USING A DIALOGUE JOURNAL TO DEVELOP WRITING SKILLS

By
Zulfadli A. Aziz¹
Nina Magdalena²

¹University of Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh
²SMPN 1 Lembah Seulawah, Aceh Besar

ABSTRACT

This study investigates a number of scholars’ opinions regarding the use of dialogue journals for improving the writing skills of young learners. Their views were compiled based on their research findings concerning the use of dialogue journals. This study aims to describe the implementation of dialogue journals in developing the writing skills of young learners. Since this study was conducted in the form of library research, various written resources such as relevant journal articles, textbooks and online documents, as well as reports from previous related research were analyzed to meet the aims of this study. The study mainly used 4 sources of research namely Remiasova (2009), Datzman (2011), Valigurova (2010), Haynes-Mays, Peltier-Glaze, and Broussard (2011). The results show that the use of dialogue journals has improved the writing skills of young learners especially in terms of vocabulary and grammar.

Key words: Dialogue Journals, Writing, Young Learners.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Writing is one of the most important skills which must be mastered by both first and second language learners. It is an active skill that requires learners to be active in producing language. Moreover, writing

* Corresponding author: nina_mgd@yahoo.com
is assumed to be a challenging task since it requires critical thinking for developing and expressing ideas clearly. Hyamps and Lyons (1990, as cited in White, 1995: 1) have stated that writing is basically an individual act that requires the writer to convert an idea into a “self-initiated” topic. Here, the writer is encouraged to develop her own ideas to become an interesting topic. She is also required to further elaborate her own ideas in order to be easily understood by her audience. Therefore, the creativity of the writer in developing her ideas is very important.

White (1995, as cited in Richards and Renandya, 2002: 259) reveals that in the language syllabus, there are some reasons that indicate writing has a special place. In particular, writing is the main way to examine the performance of a student in English. Furthermore, writing has high “face validity” since parents and students assume that the ability to write is associated with having learned the language.

Richards and Renandya (2002: 22) have stated that writing is the most complicated and difficult skill for learners to master. Writing has been considered as a difficult skill to be mastered by students because in producing good sentences, there are many elements that need to be mastered by learners. Heaton (1990: 135) points out that there are 5 main components in producing good writing namely: language use, mechanical skills, content, stylistic skills, and judgment skills. Therefore, writing is complex because when producing writing learners need to consider all the various aspects such as content, language use and vocabulary.

There are various problems that occur in writing classrooms. Firstly, many students have inadequate vocabulary. The students’ vocabulary is so inadequate that they often have difficulty to find a word that suits their meaning. Hyland (2010: 34) reveals that the main problem in L2 writing is poor knowledge of vocabulary. It is undeniable that the mastering of adequate vocabulary is a significant element in producing good writing. As Rivers (1983, cited in Nunan, 1999: 117) points out - the acquisition of an adequate vocabulary is important because it will influence the usage of structures. Thus learning vocabulary is an important element in learning writing because this will assist in the development of language structures.

Then too, students often have inadequate knowledge of grammar. This lack of knowledge especially concerns using proper grammar in writing. Hinkel and Fotos (2002: 182) point out that the use or misuse of English tenses is one of the difficulties with L2 grammar because
inappropriate usage of tense will influence the meaning of the writing. Moreover, Vaughn (1991, as cited in Hinkel & Fotos, ibid: 182) reveals that in a holistic assessment of essays, incorrect use of tenses is one of the main problems found in L2 writing. Furthermore, a study performed by Hyamps and Lions (1991, as cited in Hinkel, ibid: 182) indicated that errors in tenses were amongst the leading errors in L2 writing. From this, it can be concluded that if the grammatical knowledge of L2 learners is very poor that will later have a negative impact on their writing.

In teaching writing, there are two concepts of pedagogy of note. The first is the traditional theory that views writing as a product emphasizing the formal text unit or grammatical features in the text. The second is one current theory that views writing as a process. Asiri (2003, as cited in Al-Hazmi, 2006: 37) says that the process approach accentuates the emergence of co-operative learning between the teacher and the learners, and that the learners should use the opportunities given to think critically, commence learning activities, and start to express themselves better.

