

IMPLEMENTATION OF DIALOGUE JOURNAL IN TEACHING WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT (A Qualitative Case Study)

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Abstract: Dialogue Journals Writing (DJW) or Written Dialogue Journals are written dialogues or conversations between students and teacher kept in a personal journal book over period of time on a particular topic preferred by both the students and the teacher (Peyton and Reed, 1990; cited from Collin (2003). This study explored the implementation of dialogue journal as media in teaching writing descriptive text. The subjects of this study were students at Eleventh Grade of vocational high school. This study is qualitative case study which conducted in three meetings. The data were obtained from classroom observations, documentations from the learners and questionnaire. The result of document analysis showed that the students' writing was poor. It can be seen from the students' writing performance which was analyzed based on the writing indicator by Brown and Abeywiakram (2010). However, from the students' dialogue showed that the students could understand the content of their friends' writing. Also from the students' dialogue, they could express their feelings toward their friends' writing. While the result of classroom observation showed that the implementing of DJW brought new atmosphere for the students during learning activity. They could enjoy the learning while writing descriptive text through DJW. Meanwhile the result of questionnaire showed that students gave positive response toward implementing DJW. As the suggestions, the use of Dialogue Journal can be solution for the students who lack of practice writing. Moreover, it can build their writing habit. Thus, the teacher can use Dialogue Journal in learning activity.

Keywords : *Writing, Dialogue journal, Descriptive Text.*

1. INTRODUCTION

English is taught since Elementary School. As other languages, English has four basic skills, start from listening, speaking, reading, and writing. From those basic skills, writing is difficult to be mastered than others. Because in writing, we should pay attention to the structure, grammar, punctuation, and so on. There are many aspects that we should pay attention in writing.

A significant problem that is usually faced by the English Foreign Language students is the low writing ability, in fact not only on their ability but also their writing interest. The students have low writing ability can be seen from the students' achievement in writing. They also got difficulty in finding their own ideas. There are some factors that cause students' writing ability is low, perhaps is not only from students themselves, but

also from teacher. Teacher still uses conventional teaching strategy which make students do not interest in writing. During learning activities in the classroom, the teacher only asks the students to read the text, translate the text by using dictionary, and rewrite the translation. Teacher has to create interesting activities in the classroom. So the students can interest in learning writing.

Writing is the ability to put pen and paper to express ideas through symbols, this way, representations on the paper will have meaning and content teaching process of writing, Clark (2003:cited from Muflikhati, 2013, p.19) states that the skill of writing cannot be done by having knowledge to be filled in students' heads that is why the goal set in learning must be to enable students to develop an effective writing "process" which can be learnt even after the class meeting hours.

Writing skill as said by Brown (2000: 335;cited in Muflikhati, 2013) is a written product which is completed after the process of thinking, planning, drafting, and revising and also demands efforts and specialized skills of generating ideas, organizing them coherently, making use of the discourse markers and the rhetorical conventions, putting all of them into one, revising the content for a clearer meaning, and editing for accurate grammar into a final product. Furthermore, Brown (2001: 334) states that writing is a learnt behavior that is similar to swimming. People speak as their natural behavior, but not all of them can write as it is a skill which only can be done consciously with efforts.

When we try to make a product of writing, we need to go through several steps as parts of a process. It is not merely putting words together into a sentence and then compiling sentences into a text. The steps act as guidelines for students to start the writing until they can finally finish it. In the process of writing, there are four stages proposed by Harmer (2004:4).

1. Planning

Before starting to write down on paper, a writer needs to decide what to write. That is why the plan must be set up first. What we are going to say, what message we want to deliver, what information we want to tell to others. The plan can be made by writing down every single thought which is still in pieces on a note. But some may prefer to do all the planning on their heads. During the moment of making plan, there are 3 main points which must be kept on mind. First, a writer must determine the purpose of writing as its importance can influence on what type of text he wants to make, what language we want to use, and what information he is going to deliver. Second, it is important to consider who the audiences are. After knowing that, a writer can choose the tone of his writing or whether he wants to make it formal or informal. The last one is the content structure. It is

crucial as it can help the readers to understand the writing. Moreover, a writer also needs to make determination on putting best order of facts, arguments or ideas on his writing.

2. Drafting

The very first piece of writing a writer makes is usually called a draft as it will be going through editing steps. The draft can be considered as the raw writing which is needed to be fixed and revised before the final product is completed.

