

EMPLOYING DIARY WRITING TO DEVELOP STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS AND THEIR PERCEPTION OF THE TECHNIQUE

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ABSTRACT

Writing still becomes the hardest among other skills. Several problems in writing a recount text include developing ideas, limited vocabulary and tenses specifically verb changes. The objectives of the research are to improve students' skills in writing recount text through diary writing technique and explore students' perception about the application of the technique. Employing Classroom Action Research, the research was conducted at the class eighth B of MTs SA Biroyatul Huda Cilongok of academic year 2022/2023. The class consists of 27 students. There were two cycles conducted in this research. Instruments used for data collection are writing test, observation and questionnaire. The written test was aimed to assess the students' ability in writing recount text before and after given diary writing as a help to assist students producing recount text. Observation was aimed to see students' and teacher's behaviour during the instructional process. The questionnaire was administered to explore the students' perception on the use of diary writing to write recount text. The outcome indicates the average score of the test improve more than 30%, from 27.5 in pre-test to 60.67 in post-test. The students' perception is likely tended to show positive response with 34.04% agreement and 28.12% disagreement. Based on the result, it can be concluded that diary writing is one of the techniques that can help improving students' skills in writing recount text.

Keywords: writing; recount text; diary writing; classroom action research.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a process of expressing feelings, thoughts, and ideas in the form of graphic language and it is one of English skills that should be mastered by the English language learners (Harmer, 2006). Rogers in Fajriyani (2011) states that it allows us to record and convey information and stories beyond the immediate moment. There are many fields require the use of writing skills. Walsh (2010) says that writing is important because it is used extensively in higher education and in the workplace.

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According to Mursidha et al. (2025), it is needed to pay attention to some aspects of writing to make the product of writing becomes precise, systematic and easy to understand by readers. Having good content and organization is one important points to achieved good writing. Widiati et al. in Mursidha et al. (2025) states good content requires quality, originality, informative, relevance, meaningfulness, communicative with audience and fulfil various purposes of writing like providing information, persuading or provoking thought.

Despite its significance, students still view writing as a challenging ability to acquire, especially when learning English as a second language (ESL), where many students encounter several writing-related difficulties (Fareed et al., 2016). Heaton says teaching writing abilities are complicated and challenging because the mastering it is not merely grammatical and rhetorical aspects but conceptual and judgmental components is necessary (Rachmawati et al., 2017). Hassan et al. (2020) added that the majority of school writing assignments are focused on standardized traits, which is another factor contributing to the kids' challenges. Students may find it challenging to meet the standards as a result.

According to Salsabila et al. (2024), a diary can be defined as a place or container for a person to express various kinds of feelings, ideas and events that have been experienced. Daily journals give students the responsibility to include themselves in daily learning that not only in reinforce their writing skills but also effectively improve their understanding and use of grammar and vocabulary in meaningful context (Salsabila et al., 2024).

Process Writing Approach

One of the ways for overcoming the problems is process writing approach. Graham in Martínez et al. (2020) mentions that process writing is an action of creativity, including positive and progressive feedback, not merely focusing on final product. There are different steps of process of writing proposed by authors. One of them is proposed by Seow cited in Martínez et al. (2020) that steps of process writing are planning, drafting, revising and editing. In planning, students do the most fundamental activities by generating ideas through outlining and brainstorming. In this step, learners should gather ideas as many as possible. In drafting, students put ideas together in a coherent way. They will transform outline into sentences on a paper without thinking too much on grammatical and mechanical matters. The next step is revising. Here,

students assess the alignment and cohesion of the text and focus on the content and organization of the entire text. Teachers can guide the students to questions related to assignment-specific guidelines. The last step is editing where students focus on writing mechanics such as grammar, diction, connector, punctuation and spelling to get writing accurately.

According to Baharudin et al. (2023) when learners are involved in the writing process through different steps in writing, teachers can identify the difficulties faced by students in finishing their writing. Therefore, teachers can help learners overcome the problem in writing.

