INVESTIGATING THE EFFECT OF FREEWRITING TECHNIQUES ON THE WRITING SKILLS OF INDONESIAN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of using the freewriting techniques on the writing ability of Indonesian junior high school students in producing descriptive texts. The study was conducted in a private school located in Banten province and involved 33 students who were selected through a total sampling. A quasi-experimental design was used, with pre- and post-tests serving as the research instruments. The tests were validated for content validity and inter-rater reliability. The results were analyzed using a t-test, which showed that the use of freewriting techniques had a significant positive effect on the writing ability of the students. The t-count (2.533) was higher than the t-table (2.039) at a significance level of 0.05, indicating that the alternative hypothesis (Ha) was accepted and the null hypothesis (H0) was rejected. The average score of the experimental class was higher than that of the control class, further emphasizing the positive impact of the freewriting techniques. These results suggest that the implementation of freewriting as a teaching techniques has the potential to enhance the writing ability of Indonesian junior high school students.

Keywords: Descriptive Text, Freewriting Techniques, Indonesian Junior High School Students, Writing Ability.
1. Introduction

Writing is a crucial skill that students need to acquire in order to express their ideas effectively in written form. According to Nunan (2003), writing is a productive skill that plays a vital role in communicating thoughts and ideas by organizing them into sentences or paragraphs. However, writing can be a challenging task for EFL students, as it involves mastering several aspects, such as vocabulary, grammar structures, organization, and mechanics of writing (Sagita et al., 2018; Syahputri et al., 2018; Ramadhanthy et al., 2021).

Furthermore, writing requires time for students to think critically and analyze ideas before constructing a logical text (Afsari et al., 2021). To produce a high-quality writing piece, students must pay attention to their word choices and ensure that their ideas are logically connected, allowing readers to understand the text. Therefore, it is essential for students to acquire effective writing skills to communicate their thoughts and ideas efficiently.

Related to the mastery of writing skills, free writing can help students. There are several previous studies related to the use of freewriting techniques. A pre-experimental study by Isni (2018) showed that the use of freewriting techniques can help students to write easily and to have a good motivation in generating their ideas into a paper. Similar study by Sagita et al. (2018) also showed that the use of freewriting was good to attract the students’ attention and success in improving students’ writing skill. A study by Tarmizi et al. (2018) showed that the application of freewriting techniques can significantly develop the students’ skill in writing. However, these studies were mostly conducted by using pre-experimental research, in which each study only being implemented in one specific group with no other groups being used as a comparison. Therefore, to generalize the findings of these studies which argued that freewriting affects the improvement of students’ writing skill, it would be much more beneficial if there was a
control group of students at the same level who participated in the same program activities but never did the freewriting. Then, it will be possible to compare the two groups and see whether or not their writing skills have improved.

In accordance with the previous studies, the researchers were interested in conducting research by using freewriting techniques in one of the private schools in Kota Tangerang, Banten province because of its problems in learning writing. This research aimed to find out whether there is an influence of using freewriting techniques towards students writing skills in descriptive text. In this research, quasi-experimental was used as the research design in which there were two groups involved, including experimental and control group. Experimental group was specifically given a treatment by applying guided freewriting techniques. Meanwhile, the, control group did not get the same treatment and was treated by using lecturing techniques in order to compare the students' achievement after the guided freewriting activity had finished.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Freewriting

Writing is a crucial skill for students, including those in junior high school, who are expected to produce clear and effective written texts or essays. In Indonesia, the teaching of English writing in junior high school aims to equip students with the ability to create functional texts and monologues across a range of genres, including descriptive, narrative, recount, procedure, and report texts. Among these genres, descriptive writing is the first one taught to first-year junior high school students.

As defined by Jayanti (2019), descriptive text is a form of writing that aims to help readers understand the object or topic being described by providing clear and detailed descriptions of people, places, animals, and other subjects. By mastering the skills involved in descriptive writing, students can develop their ability to create compelling and effective texts. In teaching writing, including descriptive
text, students must be taught about how to plan a topic, write down their ideas based on the topic, revise, and evaluate the results of their writing.

