**IMPROVING WRITING SKILL OF GRADE XI STUDENTS**

**USING DIALOGUE JOURNAL**

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***ABSTRACT***

*This research aims to find out the effectiveness of Dialogue Journal in improving writing skills of grade eleventh students of SMA Katolik Santo Andreas Palu. The researcher used quasi experimental research design. The sample was selected using cluster sampling technique and two classes were chosen; they are class XI IPA I as the experimental group and XI IPS I as the control group. The number of sample was 50 students. The data were collected through pre-test and post-test. The result showes that mean score of the experimental group increased from 54.4 on the pre- test to 79.3 on the post-test. Meanwhile, mean score of the control group increased from 46.7 on the pre-test to 58.9 on the post-test. By using 0.05 significance level with 48 degree of freedom, it was found that the value of t-counted(3.24) was higher than the value of t-table(2.01). It means that the research hypothesis is accepted. In other words, the use of Dialogue Journal is effective to improve writing skills of grade XI students of SMA Katolik Santo Andreas Palu.*

*Keywords: Dialogue Journal, Writing Skill, Analytical Exposition Text.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Writing is a medium of human communication to deliver thoughts and ideas and to express feeling in a readable form. It can also be defined as a tool of indirectly communication to share information. In an academic context, writing is considered to be a productive skill in the written form as stated by Tarigan (1985) that writing is productive skills for writing an indirect communication and the nature of the character is very different from that expressed by speaking.

An effective writing depends on a number of features such as linguistic features, pragmatic features, and the context in which it will be interpreted. Those features cannot be found in speaking (Nunan,1999). Speech allows the user to exploit various devices such as body movement, gestures, facial expression, tone of voice, pitch, hesitation and stress to facilitate communication, this is not available to the writer. The writer can clarify, revise or back track ideas when there is miscommunication or misunderstanding between reader and writer, Hedge (2005).

Writing is not a spontaneous skill or acquired easily. In fact, it is probably the most difficult skills to learn as stated by Nunan (1999:273) that “Writing is a complex, cognitive process that requires sustained intellectual effort over a considerable period of time”.

Writing is a way of sharing personal meanings and writing courses emphasize the power of the individual to construct his or her own views on topic. Furthermore, Raimes (1983:76) states, “writing is the skill through which we express the ideas, feelings, and thoughts arranged in words, sentences and paragraphs.” Thus, it can be concluded that wrtiting is basically the process of expressing ideas and thoughts of the writer using knowledge of structure and vocabulary to combine the writer’s ideas as a means of communication.

Although writing is one of the common ways to convey information, the process may not be easy. Writers not only go through some processes, such as prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing, they require to have capability in aspects of writing – organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics. Suparno and Yunus (2003:14) state, “writing involves several phases; the preparatory phase, the content development and review, as well as revisions or improvements posts.” So to speak in order to produce a good piece of writing the writers undergo a long process and it can be quite difficult as they have to be able to produce something new, that is their original idea. They also have to be able to broaden words to make the best use of the sentences to express their message.

Considering the fact above, it is hardly surprising if writing becomes one of the most important skills to teach at school, especially in English class. The Indonesian government clearly emphasize the importance in technical guide for developing syllabus and model of syllabus for high school (Petunjuk Teknis Pengembangan Silabus dan Contoh/Model Silabus SMA/MA) 2006 that teaching English is focused on receptive and productive skills. In other words, writing, like any other language skills, is necessary to teach so that English teaching objectives can be achieved and student’s competence can be improved.

To find out the process of teaching and learning writing skills to grade seventh students of Katolik Santo Andreas Palu, the researcher observed the class and interviewed one of the English teachers. The results showed that first, the students considered writing a difficult skill to learn; therefore, they did not favor it. They seemed to get difficulty in organizing and constructing ideas, word choice, spelling, unity, cohesion and coherence. Second, they were lacked of vocabulary; thus, they had lower motivation and anxiety to writing. Another problem was due to a classroom technique of the English teacher, which was monotonous in practice. She was not a communicative teacher. When she taught the students, she just passed over the material, explained the material and assigned some tasks. Consequently, the students found teaching learning process boring.

