

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING IN TEACHING WRITING

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Abstract

This article presents the result of the research study aimed at finding out: (1) whether there is a significant difference in writing skill between students taught using dialogue journal writing and students taught using guided writing; and (2) whether dialogue journal writing is more effective than guided writing to teach writing. The research method used in this study is a quasi-experimental research design. This research was conducted at SMP N 16 Surakarta in the academic year of 2015/2016. The population of the research is the eighth grade of SMP N 16 Surakarta. The samples are class VIII A as the experimental class which consists of 30 students and class VIII B as the control class which consists of 30 students. The research instrument used to collect the data in this study is test. The data were analysed by using t-test formula. The computation of the t-test shows that $t_{\text{observation}} (t_o) = 2.6288$ is higher than $t_{\text{table}} (58, 0.05) = 2.0017$. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in writing skill between the students taught using dialogue journal writing and the students taught using guided writing. The mean score of experimental group is 72.3, while the mean score of control group is 69. Therefore, it can be concluded that dialogue journal writing is more effective than guided writing to teach writing.

Key words: dialogue journal writing, guided writing, writing skill, experimental research.

Abstrak

Artikel ini memaparkan hasil penelitian yang bertujuan untuk mengetahui: (1) apakah ada perbedaan yang signifikan pada kemampuan menulis antara siswa yang diajar menggunakan dialogue journal writing dan siswa yang diajar menggunakan guided writing; dan (2) apakah dialogue journal writing lebih efektif dibandingkan dengan guided writing untuk mengajar writing. Metode penelitian yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode kuasi-eksperimental. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan di SMP N 16 Surakarta tahun ajaran 2015/2016. Populasi dari penelitian ini adalah kelas VIII SMP N 16 Surakarta. Sampel dari penelitian ini adalah kelas VIII A sebagai kelas eksperimen yang terdiri dari 30 siswa dan kelas VIII B sebagai kelas kontrol yang terdiri dari 30 siswa. Instrumen penelitian yang digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data dalam penelitian ini adalah tes. Data yang diperoleh dianalisis menggunakan rumus t-tes. Penghitungan data menunjukkan bahwa $t_{\text{observation}} (t_o)$ adalah 2.6288 yang mana lebih tinggi dibandingkan $t_{\text{table}} (58, 0.05) = 2.0017$. Oleh karena itu, dapat disimpulkan bahwa terdapat perbedaan yang signifikan pada kemampuan menulis siswa yang diajar menggunakan dialogue journal writing dan siswa yang diajar menggunakan guided writing. Nilai rata-rata siswa yang diajar menggunakan dialogue journal writing adalah 72.3, sedangkan nilai rata-rata siswa yang diajar menggunakan guided writing adalah 69. Oleh karena itu, dapat disimpulkan bahwa dialogue journal writing lebih efektif dibandingkan dengan guided writing untuk mengajar writing.

Keywords: dialogue journal writing, guided writing, writing skill, experimental research.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the language skills which must be required by learners when learning languages. Writing is the process of thinking to invent ideas, thinking about how to express into good writing, and arranging the ideas into statement and paragraph clearly (Nunan, 2003: 88). According to Hyland (2004: 7), writing is seen as a skill that is essentially learned, not taught, and teachers' role is non-directive, facilitating writing through an encouraging and cooperative environment with minimal interference.

Byrne (1997: 6) explains the importance of writing for teachers and students. First, teachers present space for different learning styles and needs in the practice of some forms of writing. It builds comfortable and relaxed zone to write. Next, students recognize some real evidence that they make progress in the language process by written work. Third, writing gives various classroom activities, such as a break from oral activities and increase the amount of language contact through work that can be set out from the classroom. The last, writing is also needed for formal and informal testing of students' competency in language.

The upshot of the compositional nature of writing has produced writing pedagogy that focuses students on how to generate ideas, how to organize them coherently, how to use discourse markers and rhetorical conventions to put them cohesively into a written text, how to revise text for clearer meaning, how to edit text for appropriate grammar, and how to produce final product (Brown, 2001: 335). Brown (2004: 244-245) proposes that there are six categories to evaluate writing: organization, content, language use (grammar), vocabulary, and mechanics. In line with Brown, Jacob (in Weigle, 2002: 115) states that students' writing skill refers to the students' competence in applying the components of writing including content, organization, vocabulary, language use (grammar), and mechanics.

