THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A DIALOGUE JOURNAL IN IMPROVING STUDENTS’ WRITING SKILL IN NARRATIVE TEXT OF THE ELEVENTH GRADERS

Gundah Basiswi, Anik Nunuk Wulyani
State University of Malang
E-mail: unun_nug13@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT: This study was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of a dialogue journal in improving students’ writing skill in narrative text of the eleventh graders of SMAN 4 Malang. The design was quasi experimental. The subjects were XI-IPA1 as the control group and XI-IPA4 as the experimental group. The results of this study showed that the experimental group achieved better in posttest than control group since it was given a dialogue journal as an additional activity.

Key words: effectiveness, dialogue journal, students’ writing skill in narrative

Teaching English in senior high school is compulsory. Based on Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Dasar (KTSP) or School Based Curriculum 2006, the teaching of English at senior high school is in informational level (Depdiknas, 2006). It means that the students are prepared to continue their education to the higher level of education and are expected to be able to access knowledge by using language skills, students in senior high school have to master some text types such as procedure, descriptive, recount, report, narrative, and analytical exposition, new item, hortatory exposition, spoof, explanation, discussion, review, and public speaking. This study is concerned with narrative text type since it is always taught in every grade of senior high school.

What might happen in the teaching of writing in school is that not all teachers are able to use helpful method or technique to support the students’ effort to advance their writing ability. This could be seen in the result of the observation done at SMAN 4 Malang. The students were not interest in teaching writing activity and they tended to become passive. The students tended to keep silent when the teacher explained in front of the class. Although they did not understand too much concerning the subject, they did not want to ask questions to the teacher. Based on teaching practice program on September 2011, the students also stated that they did not know how to start writing. They were actually very active in speaking and reading activities. Thus, the writing strategy which was used in SMAN 4 Malang did not go smoothly. Therefore, it needs some improvements. In other words, some new techniques in teaching writing need to be introduced and implemented. The word ‘new’ here means that the teacher has never applied the techniques. They are newsletter writing, pen pals, and dialogue journal writing. This study proposed a dialogue journal.

A dialogue journal is a written conversation between two or more people on regular basic. Eanes (1997) states that a dialogue journal is an ongoing written conversation, with the partners exchanging messages daily or weekly. Students can write as much as they want and the teacher gives the comments to the students’ writing and questions, introduces new topics, or asks questions. The comments given should be related to the students’ writing, just like a real conversation.
There have been some studies done to know the utilization of dialogue journal. The first study was undergone by Cahyono (2001). The result of this study stated that although there was no significance different on features and functions of journals, the students were generally developed paragraphs adequately. Most of the paragraphs written in the journals fulfilled the criteria of good paragraphs development. The second study related to dialogue journal was done by Mukti (2009). The result of the study is that a dialogue journal could improve the students’ ability in writing in terms of content, organization and language use. The improvements were caused by regular writing practice done by the students and the teachers’ response given to their writing. The third study was done by Nurdin (2009). In this research, he found that the students’ entries from time to time increased significantly in terms of number of sentences and paragraphs. Lastly, Husna (2011) conducted a study related to dialogue journal. She did ten meetings. At the three first meeting of her study, students wrote from something simple like personal identities and daily activities. Started from the seventh meeting, the students tended to write more creative topics like hobbies, and friendship. The students can conduct various writing based on what they felt and happened at that time.

In line with the findings of the previous studies, Peyton (1993) states that many teachers find dialogue journal as an interactive writing on individual learner which was a crucial part of their classes. Dialogue journals do not only offer a new topic of communication, but also give another context for students’ writing development in interaction with a proficient English speaker. Students had the opportunity to use English without worrying about the grammatical errors. As the interaction is in written conversation, the students will not feel a shame to tell their interest. It is concluded that since a dialogue journal provides students with a real readers and an audience, they will write it as clear as possible. The teacher will give responses only to the content of the students’ journal, not to the grammatical and mechanical errors of the writing. Therefore, the students are free to write their thoughts.