Relating to the problems above, the researcher looked for a classroom technique that can improve student’s writing skills as well as motivating them to write. She applied Dialogue Journal- a classroom technique that gives learners chance to write about whatever they know and think important. The goal of the Dialogue Journal first and foremost is to encourage fluency before accuracy as supported by Larotta (2008:4) that “Fluency is developed through writing to communicate and with the absence of the pressure to be technically correct in language use.”

In addition, Dialogue Journal is interactive classroom technique with teacher and student taking turns writing and responding. The journal typically does not have assigned topics, and students have freedom to initiate topics of their choice. According to Peyton and Staton (1992:6), “Dialogue Journal displays student writing becoming more fluent, interesting, and correct over time.” In other words, Dialogue Journal is a good activity to get students involved in writing. As the learners can write about what they know, they find that they have a lot more to say. As a result, they will gain confidence as writers, become autonomous learners, and are more motivated to express themselves in writing. All the benefits ensured the researcher that by using Dialogue Journal in her research, the writing skills of grade eleventh students of SMA Katolik Santo Andreas Palu could be improved.

**METHODOLOGY**

The researcher decided to apply Quasi-experimental research design, namely nonequivalent control-group design in her research because it was just not possible to get consent from school to randomly select individual students to group. This design allowed her to take two sample groups; they were experimental and control group. Both groups were pretested and posttested. The design of this research was adopted from Creswell (2009:160-161) as seen below.

Group A O1 X O2

Group B O3 O4

Besides administering the pretest and the posttest, the researcher also taught both groups. She taught the experimental group using Dialogue Journal. The control group, on the other hand,was taught without specific teaching method. When teaching writing analytical exposition text to this group, the researcher began the lesson by providing students a topic. She promptly asked them to write an analytical exposition text based on the topic given. She then collected the students’ writing to read at home. She did not give any feedback and error correction to their work.

Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, Sorensen (2002:161) define a population as “all members of any well-defined class of people, events, or objects.” The population of this research was grade eleventh students of SMA Katolik Santo Andreas Palu, which consists of four parallel classes. Each class consisted of 20 – 30 students. So, the total population was 100 students. The sample had taken by using cluster sampling technique to find experimental group and control group. There were some steps to take when selecting the sample. First, the researcher provided four pieces of paper. From the four, only two were read ‘experimental group’ and ‘control group’. Then, she folded up the paper and put them into a small box. Next, she asked chairman of each class to take one of the folded paper. The chairmen with inscribed paper became the research sample. They were class XI IPA I as the experimental group andclass XI IPS I as the control group.

In connection to the title of this research, the researcher used two variables. They were independent variable and dependent variable. Creswell (2009:50) defines dependent variable as “those that (probably) cause, influence, or affect outcomes”, meanwhile, independent variable was those that depend on the independent variables.” Thus, the dependent variable was the students writing skills and the independent variable was the application of Dialogue Journal.

Instrument is a tool or aid used by researcher in collecting data. The researcher used test as an instrument in this study. The test covered pre-test and post-test. Pre-test was given to students before they received the treatment, and post-test was given after they received the treatment.

The pre-test was generally designed to determine the students’ prior skills in writing analytical exposition text. Results of the pretest provided clues about the basic skills of the experimental group and control group students in writing a-three paragraph analytical exposition text before receiving the treatment using Dialogue Journal. On the pre-test, both groups were instructed to write an analytical exposition text based on the topic given. The topic was about ‘smoking’.

When treatment to the experimental group was completely done, the researcher gave the post-test to both groups. The posttest given to both groups was similar with the pretest in the level of difficulty but different in topic. The topic of the post-test was ‘cheating’. The results of both the pre-test and the post-test were compared to determine whether the treatment given was effective or not.

After administering the pretest, the researcher provided treatment to the experimental group. In conducting the treatment, the researcher used the following steps as follows:

1. Teacher asked the students some pre questions related to the topic that was going to write.
2. The students answered the questions or gave some responses to the teacher’s questions.
3. The teacher provided a topic and assigned the students to write several things about it in three paragraphs.
4. The students wrote arguments based on the given topic.
5. Teacher collected the students’ work. And the students turned in their work.
6. The teacher gave feedback and error correction to the students’ work and gave the students’ paper back
7. And the last, the students had self-correction.

In order to assess the students’ work, the researcher used scoring rubric suggested by Weigle (2002:117) as shown in the following table.1.