Writing is the most difficult skill for L2 learners to master; most students cannot generate, organize and translate the ideas into readable text (Richards and Renandya, 2002: 303). Compared with speaking, writing needs much more

planning and preparation. Different from the other language skills, writing tends to be a well-formed and pre-organized one (Harmer, 2007: 46). Writing does not come naturally to human being, it must be taught and learned with much practices. Students with writing difficulties have problem dealing with spelling and forming letters, and also “generating ideas” for writing (Solagha, 2013: 3). According to Hadfield (2004: v), there are some difficulties related to the writing. Firstly, there is psychological difficulty in which the writers have to decide what information the reader needs and how best to express this. Secondly, there is linguistic difficulty in that the language used in written language is different from that used in speech. Thirdly, there is cognitive difficulty in which the writers have to organize their thought on paper. Consequently, a large number of students consider English writing as frightening and frustrating activity.

According to Kraayenoord et al. (2009: 25), with the development of social-cognitive and socio-cultural models of writing, teaching writing has shifted from a focus on teaching grammar and mechanical aspects of the task to address teaching about the processes of writing, text features and organization, and the meaningfulness of content. According to Piazza (in Isabell, 2010: 8), the goal that teachers should have for their students is to provide them with enjoyment, adventure, fascination, and discovery when teaching writing. Silva (in Lan et al., 2011: 149) states that teachers play an important role in helping students develop strategies for getting started, drafting, revising, and editing. Furthermore, Moore-Hart (in Isabell, 2010: 15) states that teachers can allow students to make choices in their writing, focus on the process rather than the product, avoid highlighting students’ mistakes, respect and take sincere interest in students’ ideas. Teachers can open a way for their students to explore and discover ideas and topics in the world of writing (Tanner & Clement, 1997: 119). Nation (2009: 94) suggests writing should attract learners and draw on their interests. An interesting and motivating activity would be applied in teaching writing. If students are struggling to come up with a topic, teachers can support students by brainstorming together to generate a list of ideas students are interested in. Teachers may specify the

writing form, and at other times they may establish the purpose, but students should choose their own content (Tompkins in Isabell, 2010: 10).

Tanner & Clement (1997: 113) propose several techniques which have been advocated in recent years to help students become better writers. One of the techniques is dialogue journal writing. Dialogue journal writing is particularly successful in promoting the writing development of students' learning English as a second language (Isabell, 2010: 23). Dialogue journal writing is chosen for this study because it focuses on meaning rather than form so that it leads the students to practice writing regularly and encourages their writing habit. Peyton & Seyoum (in Isabell, 2010: 23) find that students have the most success when they have the opportunity to choose their own topics and when their teachers contribute to the discussion by requesting a reply, statements, or other comments.

Dialogue journal writing is used initially in L1 and ESL classes, and later in foreign language classes, as a successful writing technique (González-Bueno, 1998: 57). Peyton & Reed (in Liao & Wong, 2010: 141) state that dialogue journal writing supports the writing process by providing an authentic two-way written interaction between writing partners. Nassaji & Cumming (in Datzman, 2010: 15) suggest that dialogue journals serve as a multifaceted tool for teachers to use when working with students learning English as a foreign language, creating a non-threatening forum for writing that often leads to improvements in writing fluency. According to Peyton (in Worthington, 1997), the use of dialogue journal in the classroom becomes a bridge of communication between a teachers and students especially students who learn English as a second language. He proposes that dialogue journals are not only a matter of communication, but also provide language and literacy development in a context. Students feel free to use English with no anxiety. They enjoy the interactive atmosphere with teachers as teachers create a natural and comfortable bridge to other kinds of writing to use reading and writing in purposeful ways. It is proved that dialogue journal writing can reduce students' English writing apprehension and increases students' writing confidence. Holmes & Moulton (in Liao & Wong, 2010: 142) states, with the reduction of writing

apprehension, students take the challenge to write more and frequently, thus improving their writing skills. Dialogue journal is believed to be able to improve students' motivation in writing (Liao & Wong, 2010; Bolton, 2013) because the students are free to choose topic that match with their interest. The students do not have to focus on correct form so they can freely and openly deliver their ideas of their topic of interest.

