

**Improving the Writing Skills of Grade VIII Students of SMP N 1
Prambanan, Sleman in the Academic Year of 2014/2015 Through Diary
Writing Activities with Peer Feedback and Teacher Feedback**

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Abstract: This research was aimed to investigate how the use of diary writing activities with peer feedback and teacher feedback could improve the writing skills of grade VIII students at SMP N I Prambanan Sleman in the academic year of 2014/2015. This research was classified as action research. The research was conducted in two cycles. Each cycle was divided into three meetings. The steps in each cycle were reconnaissance, planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research was done with the participation of 32 students of VIII B class, the English teacher, and the collaborator. The data collected in this research were qualitative and quantitative data. The researcher used observation and interviews in collecting qualitative data while tests were used to collect quantitative data. The qualitative data were analyzed through five steps of qualitative data analysis: assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building interpretations, and reporting the outcomes. Meanwhile, the quantitative data were analyzed by comparing the students' mean score of the tests. The data validity used in this research were process validity, democratic validity, outcome validity, catalytic validity and dialogic validity. The findings of the research showed that the use of the diary writing technique with peer feedback and teacher feedback could improve the students' writing skills especially in developing ideas and organizing ideas. There was also an improvement of the students' skills in the aspects of using appropriate vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. During the teaching and learning process, the students also showed positive attitude in the writing class. They enthusiastically did the writing activities. They showed their interest in writing by using the diary writing technique. Based on the quantitative data, the students' mean score increased from the pre-test to the post-test. In the pre-test, the students' mean score was 57.18 while in the first post-test, it was 63.79 and in the second post-test, it was 70.17.

Key words: *writing skills, diary writing*

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Introduction

The need to be able to communicate in English dramatically increases in the recent years. The use of English as an international language is an important reason for people to be able to communicate in English. Now English has become the international language used for communication in most activities and field in the world. English has become a global language, used in communication, education, information and technology.

One of the ways to use language as the tool for communication is through

writing. For the native speaker of English, it is easy for them to write in English because it is their first language. They use English everyday in their lives. They will not find any difficulties to write in English but that condition does not go well for non- native speakers. That condition will go oppositely for the non-native speakers.

Writing is considered to be the difficult skill to master besides speaking. Teaching and learning writing is believed to be very complex in the application. Richards and Renandya (2002) propose that writing is the most difficult skill for second language learners to master. The second language students will find difficulties to produce writing. Some difficulties that they find include the composition that is not always coherent, the organization of the text. They still lack vocabulary and have the difficulty to find, to explain, and express their ideas. Raimes in Richards and Renandya (2002: 306) states that there is more anxiety when writing is involved in the English teaching and learning process.

The importance of writing is not always supported by the students' writing ability in the real life. There are many problems in teaching and learning of writing. These problems also happened in SMP N 1 Prambanan Sleman. The problems were related to the students' motivation in the writing class and the students' low ability of writing. In relation to the students' writing skill, they had difficulties in generating ideas in writing. Some students spent too much time to find topics for their writing, whereas finding a topic to write is a basic thing. When they already had a topic, most students had difficulties in developing their topics into a good writing. In addition, the students also had problems in the sentence structure, vocabulary, and mechanics. The second problem in the writing class is the motivation in learning. The students were not motivated in the writing class. It was because the use of uninteresting media and activities. These problems are reasonable problems for students in the writing class, so it is very important for teacher to find a best solution to make the writing class more interesting and effective. Based on the problems, the researcher tried to improve the students' writing skills by using diary writing with peer feedback and teacher feedback.

According to Barjesteh, Vaseghi and Gholami (2011) diary writing can be a very productive and creative pre-writing activity for a writing classroom. Writing a diary may foster reading and encourage students to read different topics/books/articles to gain ideas for the content and this may develop their reading as well as writing skills. Furthermore, diary writing is a free writing where students can write freely without fear of being evaluated, it paves the way for planning a communicative course of writing and can have a significant impact on EFL learners' attitudes towards writing.

Diary writing with peer feedback and teacher feedback can improve the students' writing skills in generating ideas, developing ideas, using appropriate vocabulary, using correct grammar, and mechanics. It could give freedom for the students to express their ideas to be written so that they will feel free to write, they will be helped on checking the writing product by doing peer feedback and teacher

feedback. Furthermore, the students will give positive attitudes towards English especially writing. It will be a big hope that the diary writing with peer feedback and teacher feedback can help students in learning English and it is more likely to make students enjoy learning English.