**Table.1. Scoring Rubric of Writing**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No. | Writing Components | Score | Explanation |
| 1. | Cohesion | 0  1  2  3 | Cohesion almost totally absent. Writing so fragmentary that comprehension of the intended communication is virtually imposible.  Unsatisfactory cohesion may cause difficulty in comprehension of most of the intended communication.  For the most part satisfactory cohesion althrough occasional deficiencies may mean that certain parts of the communication are not always effective.  Satisfactory use of cohesion resulting in effective communication. |
| 2. | Adequacy of vocabulary for purpose | 0  1  2  3 | Vocabulary inadequate even for the most basic parts of the intended communication.  Frequent inadequacies in vocabulary for the task. Perhaps frequent lexical inapropriacies and/or repetion  Some inadequacies in vocabulary for the task. Perhaps some lexical inappropriacies and/or circumlocution.  Almost no inadequacies in vocabulary for the task. Only rare inappropriate and/or circumlocution. |
| 3. | Mechanical accuracy I (*punctuation)* | 0  1  2  3 | Ignorance of conventions of punctuation.  Low standard of accuracy in punctuation.  Some inaccuracies in punctuation.  Almost no inaccuracies in punctuation. |

After collecting data through tests, the researcher counted the student’s individual score using formula proposed by Arikunto (2006:308). Then, the researcher calculated the mean score of both the experimental and the control group on the pre-test and the post-test using the formula of Hatch and Farhady (1982:55). After getting the value of the mean score of each group on the pretest and the posttest, the researcher continued to count the value of deviation to get the value of standard error applying the formula suggested by Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, Sorensen (2010:115). Next, the researcher calculated the sum of squares total (SST) using the formula of Hatch and Farhady (1982). In addition, the researcher computed the standard error of the difference between two means of two groups. Counting the value of the standard error aimed at computing the t-counted, which functions to show relation between the independent variable and dependent variable of this study using formula as proposed by Ary, *et al.* (2010:171). Last, the researcher analyzed the result of the mean scores and the standard error of the difference between two means in order to know if there was a significant difference in the results of the pre-test and the post-test using the formula proposed by Ary, *et.al*(2010:171). Last, the researcher analyzed the result of the mean scores and the standard error of the difference between two means in order to know if there was a significant difference in the results of the pre-test and the post-test using the formula proposed by Ary, *et.al*(2010:171)

**FINDINGS**

The researcher administered two tests in collecting the research data, namely pre-test and post-test. Both tests were given to students right before and after the treatment was delivered. The pre-test was intended to uncover the students’ prior skills in writing analytical exposition text. The researcher administered the pre-test to the experimental group on September 22nd, 2016 and the control group on September 23rd,2016. She assigned students from the two groups to write a-three paragraph analytical exposition text. The students were not allowed to decide their topic. The researcher provided them a topic. The topic was about ‘smoking’. Scores of individual students from both groups were determined by three categories; they were cohesion, adequacy of vocabulary on purpose and mechanics of writing.

After conducting six times of treatment to the experimental class, the researcher administered post test to both classes. The post-test aimed at finding out the students’ progress after receiving treatment. Thus, the success of the treatment given appeared from the result of the post-test. The topic was about ‘cheating’. The researcher administered the post-test to the experimental group on October 22nd, 2016 and the control group on October 23rd,2016.

The researcher found the students’ highest score in the experimental group on the pre-test was 77.8, while the lowest was 33.3. To decide on the number of students passed this pre-test, the researcher took the minimum passing standard of 75 as used at SMA Katolik Santo Paulus Palu as a comparable figure. The result showed that after comparing the students’ individual scores with the minimum passing standard, only one student passed the pre-test. In other words, of 30 students took the pre-test, 29 of them failed to reach the minimum passing standard of 75. After obtaining the students’ individual scores, the researcher continued to compute the mean score, the mean score of the experimental group on the pre-test was 54.4

Than the highest score obtained by students in the experimental group on the post-test was 100, while the lowest was 66.7. It also showed that 28 students got score above the minimum passing standard of 75, and only two students got score below the minimum passing standard. The mean score of the experimental group on the post-test was 79.3 it was concluded that the mean deviation of the experimental group was 24.8.

