Dialogue Journals: Enhancing Students’ Writing Viewed From Writing Apprehension

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This article reports the result of a research dealing with, first, the difference between Dialogue Journals Method and Direct Instruction Method in teaching writing, second the difference between students having high writing apprehension and students having low writing apprehension and third the interaction between teaching methods and writing apprehension. The samples were two classes namely experimental class which was taught by using Dialogue Journals Method and control class which was taught by using Direct Instruction Method. Each class was divided into two groups in which each consisted of students having high writing apprehension and those having low writing apprehension. To collect the data, two instruments were used namely writing test and writing apprehension questionnaire (WAQ). The data were, then, analysed by using descriptive statistics to describe the research data and inferential statistics namely multifactor Analysis of Variance ANOVA 2x2 and Tukey test to test the hypotheses. The findings of this research are: (1) Dialogue Journals Method is more effective than Direct Instruction Method to teach writing; (2) The students having low writing apprehension have better writing skill than those having high writing apprehension; and (3) There is an interaction between teaching methods and students’ writing apprehension in teaching writing. Based on the research findings, it can be summarized that Dialogue Journals is an effective method in teaching writing at the eighth grade of one of Profit Junior High School in Surakarta in the academic year of 2014/2015. The effectiveness of the method is affected by writing apprehension.

Keywords: Dialogue Journals Method, Direct Instruction Method, Writing Skill, writing apprehension, Experimental Research.

INTRODUCTION

English is officially taught since Elementary until University level in Indonesia. In order to be successful, students need to master four language skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking. As one of productive skills, writing is not only a process of communication, but also a product necessary to achieve the goal of National Standard of Competency. It means that writing is one of significant skills that must be mastered by students.

The importance of writing skill for the students at the eighth grade of one of Profit Junior High
School in Surakarta is to lead students to master vocabulary and tenses. Besides, writing skills assisted the students to express the ideas in the written form. Thus, writing skill is beneficial to be taught to the students since it enables them to learn English as foreign language that required vocabulary and tenses as the main part in constructing ideas.

It noticed that the students got some problems in writing skill. The problems sometimes arouse from the lack of mastering vocabulary and tenses. The students got difficulty in vocabulary especially on how to identify meaning, how to use the vocabulary based on the context, how to distinguish the right tenses in constructing sentences and how to arrange sentences into a good paragraph. Therefore, it is necessary for the researcher to conduct a research on students' writing to find what method that is effective to solve the students' problems.

Writing required not only cognitive aspect that could influence students, but also affective aspect as an essential aspect that affects students in writing activities. According to Mcleod (1987) cited in Alnufaie and Grenfell (2013:79) writing is claimed to be an emotional as much a cognitive activity. Its affective constituents including emotions, apprehension (belief, feelings and attitudes) and motivation strongly influence all stages of the writing process. Therefore, the researcher conducted this research viewed from writing apprehension.

Daly (1979:3) defines that writing apprehension as “the general avoidance of writing situations perceived by individuals to potentially require some amount of writing accompanied by the potential for evaluation of that writing”. This definition draws a correlation and interaction between three constructs: (1) individual attitudes (e.g., positive or negative judgment); (2) emotions and feelings (e.g., fear or anxiety) and (3) avoidance behaviors (e.g., blocking or resistance).

Students' writing is also affected by teaching methods. In this research, there were two methods that were applied; they were Dialogue journals and Direct Instruction. Besides, the researcher inserted writing apprehension as
such kind of psychological aspect that was investigated to identify whether students having low writing apprehension have better writing than those having high writing apprehension. The researcher believes that Dialogue journal can be more effective than Direct Instruction. Dialogue journal was introduced to connect teacher and students. Tomkins (2002) also explains that journals can be a particularly effective way when writers know that someone who is also interested in the topic will read and respond to their entries.

This research is aimed at identifying the effect of the teaching methods and writing apprehension on students’ writing skill. Particularly this research is proposed: (1) Whether or not Dialogue journal is more effective than direct instruction to teach writing at the eighth grade of one of Profit Junior High School in Surakarta in the academic year of 2014/2015; (2) Whether or not Students having low writing apprehension have better writing skill than students having high writing apprehension at the eighth grade of one of Profit Junior High School in Surakarta in the academic year of 2014/2015 and (3) Whether or not there is an interaction effect between learning methods and students’ writing apprehension on the students’ writing skill at the eighth grade of one of Profit Junior High School in Surakarta in the academic year of 2014/2015.