In this study, the researcher uses guided writing as a comparison. Tyner (in Lan et al., 2011: 149) proposes that guided writing is an instructional writing context chiefly teaching the writing process through modeling, support, and practice. According to Reid (1993: 25), guided writing is free writing limited to structuring sentences, often in direct answers to questions, the result of which looked like a short piece of discourse, usually a paragraph.

Ontario (2005: 5.4) states that guided writing provides students a real example of writing to be followed and enables students to produce the new writing text based the outlines made in the class. Guided writing can help the students to find the main idea, help students brainstorm and organize ideas, and help students to make coherent paragraph. Students have organized their idea so they can arrange their sentences easily. By discussing, students can share about their problems in making grammatical sentences, mastering vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and so on.

Based on the explanation above, it can be assumed that dialogue journal writing is more appropriate to be applied in teaching writing than guided writing because it leads students to practice writing regularly and encourage their writing habit so that it improves fluency in writing and helps the students develop their writing. Dialogue journal writing creates a non-threatening forum for writing which fosters the students' writing confidence because the students are brave to exchange their thoughts and ideas with the teacher. The teacher has more time to communicate and motivate the students through writing dialogue journals. On the contrary, teaching writing using guided writing needs to practice with immediate guidance from the teacher. The teacher's role is too dominant and the students depend a lot on teacher's assistance and modeling. The students tend to be passive

in doing writing because they only follow the outline provided or imitate the model text given. Therefore, the hypotheses of this research are as follows: (1) there is a significant difference in writing skill between students taught using dialogue journal writing and students taught using guided writing in teaching writing to the eighth grade of SMP N 16 Surakarta in the academic year of 2015/2016; (2) dialogue journal writing is more effective than guided writing to teach writing to the eighth grade of SMP N 16 Surakarta in the academic year of 2015/2016.

RESEARCH METHODS

The method of this research is quasi-experimental research design. It enables the researcher to identify causal relationships because it allows the researcher to observe, under controlled conditions, the effects of systematically changing one or more variables (Johnson and Christensen, 2000: 23). This research was conducted at the eighth grade of SMP N 16 Surakarta from 19 March to 28 April 2016, in the academic year of 2015/2016. The two classes used as the sample were chosen randomly by the researcher from six classes of the eighth grade existed in SMP N 16 Surakarta. The two classes were class VIII A which consists of 30 students, as experimental group who were taught using dialogue journal writing and VIII B which consists of 30 students, as control group who were taught using guided writing.

In this research, the researcher conducted the try-out test in which the result was analyzed in terms of readability for the writing test instruction. It is tried out in one class that is not included in the research sample but at the same grade and school. The researcher chose class VIII C which consists of 24 students to do the try-out test. It is necessary since there have been some cases in which students failed to do the test because they do not understand the given instruction.

Experimental and control groups are given pre-test on writing of recount text. After that, experimental group is taught by using dialogue journal writing and control group is taught by using guided writing. The last, experimental and

control groups are given post-test again on writing of recount text. Post-test was conducted to compare the result of the two groups after they got different treatments.

Writing test, as the research instrument, was used by the researcher to measure the students' writing skill in order to collect the data. The data which are analyzed are pre-test and post-test scores of experimental group and control group, and then are compared using t-test formula to prove whether there is any significant difference between the two groups in writing skill, and to find which technique is more effective to teach writing between dialogue journal writing and guided writing.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of the research is to find out: (1) whether there is a significant difference in writing skill between students taught using dialogue journal writing and students taught using guided writing; and (2) whether dialogue journal writing is more effective than guided writing to teach writing. The data description of each group is presented as follows:

Score of Experimental Group

Table 1: The frequency distribution of experimental group pre-test scores

Class Limits	Class Boundaries	Midpoint	Tally	Frequency	Percentage
48 – 52	47.5 – 52.5	50	III I	6	20%
53 – 57	52.5 – 57.5	55	III	3	10%
58 – 62	57.5 – 62.5	60	III	5	16.67%
63 – 67	62.5 – 67.5	65	III III	9	30%
68 – 72	67.5 – 72.5	70	III	5	16.67%
73 – 77	72.5 – 77.5	75	II	2	6.67%
TOTAL				30	100%

Table 2: The frequency distribution of experimental group post-test scores

Class Limits	Class Boundaries	Midpoint	Tally	Frequency	Percentage
65 – 67	64.5 – 67.5	66	III	3	10%
68 – 70	67.5 – 70.5	69	III III	10	33.33%
71 – 73	70.5 – 73.5	72	III I	6	20%
74 – 76	73.5 – 76.5	75	III I	6	20%
77 – 79	76.5 – 79.5	78	II	2	6.67%
80 – 82	79.5 – 82.5	81	III	3	10%
TOTAL				30	100%