However, many students find difficulties in improving their ideas and turning it down into paragraphs. According to Kristiana et al. (2021), students find it hard to write their ideas because it is difficult for them to choose the appropriate words in English. Kristiana et al. (2021) also stated that students tend to have lack of vocabularies, lack of understanding the grammar structures, and have a difficulty in connecting the sentences in one paragraph. Tarmizi et al. (2018) stated that students have difficulties in writing because they have low interest and motivation to learn, and have lack of exercises. They only get the instruction to finish an assignment without taking more time to practice. Thus, teachers should give enough time for students to practice their writing because the more students write, the more they will learn about their mistakes.

Based on the preliminary research in which the researchers interviewed the English teacher in one of the private schools in Banten province, they also encountered the same problem. It can be indicated that most students in this school were having some difficulties in writing because of low motivation, lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge, and lack of exercises. The English teacher stated that some students tend to have low motivation because they had the mindset that English was hard to learn which made them rarely practice their writing. The teacher also stated that she did not use any specific techniques in teaching writing because it was difficult for her to apply a techniques through online learning which made the learning process tend to be less effective. Therefore, the school was back to offline learning again in order to help students engage more with the learning process.

Related to the problems above, it can be implied that a lot of attention should be needed by the teacher as an approach to assist and encourage students to master writing. The teacher should consider using a specific techniques to help students in
becoming more engaged and motivated in learning how to write effectively. There are a lot of techniques that can be used by teachers in teaching writing, one of them is freewriting techniques.

According to Elbow (1981), freewriting is a techniques of writing in which the students write continuously for a set period of time without worrying about their spellings, grammar, or topics. In this techniques, students can write whatever comes into their mind without stopping and worrying about the words that they use or checking what they have written. The aim of freewriting is to encourage students to easily find ideas, and motivate them to practice writing often within a set period of time. Nurfiryalianti et al. (2014) stated that by using this techniques, students are expected to find a new side of thinking in a simple way which might encourage them to write easily. According to Dunifa et al. (2017), there are two types of freewriting, such as unguided (unfocused) freewriting which is usually used to write any topic based on the writer’s choice, and guided (focused) freewriting which focuses on a particular topic and mostly used as a response to an assigned writing task by teachers. These types of freewriting allow students to practice writing often, so students can improve their writing skills.

Freewriting can also be useful for practicing students’ skills in writing descriptive text. Spencer (2005) claimed a model for learning descriptive text called SFV (Sensory details, Figurative language, and Vivid words) in which freewriting was included as a pre-writing activity that can help students to brainstorm their ideas, and develop it into a descriptive paragraph. By using this techniques for learning descriptive text, students can easily find a topic to be described and to put it in a written form.

3. Methodology

This research was conducted by using quantitative research with quasi-experimental as the research design. The population of this research was the seventh-grade students of one of the private schools in Kota Tangerang,
Banten province with a total of 33 students divided into two classes: 17 students in 7.1 as the experimental group, and 16 students in 7.2 as the control group. The samples of this research were taken by using total sampling techniques in which the entire population were taken as the samples. There were two categories of variables in this research, such as independent variable \(X\) which was the use of freewriting techniques, and dependent variable \(Y\) which was the students’ writing skill in writing descriptive text.

The instruments of this research were collected by using two writing tests which were divided into pretest and posttest. Pretest was conducted to find out the basic competences of all students and to learn their earlier knowledge before getting a treatment. Posttest was given to determine and compare the students’ achievement after the treatment process had finished. The data of the pre- and posttest were assessed by using rubric assessment adapted by Brown (2007) which focused on five components of writing such as content, organization, vocabulary, language, and mechanics.

During the treatment process, the experimental group received a specific treatment by using guided freewriting activity which followed the suggested procedure from Hwang (2010). During the treatment process, the experimental group received a specific treatment by using guided freewriting activity which followed a suggested procedure from Hwang (2010).

The procedures of the guided freewriting activity includes:

1. Explaining the students about the concepts of guided freewriting and the benefits of the activity
2. Giving a general topic to the students on what should they write
3. Making a time limit to write for at least ten until twenty minutes
4. Asking the students to write anything related to the general topic based on their interests.

The instruments of this research were analyzed by using content validity and inter-rater reliability by
Kappa. The data collected were analyzed by using statistical calculations such as normality test by using Kolmogorov-Smirnov method, homogeneity test, and independent t-test in order to find out the influence of the treatment.