While the highest score obtained by students in the control group on the pre test was 66.7 and the lowest was 22.2. Using the same minimum passing standard of 75, the researcher deduced that no students passed the pre-test. The mean score in pretest of the control group was 46.7. Referring to the level of the achievement of the two groups on the pre-test, it could be assumed that the basic skills of the students both in the experimental and the control group in writing a-three paragraph analytical exposition text were almost equal. The highest score achieved by the students in the control group on the post-test was 77.8, while the lowest was 33.3. If a total number of students in the experimental group passed the post-test were 28, a number of students passed in the control group were five, and a number of students failed were fifteen. while the mean score in posttest of the control group was 58.9 and it was concluded the mean deviation of the control group was 16.11.

In addition, the researcher applied t-test formula to determine whether there was a significant difference between the results pretest and posttest of experimental group and control group. It was 3.21.

Testing hypothesis aims to find out the effectiveness of classroom technique applied. In order to know whether the research hypothesis is accepted or rejected, the hypothesis should be tested. The rule of the testing hypothesis is that if the t-counted value is higher than t-table value, the hypothesis is accepted. On the contrary, if t-counted was lower than t-table, the hypothesis is rejected.

However, before deciding whether the hypothesis is accepted or not, the researcher needed to determine the critical t-table using 0.05 level of significance and 48 degree of freedom (df) (Nx + Ny – 2 = 30 + 20 – 2). As the critical t-table value of 48 degree of freedom was not available in critical value of students’ distribution, she used interpolation formula as suggested by Gujarati (1995:809).

The researcher asserted that the research hypothesis is accepted because t-counted value () is greater than t-table value (2.01). It means that Dialogue Journal has positive impact on writing skills of eleventh grade students of SMA Katolik Santo Andreas Palu.

**DISCUSSIONS**

The researcher conducted the preliminary research (observing teaching-learning process and interview the English teacher) at SMA Negeri Katolik Santo Andreas Palu and found three important things. First, the students viewed writing as difficult skills to master. They got difficulties in arranging, connecting, and developing ideas into good paragraphs. Second, the students had little motivation to express their ideas, feelings and thoughts in written form. So often they were nervous when asked to write due to inadequate vocabulary knowledge. Third, the way the teacher taught the students writing skills was not interesting at all. Rather than encouraging students to write, she made them yawnful.

In connection with the above problems, the researcher then assumed that the students’ writing skills were low. For that reasons, she intended to apply Dialogue Journal to solve the problems. To execute the plan, she at first selected two classes clusterly to be used as experimental and control group. Both groups were pretested in different day; the experimental group was on Thursday, September 22nd, 2016,while the control group was on Friday, September 23rd, 2016. They were assigned to write a-three paragraph analytical exposition text with topic of smoking. The result showed that the students in both groups made some mistakes in terms of grammar, word choice, and mechanics of writing. For example, one of the students wrote, “*Smoking is not good For healthy.in Indonesian many People smoking because hobby. So they addiction to smoking and it’s hard to stop smoking.”*

Next, she gave the students in the experimental group a treatment using Dialogue Journal, while the students in control group was not given any treatment. The treatment was conducted six times. During the treatment, the students were assigned to write their ideas or thoughts based on the topic given. The researcher let them write by themselves. The following are the steps of teaching and learning processes along with the students’ problems and progress in each meeting.

Because the students never heard about Dialogue Journal, the researcher explained about the working of Dialogue Journal in first meeting. She also explained about analytical exposition text, including the generic structure followed by examples. This appropriate elaboration is needed to encourage the students understand the rule of learning process. When the students got what they were expected to do, she continued teaching them by asking several questions related to the topic. These pre-questionings helped the students arrange and develop ideas. After stimulating the students’ minds with some preview questions, she assigned them to write. During the writing process, some students grumbled why they had to write, while some others were still confused to develop their ideas. They apparently were not interested in writing. Undeniably, the writing process made them bored and flustered. At the end of the meeting the researcher collected the students’ work.