3. Editing (Reflecting and Revising)

After the first draft, a writer needs to reread his work to see which one is working, which one is not and also to see some parts which are not grammatically accurate or some words which have to be changed to make clearer meaning because some of them may create ambiguity and confusion on the audience. In reflecting and revising, sometimes, there is a helper who points out the errors and mistakes and also suggests for the best final product.

4. Final Version

After all of the steps above, the last one is the final writing which is ready to be delivered to the audience. The first draft and the final version will be very different as it has gone through a process which makes many changes on its' content.

Harmer (2004:6) found to be the most appropriate as it is allowed an ongoing process of writing in a recursive manner called "*Process Wheel*".



Figure 2.1 "*Process Wheel*" Diagram Proposed By Harmer (2004: 6) *How to Teach Writing*

According to Laurel (2000), there are six purposes of writing. The first is writing to explain or inform. In this kind of writing, the writers should know concretely and clearly about what information they want to inform, for example, writing an announcement or an article. The second is writing to persuade. It is usually has related to an advertisement. In this kind of writing, the writer must use the interesting words to catch the customer's attention.

The third is writing at school. It means that the writing that used to answer the essay question from the test of their examination. The fourth is business writing. In the business writing, the writer should focus in formal language, for example, writing a formal letter. The fifth is social writing. It is a social relationship, for example the letter between friends and the content is informal. The last is artful writing. It is writing as one part of the art, for example, writing novels or short stories. Therefore, it can be concluded that the writers should know the purposes of their writing and the goal of the writing. The writers should also know who their readers would be. (Cited from Nurhasanah,p.7.2014).

In accordance with writing activity, the researcher assumed it would be quite interesting if the students implement their activity in a form of dialogue journal. Dialogue Journals Writing (DJW) or Written Dialogue Journals are written dialogues or conversations between students and teacher kept in a personal journal book over period of time on a particular topic preferred by both the students and the teacher (Peyton and Reed, 1990) cited from Collin (2003).

Dialogue journals are written conversations between just two people, one-to-one, like pen pals. The pair can be the teacher and a student or two students (Smokey & Elaine, n.d., p.100). 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 (cited in Wulyani, 2011, p. 1)

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.

According to Peyton (1990:4; cited in Yoshihara, 2008) adds that DJW is a type of written interaction between teachers and students that focuses on meaning rather than form and is a means of developing students linguistic competence, their understanding of course content, and their ability to communicate in written-form. Furthermore, Staton (1987: 49; cited in Amelia Myers Collin's journal, 2003) says that DJW is a genuine written conversation where the students can conduct private discussion with the teacher.

Besides that, Muflikhati (p.26:2013). This journal is different from the traditional one since there is an opportunity for the teacher to give comments or respond to the students' writing. The teacher's job in DJW is not to give evaluation or correction on students'

errors but to give response as a partner in conversation (Peyton and Reed, 1990: 4) in Liao and Wong (2001: 141). This journal also allows both the teacher and the student to make decision about what topic they want to talk about. Such dialogues occur on a regular basis throughout the school year, extending the conversation across time for purposes of communication, self-understanding, negotiation of the classroom relationship, and problem solving.

And then a dialogue journal is a private, written conversation between teacher and student or between students (Peyton, 1993; Schwartz, 2004; Staton, 1987). It is an asynchronous dialogue between two or more persons. The students free write in their journals on a regular basis or respond to a prompt provided by the teacher or by one of their peers. The teacher collects, reads, and replies to the journals regularly, either at the end of the week or every time the students write (Peyton, 1993). Teachers and other students in the class can reply to the entries by either asking additional questions on an entry or making comments. When the students get their journals back, they read the teacher's or their peers' reactions, comments, or questions, and then the journaling continues: They answer any questions, reply to comments they may have received, or write a new entry (Peyton, 1993).

According to Muflikhati (2013) states that DJW is also categorized as self writing used as students' records of thoughts, feeling, and reactions in which an instructor such as teacher reads and gives responses to Brown (2001: 344) based that to Clark's opinion (2003: 28), DJW has a purpose to enhance the affective writing process in the classroom to create better atmosphere and bring fresh air for the students who are bored of writing class. Dialogue journals, as writing activities, are designed among other things to motivate, and inspire writing, and this not only in the foreign language (Brno, p.12, 2009).

Furthermore, Staton (1987: 49; in Amelia Myers Collins journal: 2003) says that DJW is a genuine written conversation where the students can conduct private discussion with the teacher. This journal is different from the traditional one since there is an opportunity for the teacher to give comments or respond to the students writing. According to Brno (2009), Staton says that dialogue journals have also been successfully used with deaf students.

