%. Moreover, there were 33% students who were correct in punctuations. By seeing the data percentage, the researcher got several conclusions about the students' problem in writing. Firstly, it was hard for the students to find the correct verb for their written text. Secondly, they usually disregard to employee capitalization. Thirdly, the students did not care about employing punctuation especially full stop and comma.

After getting the students' problems based on the result of the pre-test, the researcher gave the treatment to the students in the experimental group. The treatment was conducted in eight meetings. In the process of the treatment, the researcher gave three exercises. Firstly, in exercise about mechanic of writing, the students gave the punctuation and changed the capitalization in a recount text. Secondly, in working on the exercise about grammar, they changed the verb 1 into verb 2 and wrote a simple past tense. Thirdly, in working on their own diary, the students wrote their own diary entries. After that, to facilitate the researcher to score the students task, the researcher asked them to write their diary entry in a recount text.

After giving the pre-test and the treatment, the researcher gave the post-test to the students in order to find out the students' progress. In the post-test, the test was in the same form as the pre-test. In here, the researcher asked the students to write their story in the past and the story itself was based on the students' experiences. After that, the researcher asked them to write their diary in form of recount text.

The researcher found the result of the post-test was higher than the pre-test. It shows that both groups had progress, but the progress was different. The number of students who were correct in grammar was 47.61%, while those who were correct in capitalization were 97.47%. In addition, there were 90.47% students who were correct in punctuations. By seeing the data percentage, the researcher got several conclusions about the students' progress in writing. Firstly, it was easier for the students to find the appropriate verb for their written

text. Secondly, they paid more attention to capitalization. Thirdly, the students care more about employing punctuation especially full stop and comma.

Having seen the problem in writing faced by the students, the researcher relates this study to the previous studies that have been mentioned by Ningrum (2013) and Barjesteh, Vashegi, and Gholami (2011). In the first study, she used tenth grade students of SMA AL-Khairaat Kalukubula as her population and the sample was Class XA while in the second study; they used university students of Petroleum University of Technology in Mahmoodabad and the sample was forty-four male participant selected from all the available classes among the total population of 94 BA third-year students majoring in mechanical engineering. The recent study used the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 6 Palu as her population and the sample was VIII Unggulan 1 and VIII Unggulan 2. It means diary writing can be used to improve students writing ability. In the recent research, the researcher focused on the students' problems in mechanic of writing and how to develop the students' ideas in a grammatical sentence. As a result, the researcher found that in grammatical use, the students were not skillful enough to construct the sentences in the form of simple past tense, while in the use of mechanics of writing most of them disregard the punctuation and the capitalization. However, after applying diary writing, the researcher found that there was a significant difference between pre-test and post-test. Therefore, the researcher concludes that writing diary is effective in improving students' writing ability.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Referring to the data result analysis, the researcher finally draws a conclusion that the use of diary writing can improve writing ability of the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 6 Palu. It is supported by seeing the mean score of the pre-test which is 26.50 and the mean score of the post-test which is 83.60. It indicates that the writing ability of the eighth grade students has improved. It is proved by the t_{counted} value (7.94) which is greater than t_{table} value (0.05) In other words, the research hypothesis is accepted.

The researcher has several suggestions for some people involved in the English teaching and learning process. For the students, it can be one of the ways to improve their ability in writing skill. For the teacher, the result of this research can be an alternative technique in teaching writing. For school, this study can be a starting point to develop the teaching method which applies in the school. The last is for the researchers, they can consider this research as a reference or a source for investigation.

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