Before the students started to write based on the topic given in the second meeting, the researcher returned the students’ work from last meeting. She explained common mistakes the students made in previous meeting. They paid well attention and wrote the correction on their own paper. She also explained the meaning of correction symbols she wrote on students’ paper. During the writing process in this meeting, the students were unable to write a clear and readable analytical exposition text. The ideas were not connected to each other. The generic structure was not strong and obvious. To solve the problem, the researcher gave some examples of transitional expressions show relationships between ideas, such as additionally, for this reason, furthermore, on the contrary, etc. She then provided the students with some preview questions about education of drugs; what they know about people addicted to drugs, actions to prevent drugs abuse, and solutions for drugs users. The students continued their activity by writing a-three paragraph analytical exposition text and submitted their work at the end of time.

In the third meeting, the students wrote a topic of corruption and Indonesian culture. They were asked some pre-questions, such as the condition of corruptors in Indonesian, how corruptions become a culture, and how to end it. The students response was quite good. They began to prepare their arguments when the researcher gave back their paper from the last meeting. The students were so excited to see correction symbols on their paper that they knew their mistakes. Along with the corrections, the students were provided with a moral message to motivate them to always learn from previous mistakes. They kept on writing a-three paragraph analytical exposition text with arguments they had prepared in pre questioning session. Although the students struggled to connect their ideas and the generic structure was almost invisible, they submitted their paper at the end of time.

Like previous meetings, the researcher began the teaching and learning process by returning the students’ paper collected from last meeting. To lead the students to the topic they were going to write, she asked them several questions, including how cars contribute to climate change, what can you say if car is banned?, etc. The students showed some progress in argumentating their ideas. They actively shared their ideas to class. The researcher guided them to write a-three paragraph analytical exposition text using the arguments they had. They started to understand how to develop ideas in writing. Gradually the generic structure of their composition was clear. When time was up, they collected their work.

To start up the meeting (fifth meeting), the researcher giving back the students’ work from last meeting and asked some preview questions, such as public transportation in Indonesian, benefits of free charge public transportation, etc. The students wrote their paper straightaway after getting stimulating questions. In short, they were able to organize and develop their ideas with a strong and clear generic structure. Even so, they need some more time to write a-three paragraph analytical exposition text. She turned-in their paper to be corrected by the researcher.

In last meeting of the treatment, the researcher began the class by providing some preview questions, such as how the students define fast food, how often they eat it, how it tastes, why it is so popular, any healthy fast food they know, etc. The students response was great. They enthusiastically answered the questions. Immediately they can enlighten the ideas and expressed them in written form. The researcher collected their paper when the time was over.

After conducting the treatment, the researcher gave posttest to both groups. The aim of the post test was to find out the improvement of the students’ writing skill after the treatment was delivered. The result showed that students in the experimental group had a good progress on the posttest. Their individual scores were improved. If on the pretest there was only one student passed the test (0.3 percent), on the posttest there were 28 of 30 students passed or 93.3 percent. Therefore, applying Dialogue Journal technique could improve the skill of eleventh grade students of SMA Katolik Santo Andreas Palu in writing analytical exposition text.

**CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

After collecting and analyzing the data in the previous chapter, the researcher concludes that the use of Dialogue Journal is effective in teaching writing analytical exposition text to grade eleventh students of SMA Katolik Santo Andreas Palu.The higher value of t-counted (3.21) than t-table (2.01) indicates that Dialogue Journal gives a positive impact to the improvement of students’ writing skills. It means, the research hypothesis stating that writing skills of grade eleventh students of SMA Katolik Santo Andreas Palu who are instructed using Dialogue Journalis better than those are not instructed using Dialogue Journalis accepted.

In connection with the success of the use of Dialogue Journal in improving students’ writing skills of the analytical exposition text, some suggestions are drawn. First, English teachers should consider using Dialogue Journal as an additional classroom technique in the teaching of writing without leaving the process of writing. A Dialogue Journal can increase students’ motivation in writing as they feel free to express their ideas without any pressure as well as to help fluency in writing. When the English teachers decide to use Dialogue Journalin teaching writing skills, they are suggested to continuously writing response journal to form students’ writing habit. They have to take more control so that the students write journal regularly. Moreover, the English teacher can use Dialogue Journal to teach other kind of texts, such as recount and descriptive text.

Second, students should take the opportunity of writing Dialogue Journal as a means of indirect communication with teacher, while enhancing their writing skills. Last, the next researcher can implement Dialogue Journal with different kinds of activities in the classroom that are better and match students’ preferences and needs. They are suggested to explore more about theuse of Dialogue Journal in teaching writing skills of other kinds of text.

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