According to Muflikhati (2013). The main goal of the use of DJW is to let the students practice writing as much as possible, so they can write with confidence thus their fluency in writing is enhanced. Students are usually lost when their teacher asks them to write a certain genre of text, because they are not accustomed to write. To train students fluency in writing, the most basic way is to build their writing habits first. When it can be achieved successfully with dedication and efforts, they can absolutely switch their best in

making their own creative writing in all genres of text. Staton, Peyton, and Reed (1990, 7), with others in Collins (2003), identified several characteristics of the writing in DJW.

1. The Writing Has Qualities of Good Conversation.

Peyton (2000) in Abdolhamid (2009), suggest that this can create a meaningful conversation between students and teachers in many ways. If it is possible, the teachers can directly or indirectly take students to give some attention on formal linguistic aspects such as the mechanics of writing and styles, or to give takes on the communicative and discursive aspects of their writing. The students who expect some audiences on their writing will feel motivated as they get some appreciations from their teachers. They enjoy their teachers company participating as their friend and partner in an ongoing conversation in DJW. Importantly, they also go through some experiences dealing with different linguistic and communicative aspects of writing foreign language.

2. The Writing Is Student-Generated.

They generally write about activities they are involved in and issues that interest them as they happen. Through DJW, teachers can put their responsibility for teaching a foreign language in the context of real interaction with people who possess different life experiences.

Another benefit of using DJW is that this can function as a tool which gains considerable acceptance in the classroom to help students to become aware of their own writing by making use of their experiences to enhance their writing skills (Clark & Ivanic, 1997, p. 213, cited in Pennycook, 2003 in Castellanos: 2008).

3. The Writing Is Continual.

The regular journal exchange allows students to discuss certain topics with their teacher over a period of time. It can be performed in daily, weekly or monthly basis. Because of its flexibility, teachers of English can make determination on the use of DJW by considering their students level of proficiency or age.

4. The Writing Is Functional.

Students write in their journals on things which can accomplish a wide variety of real beneficial purposes for instance: to get information, opinion, clarification, solution, and etc. Wilcox (1998) in Castellanos (2008) suggests that the acts of responding to a reading in writing, sharing ideas and reflecting on our own ways of knowing is a series of a process that improves learning and enhances thinking.

5. The Writing Is Varied in Terms of Topic, Genre, and Length.

The journals function as spaces for students to write non-personal or personal topics they prefer to tell. The use of DJW empowers them to make use of their own experiences, thoughts, and ideas with no limitation. They can explore on what they study, read, listen or even what they feel on things in their daily life. They are free to decide the length of the story themselves. However, since the use of DJW is mainly to enhance students' fluency in writing, teachers should inform the importance of giving details.

For the genres of text in English, teachers usually make deals with students about the topic on texts they will write on descriptive, recount, or the other genre of texts. This principle of DJW is crucial as Vanett and Jurich in Pierson (2003) state that the freedom to have some creative control over what is written seems to be inextricably linked to developing a sense of investment in the writing process. Moreover, they also state that writing in DJW can give students confidence in writing that they have not felt before, and can give them skills that they can use in other, more academic types of writing.

6. The Responses Give by the Teacher Should not Judge and Criticize Students Writing.

In DJW, there is no correction made for the students since the nature of this journal is free-writing medium for them to express their thoughts and ideas without being worried of making mistakes. The teacher job in DJW is not to give evaluation or correction on students' errors but to give responses as a partner, a friend or as an ally in conversation (Peyton and Reed, 1990: 4) in Liao and Wong (141).

This is considering the students feelings on their writings which are full of corrections that usually make them lose their confidence to write. The teacher is helping the students by directly participating in the conversation rather than judging the students writing (Peyton & Staton (1993) in Liao and Wong:154). DJW believes in the principles of Communicative methodology that to learn is to do and considers that mistakes are not always mistakes.

According to Oshima and Hogue (1997:50), descriptive writing appeals to the senses, so it tells how something looks, feels, smells, tastes, and/ or sounds. Wardiman said (2008; cited in Alawi, 2011). The social function of descriptive is to describe a particular person, place or thing. Emotion also can describe feelings such as happiness, fear, loneliness, gloom, and joy. Description helps the reader, through his or her imagination, to visualize a scene or a person, or to understand a sensation or an emotion, Woodson said (2008; cited in Alawi, 2011).