The highest score of pre-test of experimental group is 75 while the highest score of post-test of experimental group is 82, so the difference of pre-test and post-test highest scores of experimental group is 7. The lowest score of pre-test of experimental group is 48 while the lowest score of post-test of experimental group is 65, so the difference of pre-test and post-test lowest score of experimental group is 17. The mean score of pre-test of experimental group is 61.80 while the mean score of post-test of experimental group is 72.30, so the difference of pre-test and post-test mean scores of experimental group is 10.50.

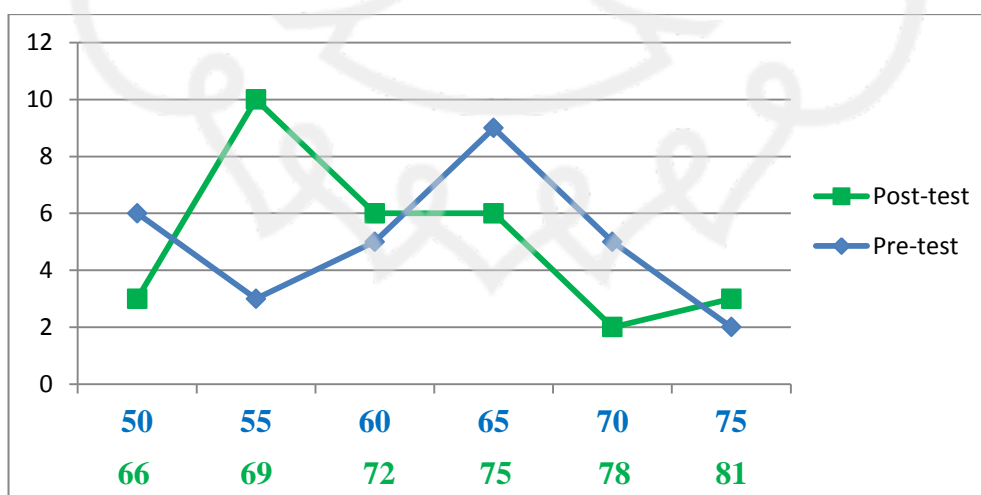


Figure 1: The difference between pre-test and post-test scores of experimental group

Score of Control Group

Table 3: The frequency distribution of control group pre-test scores

Class Limits	Class Boundaries	Midpoint	Tally	Frequency	Percentage
51 – 55	50.5 – 55.5	53	III	4	13.33%
56 – 60	55.5 – 60.5	58	III III	10	33.33%
61 – 65	60.5 – 65.5	63	III III	8	26.67%
66 – 70	65.5 – 70.5	68	III	4	13.33%
71 – 75	70.5 – 75.5	73	III	3	10%
76 – 80	75.5 – 80.5	78	I	1	3.33%
TOTAL				30	100%

Table 4: The frequency distribution of control group post-test scores

Class Limits	Class Boundaries	Midpoint	Tally	Frequency	Percentage
61 – 63	60.5 – 63.5	62	III	3	10%
64 – 66	63.5 – 66.5	65	III III	8	26.67%
67 – 69	66.5 – 69.5	68	III III	10	33.33%
70 – 72	69.5 – 72.5	71	II	2	6.67%
73 – 75	72.5 – 75.5	74	III	4	13.33%
76 – 78	75.5 – 78.5	77	I	1	3.33%
79 – 81	78.5 – 81.5	80	II	2	6.67%
TOTAL				30	100%

The highest score of pre-test of control group is 79 while the highest score of post-test of control group is 81, so the difference of pre-test and post-test highest score of control group is 2. The lowest score of pre-test of control group is 51 while the lowest score of post-test of control group is 61, so difference of pre-test and post-test lowest score of control group is 10. The mean score of pre-test of control group is 61.97 while the mean score of post-test of control group is 69, so the difference of pre-test and post-test mean scores of control group is 7.03.