This article explores the use of a dialogue journal as a technique which focuses on the process of writing for its implementation rather than emphasizing solely the accuracy of grammar. It is believed that this technique will assist students to develop their capabilities in writing especially for vocabulary and grammar.

A dialogue journal, according to a definition from Peyton (2000: 3) can integrate matters as follows: the dialogue journal employs an integrated approach where the students write their entries, read the responses given by teachers, and engage in written conversations. During the process, the teacher will ask questions, answer the students’ questions, and raise new topics.

Dialogue journals are useful to be incorporated into the writing classroom. With them all students get the opportunity to join in the activities and to obtain continual practice in writing their ideas which will lead to better fluency. Furthermore, dialogue journals enable students to join in activities where they can write at their own individual level (Peyton, 1987).

**Problem of Study**

As described above, in the background to this study, there are problems regarding writing pedagogy that students face namely poor vocabulary and lack of grammatical knowledge. It seems that students
need to be introduced to new methods to overcome these problems. In relation to the theories that support the problems mentioned above, the author proposes the use of dialogue journals as one alternative for solving these problems. The research objective of this study is therefore: “To find out whether the use of dialogue journals will better develop the writing skills of young, L2 learners”.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Writing

Some experts have revealed different perspectives on writing. According to Murray (1978, as cited in Norhaniza 2007: 16), writing means self-exposure. The writer will always face exposure through the words on the page and it is natural for the writer to have anxiety. White and Arndt (1991, as cited in Nunan, 1999: 273) define writing as a complex, cognitive process that requires sustained intellectual effort over a considerable period of time. From these definitions, it can be inferred that in producing writing, the writer should perform a range of processes involving exploration of her thoughts.

Finally, writing is a result of individual reflections on past experiences or visions of the future. Hyamps and Lyons (1990, as cited in White, 1995: 1) have stated that writing is basically the act of an individual in which the writer attempts to convert an idea into a “self-initiated” topic. In writing, the writer combines his previous knowledge through complicated mental processes to develop new ideas and concepts.

Young Learners

Several experts have explained how children develop and the various ages and stages they pass through. Piaget (1952, as cited in Harmer, 2007: 83) suggests that children begin at the sensory motor stage, and then pass through the intuitive stage and the concrete operational stage and finally reach the formal operational stage where abstraction emerges. Vygotsky (1986) emphasizes the place of social interaction in development and the function of a “knower” in providing scaffolding to assist the children who go through Zone Proximal Development where they learn new things.

Harmer (ibid: 83) says that the younger-learner age group in general are children up to about age ten and eleven. Furthermore, he states that teachers in dealing with this age group should give them
learning experiences that will encourage them to acquire information from different sources. They should encourage working with their students individually and in groups, to expand good emotional relationships. Whereas Cameron (2012) says that young learners are children under 14 years old.

In order to have similar assumptions, the young learners we are discussing here are children in the early stage of their schooling, up to the age of 13 or 14 (Brumfit, et al., 1991). These years are known as a critical period. A critical period hypothesis emphasizes that language may be acquired more easily by children then since their brains are still capable of using the mechanisms that assist in first language acquisition.

**Teaching Young Learners**

In teaching young learners, there are some matters that should be observed by teachers. Teachers should engage with their students since children construct knowledge through interaction with adults as Vygotsky (1986) says in his theory of social interaction regarding children’s learning. Furthermore, Bruner’s theory or concept says that scaffolding will assist and guide children in their learning phase through the guidance of adults. Wood (1998, as cited in Cameron, 2012: 9) suggests that the teacher may scaffold the students’ learning through a variety of ways as presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers can help children to</th>
<th>By</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attend to what is relevant</td>
<td>Suggesting;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Praising the significant;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Providing focusing activities;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopt useful strategies</td>
<td>Encouraging rehearsal;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being explicit about organization;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember the whole task and goals</td>
<td>Reminding;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Modeling;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Providing part-whole activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relating to scaffolding, Bruner also offers other ideas for language teaching namely format and routines which are characteristics that encourage the emergence of scaffolding and combine with familiarity and joyfulness. Bruner gives one example of such a routine as parents reading stories to their children from babyhood onwards. From
Bruner’s research, it can be seen how such activities with the same format and routine can make the child participate and make progress towards achievements that he cannot achieve alone without the assistance of other people such as his parents. Bruner reveals that routine and adjustment will offer significant impact for language and cognitive development (Cameron, 2012: 9).

