

The Implementation Of Daily Journal To Improve Writing Skills For University Students

Khansa Salsabila¹

Marliana Mika²

Viga Deandra Salvita³

Muhammad Rivaldy Hermawan⁴

Nida Husna⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5}Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia

¹biasalsabia@gmail.com

²marlianamika1705@gmail.com,

³vigadeandra02@gmail.com,

⁴muhammadrivaldy292729@gmail.com,

⁵nida.husna@uinjkt.ac.id.

Abstract

This study focused on implementing Daily Journal as a student's writing activity. The study's objective is to impact the implementation of a daily journal on students' writing skills. The research method used in this study is quantitative. The subject of the study was 32 students majoring in English Education in one of Islamic University in Indonesia. Participants will take a pre and post-test and from there the researcher can compare their vocabulary and grammar skills in written form. The results of both tests will be subjected to a two-sample paired t-test analysis conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software program. The test resulted in a significance value of 5%, providing sufficient evidence for a statistical change in post-treatment testing. The results of this study indicate that Daily Journal is an effective tool in enhancing English writing skills among the students in university level.

Keywords: *Daily journal, Writing, Vocabulary, Grammar*

Introduction

Writing at university is an important skill that plays a vital role in academic success. Thaiss and Zawacki (2006) define academic writing as writing that meets educational goals at school or university. Meanwhile, Henning, Gravett and van Rensburg (2002: ix) emphasize that academic writing is a process of thinking using written language. Based on these two definitions it can be concluded that writing at the university level is more than just basic composition, requiring students to be involved in scientific discourse, conducting research, and presenting a well-structured argument. It serves as the primary means of communication, assessment, and dissemination of knowledge in higher education be it essays, research papers, or reports.

Developing strong writing skills at university is very important for future academic achievement and professional success. Because becoming a superior academic writer requires a unique set of skills and abilities. In the opinion of Saleh Abbas (2006:125), writing skills are the ability to express ideas, opinions, and feelings to others through written language. Ahmad Subandi (2014) also believes that writing is a

language skill that is used to express ideas or ideas that are in the mind through written language so that they can be read and understood by others. Curiosity and research skills are required to explore complex issues and gather evidence. Based on this opinion, it can be concluded that critical thinking and analytical skills are needed to evaluate and make judgments based on evidence. By mastering these skills, students can produce work that is informative, interesting, and well-researched so that it has a significant impact. However, all of this is not easy to apply to university students because they also need to understand what things must be mastered in writing academic papers.

Nunan (1999) states that one of the most difficult things in language is producing coherent, fluent, and extensive writing. The lack of writing activities at school makes it difficult for students to express their ideas. Because they feel they only focus on practicing speaking, reading, and grammar. Meanwhile, Byrne (1988) categorizes three problems that make writing skills difficult and one of them is cognitive problems related to mastery of language forms, structures, and grammar that are useful for effective communication in writing to be mastered. Therefore, the existence of new writing training becomes important when they enter the tertiary environment, where they are required to use writing assignments (both formal scientific papers and popular ones) as a benchmark for learning evaluation. Some students may be able to produce high-quality writing, while others may experience significant difficulty conveying ideas in writing, some of those who are difficult lack vocabulary and grammar. The first problem is the problem of not being proficient in writing. Less skilled writers skip the writing process by skipping pre-writing strategies for generating ideas. Students may need a lot of time to write down their ideas.

Vocabulary and grammar play a very important role in improving writing skills. The vocabulary allows authors to express ideas more precisely and variedly. Meanwhile, good grammar helps ensure sentences and writing structures that are clear and easy to understand, by paying attention to these two things, a person's writing ability can develop significantly. Swan (2005: xix) defines grammar as the rules that show how words are combined, arranged, or changed to show certain kinds of meaning. In addition, Cook and Sutter (1980: 1) state that grammar is a set of rules by which people speak and write. These rules are not always understood consciously because the rules we refer to are those hardly anyone ever thinks about, but wish to allow people to use their language easily and naturally most of the time. Lehr, Osborn, and Hiebert (in Kamil and Hiebert, 2004: 2-3) define vocabulary as knowledge of words and word meaning in both oral and written language and in productive and receptive forms. More specifically, they use vocabulary to refer to "the kind of word that students must know to read increasingly demanding text with comprehension".