Diary Writing

Diary writing is writing made by personal based on experiences that have happened. Ihsan & Ardhiyawan (2016) state that the activity of diary writing is expressing opinions, feelings, backlashes, and responses to anything that happens which belongs to the self-writing category or writing by merely thinking of yourself as an audience. Writing a diary is excellent since in a diary the diarists will manage to understand who they are. Even though it is personal, the diary has meaning both explicitly or implicitly. Personal diary is used to record feelings today's youth and students. the contents of the diary can be about joy, annoyance, disappointment, love, including everything that happens in their life is recorded in a diary.

According to the definition given above, a diary, also known as a journal, is a notebook in which individuals are free to write the things they like, including their feelings, opinions, ideas, and impression (Klimova, 2015). By keeping diaries, students will develop writing skills especially in recount text or in any case they can write better day after day since they have more chances to write anything they want freely. Therefore, writing diary is very suitable media in learning recount text.

Curtis & Bailey (2007) state that a journal or diary is a documentation, frequently kept on a daily basis, for life, a type of personal book. Fitzpatrick in Zahro et al. (2024) also explains that the diary is an individual account of the author's life experiences and are often personal. The previous study about diary writing conducted by Resmanto (2022) that the aim of writing a diary is not merely to express feelings but practice writing including for English learners. According to the previous description, it can be induced that writing diary is an essential strategy and needed by students in writing process to improve their writing. By writing a diary every day, that can make

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students accustomed to writing correctly and improve their ability in writing recount text from day to day.

A diary is usually written in a book with each page called as an entry. A diary entry, typically has a structure like the following according to Hoffman in Kristanti & Anggraini (2020).

1. Date

Since the diary are often saved for a long time, every entry should be noted according to the time it was written. Typically, a diarist starts a post by noting the date, such as Saturday, August 16.

2. Orientation

Following the date, diarists proceed with the orientation or introduction, which includes incident background information such who was involved or the time and location of the incident.

3. Paragraphs

Additionally, the diarists might express their feelings, opinions, and emotions during the day in this section in addition to the sequential events or activities that took place during the day.

4. Personal reflection

The diarists will think back on what happened to them that day. Additionally, it serves as the conclusion, message, and impression of their thoughts and feelings on that particular day.

5. A sign off

Finally, some diarists sign their entries to conclude them. This is optional because some people may write their initials or feelings as an emoticon or choose not to sign their entry.

Regarding to the implementation of diary writing for classroom activities, Resmanto (2022) states that diary writing is a form of private recount text. Learners write diary with no worries or fear of grammar. The application of writing a diary includes the principles below.

1. The teacher provides an information about the personal recount text, namely diary writing, and grammar used is simple past tense. Here, the teacher helps students to understand in writing diaries. The teacher gives some examples of diaries to students before they start writing diaries in class.

2. After students understand the teacher's explanation, students must choose an interesting topic to use and support with the contents of their diaries. They can make good diaries if they are feel interested in the contents of the diary, and the contents of the diary depend on the interests of the author who will write according to experience or something that cannot be forgotten.
3. After students finish in writing the diaries, they collect them to the teacher.
4. Later, the teacher gives feedback through written notes on the student diary. Therefore, students are able to correct their fault in writing a diary.

Previous studies have shown the benefits of diary writing in enhancing students' abilities in English abilities. Resmanto (2022) conducted a classroom action research with an objective to increase students' mastery of vocabulary.

METHOD

The classroom action research was employed due to the problem found in learning activity that needs to be solved. As Septiani (2018) states that action research as the method to gather information with the aims of acquiring insight, increasing student's outputs, and promoting positive transformation at school in the level of instructional process in the class, the present classroom action research targets to develop students' writing ability using the diary writing technique and explore the students' perceptive about the use the technique. The research was conducted in grade VIII of MTs SA Biroyatul Cilongok with the total of 27 students.

The research employed the design of Kemmis and Mc Taggart classroom action that involves plan, act, observe and reflect in two cycles.