Moon (2006:2) mentions that Dialogue journals is a written conversation between two or more people, each responding to the other’s entries, usually around an agreed topic. Peyton (2000) also describes that the teaching method “dialogue journals” as interactive student centered way for teachers to open channels of communication with their students in natural context.

Based on those theories, it can be concluded that Dialogue Journal is a teaching method focuses on a written conversation between students and the teacher to provide them the opportunity for real communication.

Freeman (1983:18) proposes direct instruction is a method that the goal of Instruction provides learners with practically useful knowledge of language.
Arends (1997:64) mentions that direct Instruction is a conventional teaching that assists the students to learn basic skill and acquire information that can teach in step by step.

Based on those theories, direct Instruction is a conventional method that mainly focuses on teacher-centered, emphasizes the use of small group, face-to-face instruction by the teacher and provides learners with practically useful knowledge of language.

Daly and Miller (1975) coined the term writing apprehension is meaning writing-specific anxiety. Daily (1978), further referred to it as a psychological concept linked to a person’s tendencies or predisposition to avoid situations required for writing and accompanied by some amount of evaluation. It means that one who has high writing apprehensive tends to avoid situations required for writing and accompanied by some amount of evaluation.

Hettich (1994:1) in his study defines that writing apprehension as the abnormally high level of an anxious, nervous, agitated or stressful feeling in a writing-strategy-related situation, regardless of blocking and evaluation.

It can be concluded that writing apprehension can be defined as psychological construct or affective variable associated with a person’s tendencies to avoid situations requiring writing accompanied by some amount of evaluation. They have the abnormally high level of an anxious, nervous, agitated or stressful feeling in writing activity.

The hypothesis of this research can be formulated as follows: (1) Dialogue journal is more effective than direct instruction to teach writing at the eighth grade of one of Profit Junior High School in Surakarta in the academic year of 2014/2015; (2) Students having low writing apprehension have better writing skill than students having high writing apprehension at the eighth grade of one of Profit Junior High School in Surakarta in the academic year of 2014/2015 and (3) there is an interaction effect between learning methods and writing apprehension on the students’ writing skill at the eighth grade of one of Profit Junior High
School in Surakarta in the academic year of 2014/2015.

**RESEARCH METHOD**

The research was conducted in one of Profit Junior High School in Surakarta which is located on jalan Wahidin No 37, Tegalsari, Surakarta. This research was carried out at the second grade student in the academic year of 2014-2015. This research was conducted September from 2014 to November 2014.

There is a dependent variable and two independent variables in this research. The dependent variable is writing skill and the independent variables are learning methods and writing apprehension. Indicators of writing skill are content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. The measurement scale that is used in this research is nominal scale and it is used in the blueprint of the essay writing and scoring rubrics.

The teaching methods used in the class in order to achieve the objectives were Dialogue Journals and Direct Instruction. Dialogue Journals was used to teach writing in experimental class. And then, Direct Instruction was used to teach writing in control class. The last variable was attributive: writing apprehension had been provided as psychological aspect.

The design of this research was a simple factorial design 2x2 with Post-Test Only Design. Factorial design is a design in which the researcher can simultaneously assess the effect of two or more independent variables on the dependent variable (Ary et al, 2010:13). The population of this research is the eighth grade students of one of Profit Junior High School in Surakarta in the academic year of 2014/2015. The number of population is 68 students consisting of three classes (VIIIA, VIIIB, and VIIIC). This research had two classes, one class as the experimental group and one as the control group. This research was conducted in two classes, one class as the experimental group and one as the control group. The number of the students in each class is 20 students, so there were 40 students as sample. And the researcher used cluster random sampling.

The researcher used two instruments of collecting data in this study. There were writing test
and writing apprehension questionnaire. Writing test was used to measure the students' writing skill by using scoring rubrics of writing.

Writing test was assessed by using readability of the test instruction which informs whether the test instructions are appropriately readable for students and whether the instruction of writing test can be understood by the students. And the result of the questionnaire showed that more than 80% of students answered “Yes” for each item in the instruction. It can be concluded that writing test in this research is readable since 80% students could understand the instruction of the test.

And then, Writing Apprehension questionnaire (WAQ) was used to measure the level of students’ writing apprehension. WAQ was assessed by using validity and reliability test. Validity test is used to identify whether each item is valid or not, while reliability test is used to identify whether the instrument is reliable or not by using Alpha Croanbach Technique.

The techniques used in analyzing the data were descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to know the mean, median, mode and standard deviation of the scores of the writing test. To identify the normality and the homogeneity of the data, the reseacher used normality and homogeneity test. The normality and homogeneity tests were done before testing the hypothesis. Inferential analysis used was multifactor analysis of variance 2x2. It was used to test the hypotheses. \( H_0 \) is rejected if \( F_o \) is higher than \( F_t \). If \( H_0 \) is rejected, the analysis was continued to identify which group is better by using Tukey test.

**RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The data in this research are classified into eight groups: (1) The data of students’ writing score taught by using Dialogue Journals (\( A_1 \)); (2) The data of students’ writing score taught by using Direct Instruction (\( A_2 \)); (3)The data of students’ writing score having high writing apprehension (\( B_1 \)); (4) The data of students’ writing score having low writing apprehension (\( B_2 \)); (5) The data of students’ writing score having high writing
apprehension taught by using Dialogue Journals (A₁,B₁); (6) The data of students’ writing score having low writing apprehension taught by using Dialogue Journals (A₁,B₂); (7) The data of students’ writing score having high writing apprehension taught by Direct Instruction (A₂,B₁) and (8) The data of students’ writing score having low writing apprehension taught by Direct Instruction (A₂,B₂).

The result of normality test for the eight groups are: (1) The writing scores computation result of the students taught using Dialogue Journals Method (A₁) shows that L₀ (0.127) is lower than Lₜ (0.190); (2) The writing scores computation result of the students taught using Direct Instruction Method (A₂) shows that L₀ (0.185) is lower than Lₜ (0.190); (3) The writing scores computation result of the students having high writing apprehension (B₁) shows that L₀ (0.130) is lower than Lₜ (0.190); (4) The writing scores computation result of the students having low writing apprehension (B₂) shows that L₀ (0.150) is lower than Lₜ (0.190); (5) The writing scores computation result of the students having high writing apprehension taught by using Dialogue Journals Method (A₁,B₁) shows that L₀ (0.140) is lower than Lₜ (0.258); (6) The writing scores computation result of the students having low writing apprehension taught by using Dialogue Journals Method (A₁,B₂) shows that L₀ (0.200) is lower than Lₜ (0.258); (7) The writing scores computation result of the students having high writing apprehension taught by using Direct Instruction Method (A₂,B₁) shows that L₀ (0.245) is lower than Lₜ (0.258); and (8) The writing scores computation result of the students having low writing apprehension taught by using Direct Instruction Method (A₂,B₂) shows that L₀ (0.200) is lower than Lₜ (0.258). The data can be said as normal data if L₀ (L obtained) is lower than Lₜ (L table) at the level of significance α = 0.05. From the result, it can be concluded that all the data of writing scores for the eight groups are in normal distribution because L₀ of the entire data are lower than Lₜ (L₀ < Lₜ) at the level of significance α = 0.05.

The result of homogeneity test is 3.71. The data are homogeneous if χ² (χ obtained) is lower than χ² (χ table) at the level of significance α = 0.05. Because χ₀² (3.17) is lower than χₜ² (7.81), it
can be said that the data are homogeneous.

It means that the data of this research are obtained from homogeneous sample. After the data are normal and homogeneous, then the data are analysed by using Multifactor Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) 2x2. This test is used to identify the effects of the independent variables and attributive variable toward the dependent variable. In addition, it functions to check if there is an interaction among those variables. The hypothesis is rejected if $F_o$ is higher than $F_t$ ($F_o > F_t$). The summary of the data is presented as follows:

### Table 1. The result of Mean Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Apprehension (B)</th>
<th>Teaching Methods (A)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dialogue Journals Method (A1)</td>
<td>Direct Instruction Method (A2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Writing Apprehension (B1)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Writing Apprehension (B2)</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>66.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73.25</td>
<td>66.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2. Multifactors Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) 2x2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variance</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>$F_o$</th>
<th>$F_{(0.05)}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between columns ($\Sigma x_{bc}^2$)</td>
<td>455.62</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>455.62</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between rows ($\Sigma x_{br}^2$)</td>
<td>819.02</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>819.02</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columns by rows ($\Sigma x_{br}^2$)</td>
<td>893.02</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>893.02</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups ($\Sigma x_{bc}^2$)</td>
<td>2167.67</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>722.56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups ($\Sigma x_{w}^2$)</td>
<td>3688.7</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>102.46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total ($\Sigma x_{t}^2$)</td>
<td>5856.38</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First, because $F_o$ between columns (4.46) is higher than $F_t (0.05)$ (4.08), the difference between columns is significant. Therefore, $H_o$ is rejected. It means that teaching writing using Dialogue Journals to the second grade of SMP Ta'Mirul Islam Surakarta is significantly different from the one using Direct Instruction. The mean score of the students taught by using Dialogue Journals (73.25) is higher than the mean score of students taught by using Direct Instruction is (66.50). Thus, it can be concluded that Dialogue Journals is more effective than Direct Instruction to teach writing at the eighth grade of SMP Ta'Mirul Islam Surakarta in the academic year of 2014/2015.