4. Results and Discussions

Results

In the first day of instruction, the pretest was conducted in both experimental and control groups, in which they were asked to write a descriptive text consisting of two paragraphs based on the topic given by the researchers about describing people. Each student was allowed to write anything related to people for thirty minutes.

On the second and third day of instruction, students received a detailed explanation about descriptive text. The learning process was continued in control group by using lecturing techniques. Meanwhile, the experimental group started the treatment session by implementing guided freewriting activity. The treatment was started by explaining to the students about what guided freewriting is, how they should do it, and why is it beneficial for them to improve their writing skill. Then, the researchers gave a general topic for students to write.

The first general topic was about people. Students were asked to write a list of any names related to people. They were asked to choose a name that they were most interested in. Then, they started the freewriting by writing a descriptive text for two paragraphs. They were allowed to write anything about the chosen name for ten minutes.

The second general topic was about objects and animals, which was given on the third meeting. Students were allowed to write any topics related to objects and animals for ten minutes. On this day, the freewriting activity was conducted in several times. Some pictures were also used as a media in this freewriting activity, in which they were asked to write anything based on the pictures.

On the last day of instruction, posttest was conducted in both experimental and control group, in which they were asked to write a
descriptive text about describing objects or animals for thirty minutes.

The results of pretest and posttest in experimental and control groups were presented in the table below.

**Table 1. The Results of Students’ Scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Pretest of Experiment Group</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>55.47</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Pretest of Control Group</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>62.87</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Posttest of Experiment Group</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>66.97</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Posttest of Control Group</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>65.12</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The content validity of the instruments was analyzed by using validity sheet adapted from Facharyani et al. (2018) which covered basic competence, indicators competence, teaching techniques, instrument of test, teaching media, and time allocation. Then, the validity sheet was analyzed by the English teacher of that school by comparing the sheet to the English syllabus of 2013 Curriculum. According to the teacher’s analysis, the content of validity sheet was valid because it was related to the material used in English subject in the school. Therefore, the content validity of this research did not need a trial and statistical analysis.

The reliability test was analyzed by using inter-rater reliability. There were two raters in this research: the researchers and the English teacher. The results were shown in the following table.

**Table 2. Agreement of Inter-rater**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>0.671</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>0.607</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reliability in Experimental and Control Class

Based on the table above, it can be indicated that the students’ scores in pretest and posttest were reliable.

The normality test was analyzed by using Kolmogorov-Smirnov method with a level of significant 0.05. The criteria for the normality test were shown as follows:

1. If $D_{\text{max}} \leq D_{\text{critical}}$, the data is normally distributed.
2. If $D_{\text{max}} > D_{\text{critical}}$, the data is not normally distributed.
The results of the normality test were shown in the following table:

**Table 3. Result of Normality Test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N o.</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Pretest $D_{\text{max}}$</th>
<th>Posttest $D_{\text{max}}$</th>
<th>$D_{\text{crit}}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>0.147</td>
<td>0.126</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>0.1102</td>
<td>0.122</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the table above, the values of $D_{\text{max}} \leq D_{\text{critical}}$. Therefore, the students’ scores in pretest and posttest were normally distributed.

The homogeneity test was analyzed by comparing the values of $F_{\text{count}}$ and $F_{\text{table}}$ with the level of significant 0.05. The criteria for homogeneity test were as follows:

1. If $F_{\text{count}} \leq F_{\text{table}} = \text{the data is homogeneous.}$
2. If $F_{\text{count}} > F_{\text{table}} = \text{the data is not homogeneous.}$

The results of the homogeneity test were shown in the following table:

**Table 4. Result of Homogeneity Test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N o.</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>$F_{\text{count}}$ of Pretest</th>
<th>$F_{\text{count}}$ of Posttest</th>
<th>$F_{\text{table}}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experimental and Control Class</td>
<td>2.217</td>
<td>2.122</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the table above, the value of $F_{\text{count}} \leq F_{\text{table}}$. Therefore, the results of pretest and posttest in experimental and control class were homogeneous.

The hypothesis test was analyzed by using independent t-test by comparing the value of of $t_{\text{count}}$ and $t_{\text{table}}$.

The hypothesis of this research were shown as follows:

1. If $t_{\text{count}} \geq t_{\text{table}}$, $H_a$ is accepted = there is an influence of using freewriting techniques towards students writing skills in descriptive text.
2. If $t_{\text{count}} < t_{\text{table}}$, $H_o$ is accepted = there is no influence of using freewriting techniques towards students writing skills in descriptive text.