Regarding language instruction for young learners, it should include language structures which are presented in contexts which are meaningful, enjoyable and communicative. The classroom activities for children should also be enjoyable, fun and full of meaningful practice.

**Dialogue Journals**

A dialogue journal is a written conversation performed between a student and a teacher. Each student may choose a topic of interest to write about while the teacher’s role is not just to correct the writing of the students but also to communicate and encourage the students in writing (Peyton, 1990). Each student can write openly to their teacher just like in a letter. They may share their ideas, feelings and also their concerns in their writing. Then, the teacher will provide responses and comments regarding these writings. In writing the responses, teachers will share their thoughts, experiences, provide concrete comments and opinions, and finally ask for clarification and ask questions if there are parts that are not clear or don’t make sense (Regan, et al., 2005: 33). Moreover the teacher should also ensure her comments contain proper grammar, spelling, and vocabulary. From the teacher’s response, the learners will learn from the “dialogue” what the appropriate grammar and/or vocabulary should be. They can then imitate the correct grammar and vocabulary in further writing.

In a dialogue journal, the teacher basically provides scaffolding for her learners. As Werderich (2006: 47) contends that within a dialogue journal, teachers must provide scaffolding in order to improve the learner’s capability in writing. The teacher can use facilities for response such as visual aids, modeling, questioning/requesting, and feedback to scaffold literary conversations with her students. Therefore, scaffolding can be given by teachers through a range of responses such as modeling, questioning/requesting and feedback that could enhance the learner’s ability in writing.
Dialogue Journals in Practice

Peyton (2000) reveals some procedures for implementing dialogue journals in the classroom. First, the teacher gives brief instruction about dialogue journals. These are some guidelines for practicing dialogue journals in the classroom: firstly, the teacher and the student take it in turn to write continually in that student’s Dialogue Journal. Entries should include the date, the greeting, the introduction, the body, and the closing. Each entry should be a minimum of 5 sentences and it will not be scored. In this first step, the teacher also provides some samples regarding writing in a dialogue journal for her students. Secondly, students are required to write about a topic that they themselves choose. Thirdly, the teacher will respond to the student’s writing. In this step, the teacher will comment on the student’s writing by sharing ideas, asking questions, giving information, making suggestions, comments, scenarios and/or requests in her response. Fourthly, each student will make revisions to her own writing based on the teacher’s responses and comments and will write more about that topic or another topic.

Teaching Vocabulary for Writing

Linnel (2010) reveals vocabulary may be taught in either deductive or inductive ways. In teaching vocabulary through the deductive way one approach is as follows: the teacher conducts pre-teaching about certain vocabulary related to a particular topic. Then, the students are instructed to insert the vocabulary which has been pre-taught before into sentences about that topic. The teacher will then respond to the students’ writing. Then the students will make revisions to their own writing based on their teacher’s responses and comments. While for the inductive approach, Linnell (ibid: 7) suggests that teachers may use samples of journal writing to emphasize the vocabulary or parts of speech for the whole class. The students can then be assigned with tasks e.g. to use adjectives to describe family members or to recycle/use new vocabulary from their own reading (Larotta, 2008: 7).

Teaching Grammar for Writing

Ellis (2008) has developed procedures for improving grammar or linguistic form through a deductive approach proposed by her as follows: the teacher conducts pre-teaching-learning about a certain topic in grammar. In this step, the teacher sets the lesson and the classroom activity to teach a certain grammar topic such as comparative adjectives. In this stage also, the teacher will give out
exercises regarding the grammar topic. Then, her students are instructed to insert the grammar which has just been taught into a relevant topic. In this second step, the students will be asked to write journal entries related to e.g. comparative adjective that have just been learned and practiced before where they will need to compare two people, two places or two or more things by using the forms taught and practiced in the classroom. The teacher will respond to the students’ writing with praise, advice and corrections as necessary. In this step, the teacher will comment on the students’ writing by sharing ideas, asking questions etc. in order to develop the students writing better. The students will make revisions to their own writing based on their teacher’s responses and comments.