Based on the explanation above, it is urgent to conduct a study on the effectiveness of a dialogue journal to the eleventh graders of SMAN 4 Malang.

METHOD

This study attempted to find out the effectiveness of implementing a dialogue journal on the students’ narrative writing achievement. Thereby, to achieve the precise measurement of the effectiveness of a dialogue journal on students’ narrative writing achievement, it is necessary to choose an appropriate research design. Thus, this study would be best conducted in an experimental design. There are two variables employed in this study: independent and dependent variables. The independent variable in this study is the dialogue journal. The dependent variable is the students’ narrative writing scores.

The subjects of this study were XI-IPA1 (control group) and XI-IPA4 (experimental group). The instruments which were used in this study were a writing prompt for pretest and posttest and a questionnaire. The writing prompt was used to obtain the scores of the learners on pretest and posttest, while a questionnaire used to know the students’ responses toward the implementation of a dialogue journal. The writing prompt was required to make compositions in the
form of narration. It consisted of five optional titles like (1) Cinderella, (2) Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih, (3) The Race: The Tortoise and The Hare, (4) Snow White, and (5) Little Red Riding Hood.

This study was conducted in three stages: pre-experimental stage, experimental stage, and post-experimental stage. In pre-experimental stage, some preparations were done before applying this study like reviewing curriculum and syllabus, developing the test instrument, and trying out the test. In the experimental stage, three activities were done: pre-test, treatment and posttest. In this stage, the students’ scores were analyzed and interpreted. Some statistical calculations were also made. The purpose of the calculation was to be able to see the significant difference between the results of pretest of both groups and also between the results of posttest of both groups. Based on the statistical calculation, conclusion was made. After the data of both groups were recorded, they were analyzed using Independent Sample t-test with the help of SPSS 16.0.

**FINDINGS**

Based on the objective of the study, the posttest scores of students from both groups were used. From the result, it could be seen that the pretest was followed by 28 students of the control group and 31 students of experimental group. Those who did not follow the pretest or posttest from the both group were excluded from the groups.

The result of this study was presented to know the difference between the mean score of the control group and experimental group. If the mean score of the experimental group was significantly higher than the control group, this method proposed was considered as an effective method. The comparison of effects between the experimental group and the control group were presented in the Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Result</th>
<th>Students’ Scores</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experimental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pretest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total scores</td>
<td>2113.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean scores</td>
<td>68.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| The Difference of Scores between Pretest and Posttest | 12.02 | 4.78
| The Difference of Score between Group | 7.24 |

Table 1 showed that there was a significant difference between the scores of eleventh grade students of experimental and control groups. The difference of the pretest score and posttest score of the experimental group was 12.02 points, while the difference of the pretest score and posttest score of the control group was 4.78 points. Based on the analysis, the score of the control group had changed about 4.78 points, but compared to the control group, the score of the experimental one had changed significantly; that was about 12.02 points. Thus, the difference score between the experimental and control group was 7.24 points. It meant that the students who were given a dialogue journal achieved better score in writing narrative text than those who were not given a dialogue journal.
Next, the posttest scores of both experimental and control groups were compared statistically using Independence Sample t-test. From the computation using SPSS 16.0, it was found that the mean score of experimental group was significantly higher than the control group’s mean score.

In order to make a decision, there are two possibilities (one-tailed):
1. If the level of significance coefficient is higher than 0.05 (Sig > 0.05), it means that there is not enough evidence to reject H₀.
2. If the level of significance coefficient is lower than 0.05 (Sig < 0.05), it means that there is enough evidence to reject H₀.

To know which one achieved better in narrative writing skill, the post test of both groups were compared statistically using Independence Sample t-test in SPSS 16.00.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2 The Output of Independence Sample T-test.</th>
<th>Independent Samples Test</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>t-test for Equality of Means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pretest Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>.280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pretest Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>.272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>posttest Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>.792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>posttest Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>-3.307</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the computation using SPSS 16.0, it was found that t value of F for the Equal Variance assumed was 3.345 with degree of freedom of 57 and the level of significance coefficient was 0.001. Since the level of significance coefficient was lower than 0.05 (Sig < 0.05), it meant that there was enough evidence to reject H₀. Thus, there was significance different between the two groups. In other words, the control group was difference significantly to the experimental group.