The results were shown as follows:

1. $t_{\text{count}} = 2.5338$
2. $t_{\text{table}} (with \alpha = 0.05 \text{ and degree of freedom} = 31) = 2.03951$

Based on the results above, it was found that the value of $t_{\text{count}}$ was
higher than $t_{\text{table}}$ with the calculation: $t_{\text{count}} (2.533) \geq t_{\text{table}} (2.039)$. Hence, the alternative hypothesis ($H_a$) was accepted, and the null hypothesis ($H_0$) was rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that there was an influence of using freewriting techniques towards the students’ writing skills in descriptive text.

**Discussion**

Based on the findings of the students’ scores as presented in Table 1, it can be inferred that there were some differences between the results of students in experimental and control group. The results of pretest showed that the average scores between experimental and control group were quite different which was 55.47 for experimental group and 62.87 for control group. This showed that the students’ scores in experimental group were still low before getting a treatment.

The results of posttest showed that the average scores between experimental and control group were slightly different with 66.97 for experimental class and 65.125 for control class. However, this indicated that the average score in experimental class improved higher than the average score in control class which was from 55.47 in pretest to 66.97 in posttest. Meanwhile, the average scores in control class improved from 62.87 in pretest to 65.125 in posttest. Therefore, it can be concluded that there was a specific improvement on students’ scores of experimental group after getting a treatment by using guided freewriting techniques.

The result of hypothesis test showed that the alternative hypothesis was accepted, which means there was an influence of using guided freewriting techniques towards students writing skills, especially in writing descriptive text. This can be indicated that guided freewriting had an influence for improving students’ writing skills, especially for seventh-grade students who can be considered as beginners in learning writing. At the beginning of this research, some students still had difficulty in writing descriptive text because they did not know where to start. But when guided freewriting was applied in which they
were asked to write a list of topics based on their interests, they finally knew what to write and where to begin. For instance, some students chose to write a topic about their families, friends, idols, pets, etc. which made it to find ideas because they already knew the characteristics of each topic, then they could finally arrange it into a descriptive text. Some students also seemed more enjoy and enthusiastic during the writing process because they were interested in writing their own favorite topics. This helped students to get used to writing and it also improved their motivation to keep practicing their writing.

During the guided freewriting process, students only had a limited amount of time to write, which made them focus more on finishing their writings. Students were not required to think about grammatical rules and were unable to correct their mistakes. They had another opportunity to check their mistakes during the review session after the freewriting had finished. When the time was up, students had finally put down their ideas that related to the topic into a few paragraphs.

After the guided freewriting activity had finished, the researchers reviewed and gave some feedback on students’ writing so they could learn on how to improve their writing. As a result, in the next guided freewriting activity, students’ writing got better as they learned from their mistakes in previous writing. However, some students were still confused in understanding grammar structures and finding the appropriate vocabularies in English. Hence, the increasing number on each student’s score was not significant enough as the students were still beginners and had a lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge. Therefore, teachers may consider to use this techniques as an alternative for teaching writing as it gives a positive influence on students’ writing skills. However, they also need to focus more on building knowledge about the components and process of writing so students can write a better text in the next writing.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that
free writing was an effective techniques to be applied in teaching writing. This techniques helped students to be more enjoy in writing as it enabled students to write any topics based on their interests. It is also easy to implement and students can be actively involved in the learning process. Therefore, freewriting can be used as an alternative techniques in teaching writing as it has a positive influence on students' writing skills.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, freewriting is a promising alternative teaching techniques that supports students in their writing journey. The results of this research indicate that freewriting has a positive impact on students' ability to generate ideas, focus on specific topics, and engage in the writing process. This techniques helps students to be more creative and confident in their writing. The finding that the value of t-count is greater than t-table further supports the conclusion that freewriting has a significant influence on students' writing skills.

Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating learning, and it is important for them to provide students with engaging learning experiences. By using guided freewriting in their writing lessons, teachers can create an atmosphere that encourages students to be more active and involved in the learning process. This techniques can help students to develop their writing skills, foster their creativity, and build their confidence. As a result, it can be recommended that freewriting be considered as a valuable tool for teaching writing in the classroom.

REFERENCES