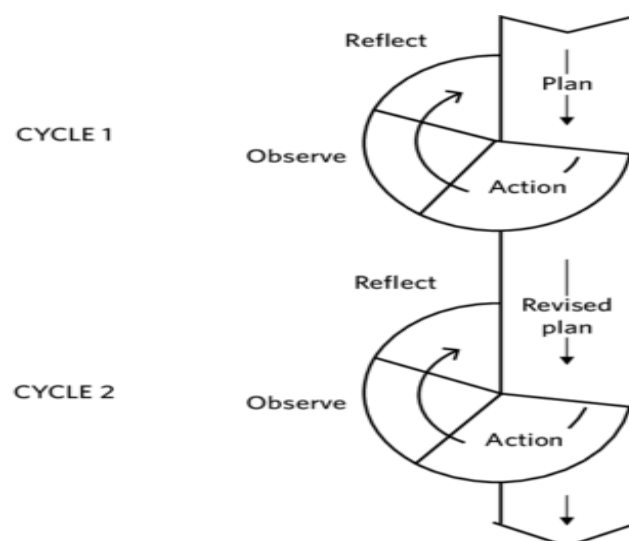


Figure 1. Kemmis and Mc Taggart Classroom Action Research Design (Resmanto, 2022)

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In planning stage, the lesson plan, material and teaching aid were developed carefully. The researcher and collaborator developed lesson plans to be implemented consisting learning goals, learning materials and methods, until the evaluation process. In designing the material, the researcher and collaborator organized the material about recount text. While for the teaching aid, researcher and collaborator prepared for the application of the diary writing techniques for writing recount. Instruments for data collection were also prepared such as test papers, observation checklist and questionnaire. After the planning stage was over, students were given the pre-test by assigning them to write a recount text.

In action stage, the classroom teacher implemented the lesson plan by teaching the students about recount text and how to write the recount text using diary writing technique. While the teacher implemented the teaching learning process, collaborator acted as observer who did the observation. Bariroh (2020) stated that observation is efforts to obtain input or data concerning the results of the action taken. Observer filled out the observation checklist containing notes on students' activities while doing teaching and learning process using diary writing. This observation result was needed as reference or information for the next stage. After finishing the action and observation stages, post-test was administered by asking the students to write a recount text. Then, students' writing product were assessed by using assessment writing scoring rubric by Brown (Ardiyanto, 2021).

Table 1. Assessment Writing Scoring Rubric

Aspect	Score	Recount Performance	Weight
Content (C) 30% - Topic - Details	4	The topic is comprehensive and vivid; the details are related to the topic	3x
	3	The topic is comprehensive and vivid; the details are almost related to the topic	
	2	The topic is comprehensive and vivid; the details are not related to the topic	
	1	The topic is not comprehensive and vivid; the details are not related to the topic	
Organization (O) 20% - Orientation - Event - Reorientation	4	Orientation is comprehensive, events are organized with proper connectors and re-orientation is complete	2x
	3	Orientation is almost comprehensive; events are almost organized with proper connectors and re-orientation is complete	
	2	Orientation is not comprehensive; events are organized with few misapplications of connectors and reorientation is almost complete	
	1	Orientation is not comprehensive; events are organized with misapplications of connectors and reorientation is not complete	
Grammar (G) 20% - Use Past Tense - Agreement	4	Very few grammatical or agreement errors	2x
	3	Few grammatical or agreement errors but not influence the meaning	
	2	Numerous grammatical or agreement errors	
	1	Often found grammatical or agreement errors	

Vocabulary (V) 15%	4	Efficacious choice of words and word forms	1.5x
	3	Few misapplications of vocabularies, word forms but not change the meaning	
	2	Limited amount of confusing word and word forms	
	1	Very little knowledge of words, word forms and not intelligible	
Mechanic (M) 15% - Spelling - Punctuation – Capitalization	4	It uses correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization	1.5x
	3	It has occasional errors spelling, punctuation and capitalization	
	2	It has numerous errors of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization	
	1	It has dominant errors of spelling, punctuation, and capitalization	

Reflection stage was the last stage that was carried out by analyzing and interpreting the result of the classroom action research that has been employed. The result of post-test and observation result were then analyzed and determined whether further cycle was needed to implement. Based on the result of the first cycle, it was found that the post-test result had not reached the success criteria so the second cycle was then implemented.