Several studies have been completed by Mathelda Obisuru and Widyastuti Purbani (2016) using a learning process through self-editing and self-correcting which is based on analysis of grammatical and vocabulary errors made by teachers and researchers. It can be concluded that there has been a change for the better in Students' writing abilities compared to before the action was taken. Then there was other

research from Jennifer Aster Visakha (2019) which stated that giving assignments to create descriptive texts could help students increase their knowledge in vocabulary and grammar.

In this context, the research aims to observe and analyze the grammar and vocabulary of students' writing learning at the university level. What is the impact of writing a daily journal on students' writing skills? By identifying the factors that influence students' achievement of writing skills by better understanding the challenges and opportunities in developing students' writing, we can contribute to the formation of a generation that is more skilled in writing, which will ultimately support students' educational and social progress.

Method

The research method used in this study is quantitative. Creswell defines it as "a research approach that emphasizes the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data in numerical form" (Creswell, 2012, 2013; John W. Creswell, 2016). According to William Trochim, a research methods expert, quantitative research is "a formal, objective, systematic process in which numerical data are used to obtain information about the world" (Patton, 2002). It can be concluded that this research focuses on collecting data in the form of numbers to get the results desired by the researcher and also to get as much information as possible about the targeted topic.

The purpose of this research is to describe the implementation of writing teaching using daily journals to improve students' writing skills and improve vocabulary and grammar in their writing. According to Zulkarnaini (2009: 1), dairy journals are noted as Important about experiences, thoughts, and feelings written every day by someone. According to the above understanding, a diary is a place or container for someone to vent and pour out all kinds of feelings, thoughts, and experiences that have been experienced.

Participants in this research are students at Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta University consisting of 32 students in one class. The instruments used are tests and observations. The test in the form of an essay test makes a daily journal that is collected in a Google form and is given to students as a pre-test and post-test. While observations were made during the action taken in the classroom, Observations were made to all students in the classroom. The data is then analyzed to find out the similarities and differences of data. The data results will be discussed in the following sections of this study.

Technique of Data Collection

This assignment uses Google Forms as a medium for collecting data. Each assignment is in the form of an open-ended question, where the researcher gives respondents the freedom to write down their ideas as much as possible. Both the pre-test and post-test only give one question, and from there the researcher can compare their vocabulary and grammar skills in written form. Respondents were also asked for

numbers to give rewards to the 2 best people with the most correct changes in the post-test.

Technique of Data Analysis

This assignment was carried out through the analysis of two paired sample t-tests carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software program. This statistical approach was chosen to assess the effectiveness of treatment, which is indicated by the difference in averages through the pre-test and post-test after the treatment is given.

Results

This study was to find out respondents' opinions about the impact they had after writing a daily journal, and whether the daily journal could increase their knowledge in vocabulary and grammar with 7 respondents using the *Zoom* application. The respondents were each asked 4 questions by the researcher, as follows: 1) "Do you feel that writing a daily journal can increase your creativity?" 2) "Does writing a daily journal make you feel like continuing to write?" 3) "After making a daily journal, do you feel that you have gained new knowledge in vocabulary and grammar?" 4) "Have you previously found it difficult to write because of a lack of knowledge about vocabulary and grammar?".

Based on the opinions of students 1 to 4, they said that they enjoyed making a daily journal because they felt that they could be as creative as possible, and they were also interested in making other daily journals. However, they did not find it difficult to write because they lacked knowledge in vocabulary. Meanwhile, the opinion of students 5 to 7 was that they felt a little difficulty in finding vocabulary that was suitable for their daily journal and they also felt difficulty in changing it into good grammar, but after treatment it became easier for them to find the correct grammar.

From the 7 respondents' answers, it can be concluded that writing a daily journal can be used as a method to increase students' enthusiasm for writing and can help them have broader insight into vocabulary and grammar. However, we also calculate statistically so that we can statistically assess which has more valid results. The application we use is SPSS (Statistical Program for Social Science) with a test called the simple paired t-test.