In terms of students’ attitudes toward the implementation of a dialogue journal, it was found that 7 students (22.58%) felt very happy with the implementation of the dialogue journal as an additional writing activity, 20 students (64.52%) felt happy, no students (0.00%) felt displeased and very displeased of the implementation of a dialogue journal. In addition, there were 7
students (22.58%) who felt very relaxed and 22 students (70.97%) who felt relaxed in expressing their ideas or feeling through dialogue journals.

Dealing with students’ feeling if they know that their journal was being discussed in the class and Commented classmate, there were 6 students (19.35%) from 31 respondents who felt happy when other students responded their journals, 13 students (41.94%) who felt pleased, 7 students (22.58%) who felt neither happy nor unhappy, 4 students (12.90%) who felt displeased, and one student (3.23%) who felt very displeased when her journal was commented by other friends in the class. Related to question how the students’ feeling when they know that some of their mistake being corrected by their friend in the class, there were 14 students (15.48%) who felt very happy, 15 students (45.16%) who felt happy, 5 students (16.13%) who felt neither happy nor unhappy, and no one who felt unhappy when the class discussed about the mistakes in their dialogue journals. Dealing with the dialogue journal was motivated or not, there were 15 students (45.16%) who felt very motivated, 14 students (41.94%) who felt motivated and 4 students (12.90%) who felt neither motivated nor unmotivated. Dealing with the question whether the students thought that they wrote with a better content through a dialogue journal or not, 16 students (51.61%) thought that dialogue journal was very helpful for them to write better content, 15 students (48.39%) thought that dialogue journal helped them to write better content and no students felt doubt about dialogue journal. In terms of whether the students thought that a dialogue journal helped them to write with a better organization or not, there were 13 students (41.94%) who thought that dialogue journal method really helped them to write with better organization, 16 students (51.61%) who thought that dialogue journal method helped them to write with better organization, and only 2 students who thought that dialogue journal method was neither helpful nor unhelpful for them to write with better organization.

Referring to question whether the students thought that a dialogue journal helped them to write with a better vocabulary or not, 13 students (41.94%) very agreed if dialogue journal method helped them to use better vocabulary in writing, 17 students (54.83%) agreed if dialogue journal method helped them to write with a better vocabulary, and only one student who thought that this method did not help her to write with better vocabulary.

Concerning question whether the students thought that a dialogue journal helped them to write with a better language use or not, 14 students (45.16%) thought that this addition activity was really helpful to improve students’ writing quality in terms of language use, 15 students (48.39%) thought that this activity was helpful for them to have better language use, 2 students (6.45%) thought that dialogue journal was neither helpful nor unhelpful to improve their writing ability. For the last aspect asked, whether the students thought that a dialogue journal helped them to write with a better mechanics, 9 students (29.03%) students thought that dialogue journal really helped them to write with a better mechanics, 20 students (64.52%) thought that dialogue journal helped them to write with a better mechanism, and only 2 students thought that dialogue journal was neither helpful nor unhelpful them to have a better writing in terms of mechanics.

Besides, most of students stated that they enjoyed and excited to have a dialogue journal activity because it could help them to write better. There were also students who stated that writing in dialogue journal could make them feel free.
to write their ideas even their problems. The students also stated that it could reduce a little bit their burden in writing activity.

Dealing with the suggestions, some students suggested that this activity should be implemented in every grader that takes English as a compulsory course in the school. Also, they stated like “Dialog jurnal cukup menyenangkan karena ada komentaranya. Saran: lebih baik dialog jurnal dilanjutkan.” (“A dialogue journal is fun because there is a comment. Suggestion: it’s better to continue it.”); “Membuat dialog jurnal sangat efektif dan membantu” (“A dialogue journal is effective and helpful”); “This activity is very interesting because it can make me love to write. Let’s continue it!” From those statements, it can be concluded that this activity should be continued, not only for one month but one semester at least. However, another student suggested that there should be a correction in their journal related their mistakes, not only give comments.