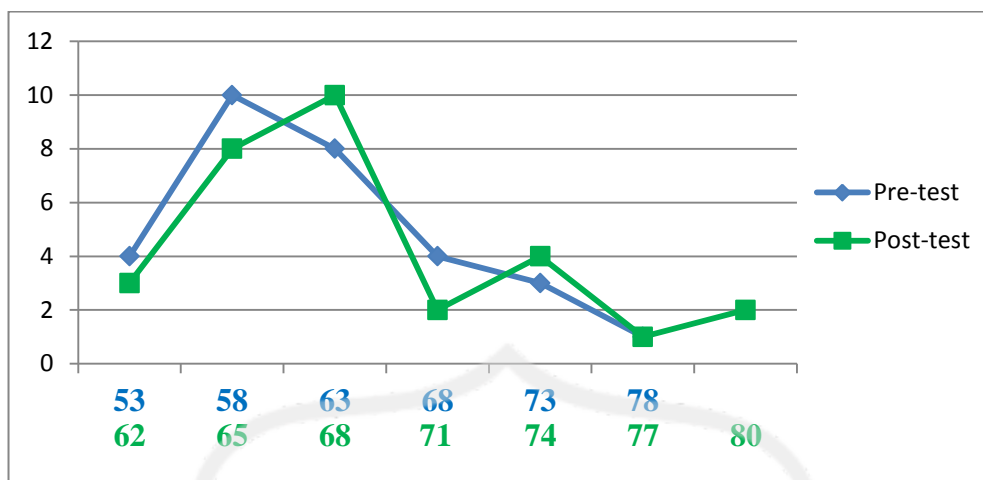


Figure 2: The difference between pre-test and post-test scores of control group

Normality and Homogeneity of Pre-test Experimental and Control Groups

The normality test used in this research is Liliefors testing at the level of significance of 0.05 ($\alpha = 0.05$), while the homogeneity testing used Bartlett formula at the level of significance of 0.05 ($\alpha = 0.05$). The computation result of the normality test of pre-test for experimental and control groups is both experimental group and control group are in normal distribution. In the data of experimental group, it can be seen that L_o is 0.1141. It is then consulted with L table for $n = 30$ at the level of significance of $0.05 = 0.1610$. It can be concluded that the data of experimental group are in normal distribution because the value of L_o is lower than L_t ($L_o < L_t$). Meanwhile, the data of control group shows that L_o is 0.1257. It is then consulted with L table for $n = 30$ at the level of significance of $0.05 = 0.1610$. It can be concluded that the data of control group are in normal distribution because the value of L_o is lower than L_t ($L_o < L_t$).

From the computation of homogeneity test of pre-test, it can be seen that $\chi_o^2 = 0.5911$ is lower than $\chi_t^2 = 3.841$ or $\chi_o^2 < \chi_t^2$. It can be concluded that the data are homogeneous because χ_o^2 is lower than χ_t^2 .

Normality and Homogeneity of Post-test Experimental and Control Groups

From the computation of the normality test of post-test for experimental and control groups, it can be seen that the data of both experimental group and control group are in normal distribution. In the data of experimental group, it can be seen that L_o is 0.1216. It is then consulted with L table for $n = 30$ at the level of significance of $0.05 = 0.1610$. It can be concluded that the data of experimental group are in normal distribution because the value of L_o is lower than L_t ($L_o < L_t$). Meanwhile, the data of control group show that L_o is 0.1207. It is then consulted with L table for $n = 30$ at the level of significance of $0.05 = 0.1610$. It can be concluded that the data of control group are in normal distribution because the value of L_o is lower than L_t ($L_o < L_t$).

From the computation of homogeneity test of post-test, it can be seen that $\chi_o^2 = 0.0419$ is lower than $\chi_t^2 = 3.841$ or $\chi_o^2 < \chi_t^2$. It can be concluded that the data are homogeneous because χ_o^2 is lower than χ_t^2 .

Hypothesis Testing

The data which are analyzed in this research are pre-test and post-test scores of the two groups, experimental and control groups. The null hypothesis (H_o) of this research states that there is no significant difference in writing skill between students taught using dialogue journal writing and students taught using guided writing. Statistically, the hypothesis can be $H_o: \mu_1 = \mu_2$. The alternative hypothesis (H_a) of this research is that there is a significant difference in writing skill between students taught using dialogue journal writing and students taught using guided writing. Statistically, the hypothesis can be formulated as $H_a = \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$. If t_o (t observation) is lower than t_t (t table) $t_o < t_t$, H_o is accepted. On the contrary, if t_o (t observation) is higher than t_t (t table) or $t_o > t_t$, H_o is rejected.