Table 1. Paired Samples Statistic

		Paired Samples Statistics			
Pair 1		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
	pretest	-2,88	32	1,930	0,341
	posttest	2,88	32	1,930	0,341

Table 1 displays the results of descriptive statistics from the pre-test and post-test samples of 32 new students in class 1B, Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University,

Jakarta, majoring in English Language Education. As can be seen in the table, the average value or average score on the pre-test is -2.88, while the average score on the post-test is 2.88. Apart from that, the standard deviation of the pre-test and post-test is 1.930, which shows that the pre-test and post-test scores differ by 1.930 from the average score. This indicates that there are differences in the application of this assignment method.

Table 2. Paired Samples Correlations
Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	pretest & posttest	32	-.974	.000

Table 2 shows the correlation between pre-test and post-test scores for 32 participants. The table shows that the correlation level between the two variables is -0.974, indicating a negative correlation. A negative correlation is when the value of one variable increases, and the value of the other variable decreases. In this research, the correlation test uses the Pearson product-moment method, which is a statistical method that is widely used to measure the correlation of two variables. The significance value obtained through this test is 0.000, which indicates that this research provides a significant change because $\text{sig} < 0.05$ means reject H_0 and with a significance of 5%, there is sufficient evidence that there is a change in the post-test after treatment statistically.

Discussion

This section obtained, it can be concluded that writing a daily journal can be used as a method to increase students' enthusiasm for writing and can help them have broader insight into vocabulary and grammar. The average score on the post-test increased greater than the average score on the pre-test. These results are in line with previous research which found that giving assignments to create descriptive texts can help students increase their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar (Visakha, 2019). It was also found that providing material on how to write a good daily journal and how to convert it into grammar was very helpful and critical thinking skills. Based on the results of the pre-test to post-test, it was shown that daily journaling, assessments, and activities had improved students' ability to apply and help them have broader insight into vocabulary and grammar. The average score on the post-test is more than the average score on the pre-test.

These results are in line with previous research that found that Wang and Chen (2021) investigated the cognitive benefits, stating that the regular practice of journaling stimulates creativity and linguistic flexibility, which are important components of effective writing. It was also found that by assigning the daily journal as part of their mandatory assignments, students can develop their curiosity and ability to elaborate on their ideas. Based on the pre-test to post-test results obtained It is shown

that daily journaling, assessments, and activities have increased students' ability to have broader insight into vocabulary and grammar.

Most students gave more or less the same positive impression. A diary is a place or container for someone to vent and pour out all kinds of feelings, thoughts, and experiences that have been experienced (Zulkarnaini, 2009). Through daily journaling, students have the opportunity to actively apply the grammatical structures and vocabulary they have learned. Consistent practice of language use helps strengthen language skills and increases students' familiarity with correct grammatical rules.

Daily journals give students the responsibility to involve themselves in daily learning. Expressing themselves regularly, students cultivate learning independence, which in increases their desire to continue learning and improve their language skills. By implementing a daily journal, students can not only strengthen their writing skills but also effectively improve their understanding and use of grammar and vocabulary in meaningful contexts

Students doing daily journaling should receive some instruction on how to do it properly, but this cannot be done in one session. Practicing these skills, we do not need to wait until students reach the university level, as they can start earlier in their English language learning (Eftekhar & Kalayeh, 2014). Systems in schools can be designed to help students practice their skills in strengthening their writing skills so that this also effectively improves understanding and use of grammar and vocabulary.

Conclusion

Journal writing is one of the academic writing skills that can assess the basic vocabulary and grammar skills of a university student. Making a journal does seem easy, but it turns out that in the results of their pre-test, it was found that several new students did not understand what journaling was, how to structure it, and their understanding of changing vocabulary into grammar when making a journal. This is where researchers help new students. keeping journals in the form of daily journals and also researchers help them to increase their vocabulary and understanding of grammar. Furthermore, to ensure changes occur in the understanding of making a daily journal, researchers carry out treatment to ensure that the results of their assignments or post texts develop well through assessing their vocabulary and grammar. After completing the pre-test and post-test, the researcher found that not all new students have good academic writing skills, especially in journaling. When conducting research, the researcher found that academic writing requires collaboration between lecturers and students because new university students are not used to understanding the material on their own without the help of their teachers/lecturers. The results of this survey are significant because of the good collaboration between researchers and students. In addition, the treatment carried out in this research was only carried out in one meeting because the participants did not have much time and this made the research results only increase by 5%.

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