DISCUSSION

As discussed in findings, it was found that the mean score in posttest of experimental group was significantly higher than the mean score of control group. After doing statistical analysis, it was revealed that a dialogue journal gave significant effect on students’ skill in writing narrative. The Independent Sample t-test analysis showed that \( t \) value of \( F \) for the Equal Variance assumed was 3.345. From the computation, it was found that the degree of freedom was 57 with significance level of 0.001. Therefore, there was enough evidence to reject \( H_0 \) since the significance level was lower than 0.05 (one-tailed). It statistically proved that a dialogue journal was effective to help the students improving their writing skill in writing narrative text.

There are a number of possible reasons why a dialogue journal gives significant effect on students’ narrative writing. First of all, it was easier for students to write since they are free to write. The students will have thoughts so that they have a freedom to write. The students are free to choose the topic they like and they should not feel afraid to write because the teacher will only give concern on the content of students’ entry, not grammatical and mechanical errors in writing. It is similar to Peyton (1993) who states that freedom to write anything of their interest is very important as the students are easy to explore and expressing their ideas.

Second, a dialogue journal is to provide students with a real reader. Therefore, the students will write as clear as possible since they think about the readers. This idea goes with Gebhard’s idea (2000). He says that a dialogue journal can teach the students to write to an audience.

Third, a dialogue journal motivates the students to write continually as they may have the problem solved from the teacher’s comment. The comments are related to the students’ writing, just like a real conversation. Eanes (1997) says that a dialogue journal can make vital connections with the students not afforded by other types of assignments and activities. Since some students have lack of confidence to write English, a dialogue journal can help the teacher to change their attitudes and to build the students’ confidence. In other words, the teacher could know more about the students’ personalities, understand their language problem and motivate them.
Overall, this study further proved that a dialogue journal had a good influence in the students’ skill in writing narrative. Writing through a dialogue journal make the students open their thoughts freely so that they have a freedom to write.

Referring to the results of research findings that had been discussed, this technique was worth applying as additional activity in teaching and learning of writing. Therefore, it is necessary to have other investigations as follow up to the research which has been conducted. To make it clearer, the general conclusions on the result of research findings, more detailed suggestions and recommendations for the next researchers are discussed in the next chapter.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion
Based on the research findings, the implementation of dialogue journal in improving students’ skill in writing narrative text was effective. The students who were given a dialogue journal as an additional activity had better scores in narrative writing than those who were not given a dialogue journal.

The improvement of the students’ skill in narrative writing was shown by the result of the posttest from both groups. The mean score of the experimental group was 80.18 and the mean score of the control group was 73.57. From the comparison, it was clear that the difference of the two groups was 7.24.

Besides, the result from Independent Sample t-test showed that the result of $t_{value}$ for Equal Variance Assumed was 3.345 with the degree of freedom of 57 and the level of significance coefficient of 0.001. In other words, there was enough evidence to reject $H_0$ because the level of significance coefficient was lower than 0.05 (one-tailed). It meant that the control group was difference significantly to the experimental group. Thus, it could be concluded that there was a significant difference between the students who were given a dialogue journal and those who were not given a dialogue journal as additional activity. Therefore, it is better to implement a dialogue journal as an additional activity in teaching of writing.

Suggestions
In accordance with the success of implementation of dialogue journal in improving narrative paragraphs writing, some suggestions are drawn for the teachers and the next researcher.

In order to improve the students’ achievement in writing narrative text, English teachers are suggested to use dialogue journal as an additional activity 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 and it helps fluency in writing. It is also suggested to English teachers that writing response journal should be continued in order to have writing habit. Although writing journal is an additional exercise, the teacher can take more control so that the students write journal regularly. Moreover, it is suggested to use a dialogue journal to teach other kind of text types, such as recount and descriptive texts.

Finally, the next researcher is recommended to explore the more about the dialogue journal in the teaching of writing other text types. Besides, this study
also can be used as a reference for the next researcher who will conduct a similar study with a different subject of the study.

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