Second, because $F_o$ between rows (7.99) is higher than $F_t (0.05)$ (4.08), the difference between rows is significant. Therefore, $H_o$ is rejected. It means that students having low writing apprehension are significantly different from those having high writing apprehension. The mean score of the students having low writing apprehension (74.4) is higher than
the mean score of the students having high writing apprehension (65.35). It can be concluded that students having low writing apprehension have better writing skill than students having high writing apprehension at the eighth grade of SMP Ta'Mirul Islam Surakarta in the academic year of 2014/2015.

Third, because $F_{interaction}$ between groups (8.71) is higher than $F_{(0.05)}$ (4.08), $H_0$ is rejected. Therefore, there is an interaction between the two variables, the teaching methods and writing apprehension in teaching writing at the eighth grade of SMP Ta'Mirul Islam Surakarta in the academic year of 2014/2015.

After knowing the effects and the interaction of independent variables toward the dependent variable, it is also necessary to compare the mean of every treatment with the other means using Tukey test. This test is used to identify which means are significantly different from the other. Dialogue Journals is more effective than Direct Instruction to improve students’ writing skill. Taking written conversation into the language class is very interesting. Dialogue Journals provides students as many opportunities as possible to express themselves in the target language.

### Table 3. Summary of Tukey Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>$q_o$</th>
<th>$q_t$</th>
<th>$\alpha$</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A-A</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>B-B</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A-B</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A-B</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First, because $q_o$ between columns (2.98) is higher than $q_t$ at the level of significance $\alpha = 0.05$ (2.95), it means that Dialogue Journals is significantly different from Direct Instruction in teaching writing. The mean score of the students taught by using Dialogue Journals (73.25) is higher than the mean score of students taught by using Direct Instruction is (66.50). Thus, it can be concluded that Dialogue Journals is more effective than Direct Instruction to teach writing at the eighth grade of SMP Ta'Mirul Islam Surakarta in the academic year of 2014/2015.

Second, because $q_o$ between rows (4.00) is higher than $q_t$ at the level of significance $\alpha =0.05$ (2.95), it means that the students having high writing apprehension are significantly different from those
having low writing apprehension. The mean score of the students having low writing apprehension (74.4) is higher than the mean score of the students having high writing apprehension (65.35). It can be concluded that students having low writing apprehension have better writing skill than students having high writing apprehension at the eighth grade of SMP Ta'Mirul Islam Surakarta in the academic year of 2014/2015.

Third, because \( q \) between cells A1B1 and A2B1 (0.84) is lower than \( q_{t} \) at the level of significance \( \alpha = 0.05 \) (3.15), it means that Dialogue Journals is not significantly different from Direct Instruction to teach writing to the students having high writing apprehension. Since the difference of the mean score of A1B1 (64) and A2B1 (66.7) is not significant, it can be concluded that Dialogue Journals Method is as effective as Direct Instruction Method to the students having high writing apprehension at the eighth grade of SMP Ta'Mirul Islam Surakarta in the academic year of 2014/2015.

Godev (2010) explains that Dialogue journals can successfully be integrated into a conversation class because Dialogue Journals is interactive. Furthermore, the interaction that is present in the dialogue Journals allows writers to share an equal effort to keep the communication flow going quite easily.

The following section discusses findings of this research by considering the result of data analysis above: (1) the Difference between students taught by using Dialogue Journals Method and Direct Instruction Method. The findings of this research reveal that there is a significantly difference between teaching writing using Dialogue Journals
Method and teaching writing using Direct Instruction Method. Dialogue Journals Method is more effective than Direct Instruction Method to teach writing.

Taking written conversation into the language class is very interesting. Dialogue Journals provides students as many opportunities as possible to express themselves in the target language. Godev (2010) explains that Dialogue Journals can successfully be integrated into a conversation class because Dialogue Journals is interactive.

Otherwise, Cruickshank, et al (1999) states that Direct Instruction seems to satisfy the students because they just become the follower and depend on help. Berlitz (2011) argues that Direct Instruction is a traditional method focused on teacher-centered. It is characterized by teacher-dominated classroom. In Direct Instruction method, students do not allow to use his or her mother tongue. Direct Instruction refers to the classroom activities which are totally led by the teacher; (2) The Difference between students having high writing apprehension and students having low writing apprehension.