After completing two cycles, the result of the post-test had reached the success criteria. Then, the researcher decided to end the classroom action research and distributed questionnaire to explore the students' perceptions about the use of diary writing technique for writing recount text. The questionnaire used was a Likert scale type with five points provided choices; Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The questionnaire provided eight (8) statements that were supposed to explore students' perception towards the application of diary writing to write recount text.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After completing the classroom action research and distributed questionnaire, the researcher found out that diary writing improved students' ability in writing recount text. The questionnaire also showed positive response towards the implementation of the diary writing technique.

Implementation of Diary Writing to Write Recount Text

The classroom action research began with pre-test that showed an average score 27.5. The researcher then preceded with conducting the first cycle. The first cycle included two meetings with different focus for every meeting. In the first meeting, students were taught about recount text and introduction to diary writing. Students were assigned to write recount text using the diary writing format given by the teacher.

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From the reflection, it was concluded that students still got difficulty in writing recount especially with vocabulary input. Therefore, in the second meeting, students were given reinforcement on vocabulary and asked to make use diary writing for writing recount text with different topic. After finishing the first cycle, students were given post-test and the average score was 44.8 and increased 17.3% from the pre-test. However, the target was 30% improvement that the next cycle was then carried out.

In the second cycle, students were taught using diary writing to get them accustomed to it. The teacher also gave reinforcement on language elements. In the first meeting of cycle two, the teacher reviewed material about writing recount text using diary writing and simple past tense especially on verbs changing. Students were then assigned to write a recount text about embarrassing moment using diary writing technique. While, in the last meeting of the cycle, students were given reinforcement to write recount using diary writing more fluently. After the second cycle was finished, post-test was administered and the average score was 60.67 or 33.17% improvement from the pre-test. This means that the improvement had surpassed the success criteria which was 30%.

Perception towards the use of diary writing to improve students' skill in writing recount text was then explored through questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to 27 students and the result was analyzed and presented in the following table.

Table 2. Result of Students' Perception

No	Statement	Scale				
		SA	A	N	DA	SDA
1.	I like English writing lessons.	3.7 %	37%	29.6%	11.1%	18.5%
2.	I have learned to write recount text using diary writing technique before.	22.2%	18.5%	14.8%	37%	7.4%
3.	I know writing recount text using diary writing techniques.	3.7%	29.6%	29.6%	37%	-
4.	I use diary writing techniques in writing recount text.	7.4%	48.1%	33.3%	7.4%	3.7%
5.	Writing recount text using diary writing technique is easy.	3.7%	22.2%	29.6%	33.3%	11.1%
6.	Writing recount text using diary writing technique is difficult.	7.4%	37%	22.2%	33.3%	-
7.	I feel impressed learning to write using the diary writing technique.	7.4%	40.7%	18.5%	18.5%	14.8%
8.	I feel motivated to write in English using diary writing technique.	18.5%	44.4%	18.5%	14.8%	3.7%

According to the table, it can be viewed that students' perception towards the application of diary writing tended to show positive response. Only in certain statements, that asked about the feasibility in using diary writing, the result indicated disagreement.

Discussion

Through diary writing technique, the students' writing ability increased several elements. Some of them were grammar and vocabulary. Before the implementation of diary writing, the students used inappropriate grammar in sentences. The following is an example of the issue. They wrote "I am going to holiday in Jogja." in the context talking about experience in past time. During the research, after the teacher gave feedback and reinforcement related to grammar, the students' ability improved. The students wrote a recount text using diary writing and constructed a correct sentence "I went to Jogja to holiday." In addition, the students were able to write in a proper passage. It is known that grammar is crucial to shape and form proper sentences. This statement is in line with Magfirah (2015) that an excellent mastery of grammar assists students to produce sentences which are easily understood.