Furthermore, Linnell (2010) proposes some steps to teach grammar using the inductive approach as follows: the teacher distributes a sample of writing to her class about a certain grammar topic. At this stage, the teacher will ask the students to read the sample about that certain grammar topic e.g. prepositions used to describe a place. Then, the class will be instructed to find the prepositions and observe how they are used in the context of sample sentences. The teacher then instructs the students to write relevant pieces namely about describing favorite rooms or interesting places. After the students write their drafts the teacher will respond to the students’ writings. Finally the students will revise their own writing based on the teacher’s responses and comments.

METHOD

Research Design

This Dialogue Journal Writing (DJW) study used library research namely searching literature sources such as textbooks, notes or results from previous research (Hasan, 2011: 11). Thus, the author collected data from previous researchers regarding the use of dialogue journals. Then she formulated generalizations about similar problems namely whether dialogue journals can improve the ability of young learners writing skills.

The objective of this DJW study was to reveal how dialogue journals can be implemented as a tool that will assist young learners to improve their capabilities and skills in writing. The study reviewed some procedures in implementing dialogue journals in classrooms. Some relevant documents about DJW were used to assist the author in
reviewing the topic. In the literature review, the author discusses theories underpinning the use of DJW formulated by previous researchers, comments from other researchers and procedures for implementing DJW in the classroom. While in the discussions and findings analysis, the author reviewed findings from some researchers who had focused on young learners and analyzed the similarities and differences found in their research. Finally, the author constructed generalized conclusions from these analyses.

**RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

**Research Results**

A number of theories from experts regarding the topic of this study are discussed to gain a brief overview at the start of this research. Amongst the range of theories that will be examined, the main focus of this investigation will be on the research findings of Haynes-Mays, et al. (2011) who investigated the effects of DJW on the literacy and language skills of African-American students. Their study followed 49 African-American students in the fourth grade of a small rural school district. Two of the three classes were used as subjects for the study. The ages of the students ranged from ten to eleven years of age. The classes were heterogeneous comprised of students with varying academic abilities. The results of this study clearly showed that the writing abilities of these students improved quantitatively and qualitatively as a result of DJW. In this research, the researchers used a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) in order to compare pre and post-test means of students in the control and experimental groups. The students were assessed based on two criteria namely (1) the frequency of African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) in their writings and (2) the quality of writing done by the students. Two rubrics were used to evaluate the writing ability of the students.

In determining quantitative results, the researcher used a two way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare the pre-test and post-test results from students in the control group with that from the experimental group. In utilizing AAVE writing rubrics, the average score of the control group students was 3 implying that the students used some features of AAVE in their writing. However, the experimental group’s average score was 2.7. Then Table 3 indicated significant gains from the pre-test to the post-test. The results from the ANOVA illustrated that there was no significant difference in the
results, $F (1.43) = 0.256, p = 0.616$ for Quality Score and $F (1.43) = 3.520, p = 0.067$ for the AAVE score as shown in Table 3. The control group’s mean pretest significantly exceeded the mean of the experimental group’s pretest results. A t-test for the independence of samples showed there was a significant difference in the AAVE writing scores, $t = 2.457, p = 0.018$. A dependent sample t-test was conducted to evaluate the significance of the mean gain between females and males in their scores for quality of writing and the AAVE scores for writing between the two groups. The results showed that there was no significant difference in the quality scores between the females and the males participating in the daily DJW, $t = 0.489, p = 0.627$. The t-test also indicated that there was no significant difference in the AAVE scores between females and males participating in the DJW, $t = 0.409, p = 0.702$.

The current study showed that daily DJW was highly effective in developing African-American fourth-grade students’ writing skills. This improvement was based on the ability of the students to lessen many of the AAVE features in their writings.