The findings of this research reveals that students having low writing apprehension have better writing skill than those having high writing apprehension. The mean score of students having low writing apprehension is higher than those having high writing apprehension.

In the teaching and learning process, students having high writing apprehension have difficulties in exploring ideas and they are passive to learn in the class. In writing activities, they do not list points of ideas and they just stuck or stop doing writing until they have ideas. It is ineffective since students block themselves from asking questions. They tend to think that the teacher or the partner gives the negative judgment in this situation. This pessimistic enhance their writing apprehension.

On the other hand, students having low level of writing apprehension write significantly more paragraphs, more sentences, more nouns, pronouns, adjectives than the students having high writing apprehension. They tend to be active in the teaching and learning process. The students having low writing apprehension have more willingness to write
when the teacher asks. Daud & Kassim (2005) mention that the students having low writing apprehension tend to achieve higher grades in composition courses than those having high writing apprehension and (3) The Interaction between teaching methods and writing apprehension in teaching writing.

The findings of the research reveal that there was an interaction between teaching methods and writing apprehension on the students' writing skill. The data shows that Dialogue Journals Method is significantly difference from Direct Instruction Method to teach writing to the student having low writing apprehension, but the difference happens insignificantly to those having high writing apprehension.

The characteristics of students having low writing apprehension is appropriate taught by using Dialogue Journals Method. This method needs students having a positive belief, feeling and attitude toward writing, so that they can concentrate in exploring more ideas without being worried about their mistakes related to grammar.

To the students having low writing apprehension, Dialogue Journals can motivate them to explore their writing skill more deeply. Peyton (1988) claims that the ongoing written conversation maintained between the students and the teacher ensures a real audience for the students' writing and a purpose of real communication. Dialogue journals generates more useful writing features compared to a more formal writing assignment taught by using traditional method. In contrast, students belong to low writing apprehension cannot be taught effectively by using Direct Instruction because this method cannot facilitate students work autonomously.

On the one hand, students having high writing apprehension is insignificantly different taught by using Dialogue Journals and Direct Instruction Method. Foo (2012) states the students having writing apprehension consider writing to be unrewarding, and these individuals tend to avoid writing class. To the students with high writing apprehension, Dialogue Journals method is not significantly effective to be taught in the writing class because it is
very time consuming. On the other hand, Direct Instruction also cannot motivate them to write well because the activity is over controlled by the teacher. Almost of the entire activities are dominated by the teacher. Thus, Dialogue Journals is as effective as Direct Instruction because the characteristic of students belong to high writing apprehension see writing from the negative aspects.

It can be concluded that Dialogue Journals method is more effective than Direct Instruction method in teaching writing to the students having low writing apprehension and Dialogue Journals method is as effective as Direct Instruction to the students having high writing apprehension.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS
Based on the hypothesis testing, research findings are follows: (1) The students taught using Dialogue Journals have better writing skill than those taught using Direct Instruction. In other words, the use of Dialogue journals is more effective than Direct Instruction in teaching writing for the second grade students of one of Profit Junior High School in Surakarta; (2) The students having low level of writing apprehension have better writing skill than those having high writing apprehension for the second grade students of one of Profit Junior High School in Surakarta and (3) There is an interaction between teaching methods and writing apprehension to teach writing. Dialogue Journals method is more effective than Direct Instruction method in teaching writing to the students having low writing apprehension and Dialogue Journals method as effective as Direct Instruction to the students having high writing apprehension.

Based on the research findings, it can be summarized that Dialogue Journals is effective to teach writing for the second grade students of one of Profit Junior High School in Surakarta in the academic year 2014/2015.

Therefore, it is recommended that: (1) For teachers, in order to improve students’ writing skill, teachers are recommended to apply Dialogue Journals in the class. It is suggested that teacher not only correct students’ writing, but also needs to encourage students to develop ideas. Therefore,
students feel enjoy in writing. It is better to use Dialogue Journals because it allows teacher to connect with individual students in large classes; (2) For Students, the students having high writing apprehension, they should have positive thinking that even they have done the mistakes and error it will be corrected by the teacher, they need to avoid negative feeling during writing process and they do not need being worried to be evaluated by the teacher. And, it is better for students to use Dialogue Journals, so they can become an autonomous learners and better in writing process and (3) For researchers, There are probably some weaknesses in this study which should be considered by other researchers to conduct better research. The result of the study can be a reference for the other researchers who would like to conduct further research at the same subject, It can be useful to explain more description on the process of conducting the same kinds of research viewed from any different psychological point of view besides writing apprehension.

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