In pre-test, the sample should come from the same level of population and have no significant difference in the writing skill. To prove that the two groups have no significant difference, the researcher used the t-test. The result of t computation (t-test) of the pre-test shows that t observation (t_o) is -1.4718 while t table (t_t) for degree of freedom 58 and the level of significance of 0.05 is 2.0017.

It is known that if t_o (t observation) is lower than t_t (t table) or $t_o < t_t$, H_o is accepted. It can be concluded that there is no significant difference in the students' writing skill in the two classes in the pre-test.

The researcher also used the t-test to test the first hypotheses. The data which are analyzed in this research are post-test scores of the groups, experimental and control groups. The result of t computation shows that t observation (t_o) is 2.6288, while t table (t_t) for the degree of freedom 58 and the level of significance of 0.05 is 2.0017. It is known that if t_o (t observation) is higher than t_t (t table) or $t_o > t_t$, H_o is rejected. Then, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in writing skill between students taught using dialogue journal writing and students taught using guided writing.

The second hypothesis of this research is that dialogue journal writing is more effective than guided writing to teach writing. To test the second hypothesis, the researcher compares the post-test mean scores of the two groups. The mean of the scores of experimental group is 72.30, while the mean of the score of control group is 69. The mean score of experimental group is higher than the mean score of control group. It can be concluded that dialogue journal writing is more effective than guided writing to teach writing.

The result of the research shows that there is a significant difference in the writing skill between the students taught using dialogue journal writing and students taught using guided writing, and dialogue journal writing is more effective than guided writing to teach writing ($\bar{X}_1 > \bar{X}_2$).

Discussion

In the implementation of dialogue journal writing, the students took the challenge to write more and frequently because they got feedback on their writing from the teacher. The teacher had more time to communicate and motivate the students through writing dialogue journals; it created a good atmosphere among the students and the teacher. Since some students had lack of confidence to write English, this technique helped the teacher to gain the students' confidence and also to change their attitudes. The teacher could learn about the students'

personalities, diagnose students' writing skill, and understand their language problem. Dialogue journal writing also created a non-threatening forum for writing which fosters the students' writing confidence because the students were brave to exchange their thoughts and ideas with the teacher. This trust gained the students' comfort in expressing their thoughts and ideas. Besides, dialogue journal writing focused on meaning rather than form so that it led the students to practice writing regularly and encouraged their writing habit.

Furthermore, the result of the study is supported by the theory proposed by Garmon (in Forouton et al., 2013: 41), the students are more likely to have expressed their ideas in their comfort zone where they feel safe when corresponding with their teachers. One more community builder is that the teacher can offer praise, encouragement or simply understanding without the student feeling uncomfortable with peers (Peyton and Reed in Voit, 2009: 17). According to Liao and Wong (2010: 155), the meaning-making, non-threatening free topic journal writing allows the students to be willing to take more risks in expressing their ideas in English. It is similar to Peyton (1993) who states that freedom to write anything of their interest is very important as the students are easy to explore and expressing their ideas.

On the contrary, teaching writing using guided writing needed to practice with immediate guidance from the teacher. The teacher's role was too dominant and the students depended a lot on teacher's assistance and modeling. The students tended to be passive in doing writing because they only followed the outline provided or imitated the model text given. The students had less chance to expose their own ideas so that they could write a text freely. As stated by Hyland (2003: 4), guided writing is a technique in which the learners imitate the model text given by the teacher. Furthermore, according to Ontario (2005: 5.4), guided writing makes students less active in doing the writing because they only follow the outline already provided. It emphasizes on modeling so that it inhibits students in exploring ideas and creating meaning and authentic texts on their own.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the research, the conclusions are as follows: (1) there is a significant difference in writing skill between students taught using dialogue journal writing and students taught using guided writing to the eighth grade of SMP N 16 Surakarta in the academic year of 2015/2016; and (2) dialogue journal writing is more effective than guided writing to teach writing to the eighth grade of SMP N 16 Surakarta in the academic year of 2015/2016.

The result of the research shows that dialogue journal writing is more effective than guided writing to teach writing. The research finding proves that the students taught using dialogue journal writing have better writing skill than those taught using guided writing. It implies that dialogue journal writing is better applied by the teacher to teach writing, especially in the eighth grade of SMP N 16 Surakarta in the academic year of 2015/2016.

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