Research Methods

The participants of the research were the students of class VIII B in SMP N 1Prambanan Sleman. There were 32 students in the class. The research data were in the form of qualitative data and supported by quantitative data. The qualitative data were gained from the description of teaching and learning process and also from the interview with the collaborator, English teacher and students. Meanwhile, the quantitative data were derived from the students' writing scores in the pre-test, post-test 1 and post-test 2.

In collecting the data, the researcher used three data collection techniques. The first was classroom observation. The researcher and collaborator observed the teaching and learning process including the students' responses and the problems that might appear during the actions. The second was the interview. The researcher conducted interviews with the English teacher, the collaborator, and the students to find out their reactions, responses, suggestions, opinions, and expectations regarding the implementation of the diary writing with peer feedback and teacher feedback. Third, the researcher used a test to find out the improvement of students' writing skills before and after implementing diary writing with peer feedback and teacher feedback. The test was conducted three times included pre-test, post-test 1 and post-test 2.

This research used both qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative data were analyzed using the stages of data analysis proposed by Burns (2010:104). Therefore, the quantitative data were analyzed by comparing the mean scores from the pre-test up to the post-test. To enhance the trustworthiness of the data and to reduce subjectivity in analyzing the data, the researcher applied time, theoretical, and investigator triangulation proposed by Burns (1999:164).

Findings and Discussion

The diary writing with peer feedback and teacher feedback technique was successfully implemented in writing and the objective had been achieved. The research findings were defined from the qualitative and quantitative data gathered during the actions. The following table presents the changes as the result of the implementation of diary writing with peer feedback and teacher feedback.

Table 1: The Comparison of the Students' Writing Skills in Each Aspect Before and After the Implementation of Diary Writing with Peer Feedback and Teacher Feedback

Aspect	Before Implementation	After Implementation
Content	The content of the students' writing was inadequate and the development of the topic had not matched the purpose of the recount text.	The content of the students' writing was mostly relevant to the purpose of the recount text and there was good development of the topic.
Organization	The students' texts were loosely organized and some ideas were confusing. The students did not use time conjunctions to connect the sentences or paragraphs.	The students' texts were well organized. They stated the ideas in a clear text organization. They used time conjunctions to make the text cohesive.
Vocabulary	There are frequent errors of the word choice and usage in the students' texts. The meaning was also sometimes confusing.	There were occasional errors of the word choice and usage in writing.
Grammar	The students' writing was dominated by errors of the agreement, tenses, articles, pronouns, and prepositions.	There were still some errors of the agreement, tenses, articles, pronouns, and prepositions. Most students wrote the text by using the past tense.
Mechanic	There were frequent errors of the spelling, punctuation, and capitalization in the students' writing.	The students made occasional errors of the spelling, punctuation, and capitalization, but the meaning was not obscured.

Beside the students' scores in writing, there was also an improvement on the motivation and classroom situation during the process of teaching and learning. The diary writing activity with peer feedback and teacher feedback successfully attracted the students' interest in writing. Students enjoyed the writing activities. The diary writing can be a very productive and creative activity in the writing classroom. By emphasizing diary writing, that is a free writing where students can write freely without fear of being

evaluated, an English teacher paves the way for planning a communicative course of writing and can have a significant impact on students' attitudes towards writing.

The improvement of the students' writing skills could also be seen from the students' writing in the pre-test up to post-test. The gain score of 12.99 indicates that there was an improvement on the students' writing skills after the implementation of diary writing activity with peer feedback and teacher feedback.

Conclusions

Diary writing activity with peer feedback and teacher feedback successfully improved the students' ability in writing and motivation in learning. There was an improvement on each writing indicator, namely content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanic. The improvement of the writing ability can be seen from the scores in the pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2. The mean score in the pre-test was 57.18, and after the implementation of the diary writing activity with peer feedback and teacher feedback technique, the students' mean score in the post-test1 was 63.79, and in the post-test 2 their mean score was 70.17.

The students also showed interest in the learning process. They enjoyed the writing activities using Diary writing activity with peer feedback and teacher feedback. The students did not easily get bored and sleepy during the class. Although some students still made noise and broke rules in some activities such as in the game and individual tasks, they did the tasks and paid attention to the researcher's explanation. Finally, the implementation of Diary writing activity with peer feedback and teacher feedback was believed to be able to improve students' writing skills.

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