After conducting the research, it is found that learning writing text recount through writing diary class was a good strategy to enhance students' ability in writing recount text. Using diary writing, the students were more interested, and the technique helped students in writing recount text in classroom with joy, fun, easy, and free. This is supported by Chairunnisa et al. (2017) that writing a diary is a joyful activity so that students can easily write their ideas freely and dig their ideas. According to Syarifah (2021), the students especially young learners will enjoy the school activities when the teacher using some medias in their activity, such as using writing diary in the writing subject. The students also had more braveness, good self-confidence and know what they are going to write. The emphasis of writing using diary that makes students feel more comfortable and confident as they write to express what they mean without thinking much about the grammar accuracy (Kasrabowo et al., 2021). In addition, giving freedom to students to determine the topics they want to write down allows students to develop creative and varied story ideas (Zainab et al., 2021). According to the result, there was an efficacious increase on the students' skill in producing written recount text using writing diary activities.

This is supported by students' perception that tends to show positive response to the application of the diary in writing recount text. In writing diary, students felt

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excited because they learned to write in a more enjoyable technique. This is confirmed from previous research that diary writing can be one of the fun learning activities, especially in writing because students can practice more and make them motivated to produce good writing (Qarina et al., 2018). Through the diary writing technique students can also increase students' encouragement in writing recount text. The result is aligned with (Harmer, 2007), & (Qarina et al., 2018) where students have good learning achievement when they get fun exercises and learning activities.

In addition, writing using the diary writing technique can push students to write in English. By writing in a diary, one can write down events that are personal thought. Diaries, which usually contain personal events, are usually used for the author's consumption only. Having the habit of writing a diary motivates students to write in English even for a wider context. This is supported by Zainab et al. (2021) that there are diaries intended for public consumption. Usually, the diary contains a public work that can be read by everyone that can aim to inspire many people. Moon in Klimova (2015) states that diaries are written within a certain period which can be done in the learning process, work environment or research projects. Diaries can come from various topics and be used for various purposes. In this digital era, there are many media that can be used to write diaries both conventionally and modernly. Social networking media is one of the media that is most in demand currently to write down ideas, thoughts or just pour out the contents of the heart (Zainab et al., 2021). This really supports students to be motivated to write English more often, starting from social media owned by individuals to international social networks.

However, there were results of students' perceptions about the use of writing diary in writing recount text indicating that students gave negative responses in several statements. The students experience difficulties in writing recount text and felt it is not an easy thing to do using the diary technique in writing recount text. It was caused that not everyone wants and is happy to write in a diary, at their age growing up for example. This happens because someone does not know what to do written, when to write and for what to write. This is explained by Zainab et al. (2021) that 1) Everyone's reluctance to write because there is a fear of expressing events or events that have been experienced in the form writing and worry if the writing is read by others. 2) The reluctance of the children of the era now in writing a diary is because there is an assumption that writing a diary is only for small children and seem old-fashioned. In

fact, writing a diary is highly recommended to help someone release the pressure and problems they are experiencing. Many of activities inside or outside of school makes students inconsistent in writing, they only do it during writing subjects. This causes students to rarely write and not be disciplined in maintaining their writing. This is explained by Syarifah (2021), that writing diary need time to commitment. Keeping a diary requires individual-discipline and commitment, work or school priorities, excellent responsibilities, and sudden occasions are usually troubling by writing a diary outside the classroom. So, writing diaries late often makes writing inconsistent.

Based on the explanation above, it showed that there are variations of students' responses. Each student had different perception to think about the diary writing technique that used to write recount text. It can be inferred that perception refers to an opinion to form impressions of stimuli. From the results of this research, students' perception that tends to show in positive response to the use of the diary in writing recount text. It can be viewed from the response of student' perceptions which showed positive responses were greater than negative responses. This provides motivation and broad opportunities for students to write English in a wider scope, starting with daily diary writing.

CONCLUSIONS

Writing still becomes the most difficult skill to master, in the context of EFL learners. There for, teachers are supposed to find different ways to teach how to write in good English. One of the ways to help students improve their skills in writing recount text is by using diary writing technique. Through the classroom action research conducted in MTs SA Biroyatul Huda Cilongok as an example, students can improve their writing ability in writing recount using the diary writing technique. students show improvement in several aspects such as generating ideas, using vocabulary and simple past for writing recount text. The questionnaire outcomes that explored students' perception towards the technique also tended to show positive response. Therefore, diary writing can be used as option of solution in solving students' problems especially in related to writing recount text.

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