The descriptive text is really different from the other kinds of text. Descriptive text is the text that describes something. Wyrick (1987:227, cited from Husna, *et al.*, n.d) states,

“The writer of description creates a word picture of persons, places, objects, and emotions using a careful selection of detail to make an impression on the reader.” From the explanation above, it can be concluded that descriptive writing is a kind of writing that consists of description, characteristics, definition of something, object or person. Then, the descriptive text is usually in simple present tense. It is necessary for the teacher to make teaching and learning writing descriptive text more interesting. Writing becomes the most difficult skill when it is learned by the foreign language learners. “Writing is a difficult skill for native speakers and non-native speakers; because writers must be able write it in multiple issues such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabularies and mechanics such as punctuation, spelling, and capitalization” (Rass, 2001:30). According to Brown (2001): “writing is thinking process, because writing is a process of putting ideas down on paper to transform thought into words and give them structure and coherent organization”.

In this research, the students wrote about a place. The students should include several information about the place, such as where the place is, how big it is, how cold or warm the place is, how the place makes you feel, what things you can see in this place, etc. For example, when a student wants to describe about his house, then he should have background knowledge about parts of his house, such as how many rooms that this student has? What is the color of the wall? How wide or how high the house is.

In another point of view, the description of place is bringing the student into the situation where they have been there. According to Knapp and Watkins (2005) “A description of place can include physical and emotional description. A description of place sometimes includes descriptions of objects and/or people that may be associated with the place”. It means that by giving complete information about the place it will be interesting by including details that express feelings about this special place. Furthermore, the students have been given some questions to help them write effectively: “What do you think about the place?”, “How is the interior and exterior design?”, “What did you like about it?” etc. And then the purpose of Descriptive Text is to describe the characteristics of living things, objects, animals or certain places specifically by the vision of the writer.

2. METHOD

This study used qualitative case study. “A qualitative case study can be defined in terms of the process of actually carrying out the investigation, the unit of analysis (the bounded system, the case), or the end product” Sharan (1998). A case study is a general term for the exploration of an individual, group or phenomenon Starman (2013:31). Therefore, a case study is a comprehensive description of an individual case and its analysis; i.e., the characterization of the case and the events, as well as a description of the

discovery process of these features that is the process of research itself (Mesec, 1998, p. 45) cited in Starman (2013:31).

Qualitative research usually used to comprehend social phenomenon from participant point of view (Patton, 1990). Qualitative case study is an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

This study analyzed the use of dialogue journal in learning writing descriptive text. In this study, the researcher's role is as an observer who observed the use of dialogue journal in teaching learning process with the help of collaborators such as English teacher and school principal to improve the teaching learning process using the Dialogue Journal in writing descriptive text.

In collecting the data, the researcher conducted three meetings based on the schedule of the class participant. The data were collected by using three instruments, such as document analysis, observation sheet, and questionnaire. The result of those instruments were interpreted in qualitative method.

The participants in this study were 35 of eleven grade students. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2000; cited in Nurviyani, 2014) states that sample size affects accuracy of representation. It is minimum is 30; upper limit is 1.000. The larger sample means less chance of error. The participants were chosen purposively. This research involved the eleven grade students in the academic year of 2016/2017 to help the process of the research to perform properly and successfully. The reason in choosing this class as the participants was because the material about descriptive text had not taught in this class.

Data collection there were document analysis, observation, and questionnaire for collecting data. First data analysis, the researcher will analyze each students' writing whether there was improvement or not in students' writing performance in every meetings. Then, the data was interpreted as findings.

Second, Observation was taken by using observation sheet to answer research questions about the students' response toward dialogue journal. There were some aspects that was observed by the researcher as observer. The researcher described the result of each aspect in each meeting. Those aspect were students interest to dialogue journal, students are active during learning process, students pay attention to the explanation, and students were serious in writing descriptive text using dialogue journal.

Last, the reseracher interpreted the data as findings qualitatively. Meanwhile, to answer second research question, the researcher used open-ended questionnaire to find out whether the students had positive response or not toward the use of dialogue journal.

The questionnaire consisted of seven questions. The data from questionnaire was described as the findings.

3. DISCUSSION

This chapter describes the research findings from the whole data. It presents the data from document analysis of students writing, observation sheet, and questionnaire. All data are presented to answer research questions, namely: 1) How are the students' writing of descriptive text through dialogue journal?, 2) How are the students' responses toward the use of dialogue journal in writing descriptive text?. The findings of each research question are discussed in the following sections.

In the first meeting of implementing Dialogue Journal, the students responded the content of the text rather than the form of the text. It is in line with Peyton (1990: 4) in Muflikhati (2013:27) adds that DJW is a type of written interaction between teachers and students that focuses on meaning rather than form and is a means of developing students' linguistic competence, their understanding of course content, and their ability to communicate in written form.

The data from document analysis showed that the students' writing of descriptive text was poor. The students always forgot to give the title on their text. In the first text, all students did not put the title, but in the second and third text, some students started to give title, even though other students ignored to give it.

The students were poor in writing can be seen from five aspects that the researcher used to analyze students' writing. In the aspect of organization, most of students could give the identification, but they could not develop their ideas on the description. The students just wrote a main sentence without added some supporting sentences. In the aspect of content, the students could write assign the topic, but they could not develop their ideas. It made their writing was short. Most of students were also hard to arrange good sentences. In the aspect of grammar, there were many grammatical error that students made, like use appropriate *to be*, *pronoun*, *singular/plural noun*. In the aspect of punctuation and mechanic, most of students did not pay attention to the punctuation. They did not use comma, full stop, capital letter in the beginning of sentence or the name of place. Some students also did not write as paragraph but make it as a list. In the aspect style, the students were difficult to use appropriate words to make it as good sentences.

In the second meeting of the research, the teacher asked the students to write a descriptive text with the theme "MY IDOL". In this text, the students started to put the title on it, although some students forgot giving the title. In the aspect organization, most of students could develop their identification. When they introduced their idol in the first

sentence as the main sentence, they could also develop the supporting ideas. In the third meeting of the research or the last meeting, the teacher asked the students to write a descriptive text about *my favorite face*. As in the previous text, some students put the title on it, but some students forgot giving the title. In describing their favorite place, the students did not describe clearly as the previous text that they had described.

In the aspect organization, the students began the identification with the main sentence *My favorite place is*. Some students gave supporting idea with the reasons why they called it as their favorite place, but some students tend to use second sentence and other sentences as the description. So, there were no other supporting ideas to support the identification, because they tend to describe directly to description.

In the aspect of content, the students' writing assigned the topic but they could not develop their ideas well. It made their writing were short as usual. The students also did not describe the place clearly. They did not describe how the situation is, or the characteristic of the place. They tend to describe their feeling toward the place.

In the aspect of grammar, as in the previous text, the students did grammatical error in the form of uncorrect pronoun, to be, and so on. In the aspect Punctuation, Spelling, and Mechanics, the students did not pay attention to the use of full stop, comma, capital letter. The students also did spelling error. Data from classroom observation showed that the students were serious in reading their friends' text, but some students were busy to see their friends' work at the back.

But overall, most of students seemed interest in Dialogue Journal, they seemed trying to give comment on their friends' writing. But, they looked confused in the beginning because it was the first time using Dialogue Journal and due to the fact that they were rare to practice writing. Meanwhile, the students enjoyed in following the learning activity. According to Clark's opinion (2003: 28), DJW has a purpose to enhance the affective writing process in the classroom to create better atmosphere and bring fresh air for the students who are bored of writing class (cited in Muflikhati, 2013:27). For them who rare to practice writing, using Dialogue Journal has brought new atmosphere in learning activity, especially in learning writing that never been used before.

In analyzing the result of questionnaire, the researcher read the students' answer and described it as the findings. There are seven questions related to the use of Dialogue Journal in learning writing descriptive text.

Last, the data from questionnaire showed positive response from students. Through dialogue journal, the students could gain interaction with their friends. Students could get motivation from what they had read. They got information by reading it, so that they could

also get new vocabularies from their friend's writing. It made the students confidence to write without worry to lack of grammar mastery.

4. CONCLUSION

This research reported the result of the implementation of Dialogue Journal in teaching writing descriptive text. The aims of the research are to investigate the students' writing of descriptive text through dialogue journal and to investigate the students' responses toward the use of Dialogue Journal in writing descriptive text.

Based on the data findings and discussion in the previous chapter, the conclusions are as follows. The data from document analysis showed that the students' writing of descriptive text was poor. The students always forgot to give the title on their text. In the first text, all students did not put the title, but in the second and third text, some students started to give title, eventhough other students ignored to give it.

The data from classroom observation showed that the students could more active in joining the lesson. The students were serious in writing and they looked interest in writing dialogue journal. Last, the data from questionnaire showed positive response from students. Through dialogue journal, the students could gain interaction with their friends. Students could get motivation from what they had read. In addition, the use of Dialogue Journal is effective to be used in learning writing.

The teacher should give opportunities for students to practice more in writing. While practice in writing, the teacher should guide them more, in order the students can gain their motivation to learn.

The students should practice more in writing, in order it can gain their writing habit and their writing skill. Besides, the students should be able to utilize the media which is provided by the teacher.

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