Table 2. ANOVA of post-test scores (AAVE score/ quality score).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean squares</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>Significance of $F$</th>
<th>Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAVE Score</td>
<td>2.847</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.847</td>
<td>7.556</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>1.326</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.326</td>
<td>3.520</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td>0.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>16.202</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>0.377</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>21.619</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21.619</td>
<td>32.201</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>0.172</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.172</td>
<td>0.256</td>
<td>0.616</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>28.869</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>0.671</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. Reports mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) and T-test for Quality Score and AAVE Score Writing for females and for males.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Sig.(2-Tailed)</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality Scores</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.967</td>
<td>-0.489</td>
<td>0.627</td>
<td>0.627</td>
<td>0.702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAVE Scores</td>
<td>0.695</td>
<td>0.409</td>
<td>-0.489</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender: Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.208</td>
<td>1.4136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender: Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.227</td>
<td>1.2318</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In qualitative results, there are 3 aspects which were examined by the researchers namely: content, language and vocabulary. In regards to the content area, the researchers were attempting to examine whether the students stayed on the topic and added feedback to the topic discussed in the journal. In examining the language area, the researchers tried to observe the frequency of AAVE grammatical features within their writings as well as the student’s ability to self-correct during the writing sessions. The vocabulary area was examined by the students’ ability to use the Standard American English (SAE) terms or vocabulary, rather than using the everyday AAVE colloquial terms in their writings.

**Language**

The data on the subjects’ writing skills in English indicated that all the students made progress in their language skills. Students were taught the African-American Vernacular English (AAVE) grammatical features before they began to write their journals. AAVE features such as the possessive form and noun plurals have developed greatly. However, subject verb agreement still seems to be more of an issue in their writings.

**Vocabulary**

Regarding vocabulary in the subjects’ writing, it was shown that there was progress in the use of vocabulary. Both male and female students presented a satisfactory level of vocabulary progress and had new variety in their word choices. When the mean of journal entries were compared, it revealed that male students scored the highest means at 4.5 followed by the female students at 4.1.
In research performed by Datzman (2011), the study followed eight English language learners from a grade 4 elementary school class. The classroom chosen had 28 students ages nine or ten. From these 28 students, 10 were English language students. Eight of the ten English Language students were selected to join this study. The students were grouped into a control group and an experimental group. The sample of the students’ writings were copied and examined based on six traits. It indicated progress in the students’ writings through the interventions. The journal entries comprised a combination of free responses where the student could choose their own topic and structured responses where the researcher presented the students with a prompt or selection of prompts. Over 12 weeks, the implementation of the dialogue journals showed significant progress. The result of a t-test showed that the students in the experimental group improved significantly in their overall scores. She found that over the course of 12 weeks, the students made significant improvements in terms of language use and word choices. The researcher observed that through examination by using a 6+1 writing traits rubric, the students showed progress in conventions. This emerged due to the constant practice and seeing the modeling of appropriate grammar from the researcher.

In research performed by Remiasova (2009) in a school in Osecka, the participants from the 7th grade were a target group of 21 students and a control group of 20 students. In both groups, the students were 12 or 13 years old. The target group had 11 (eleven) girls and 10 (ten) boys. It was found that there was an improvement in terms of vocabulary that was measured through the use of verbs and the length of writing of those seventh grade students. Thus 13 of 18 students used more than 100 words (72%) in the target group, whilst in the control group only 5 of 17 students (29%) used more than 100 words in their journal writing.

In research performed by Valigurova (2010), in a basic school at Rozhnov pod in Radhostem situated in the middle of town, the target group had fourteen students while the control group had thirteen eighth grade students. In both groups the ages were 13-14. The project ran for eight weeks. She found that in their first entry, the students wrote 8 sentences and 46 words on average while in the tenth entry the students expanded their writing ability by producing 63 words per entry which was a 37% progress from their initial writing. Through DJW, she concluded that the students were able to write more words and more complex sentences.
Discussion

The four samples of student writing showed similar trends which actually portray the typical writing of young learners. The first entries of these students are likely to use many simple sentences with a low variety of word choice. In their final writings, these students show much progress in their writing. They elaborate their ideas with more detail in descriptions. They use a bigger variety of words and also are more courageous, trying to utilize more complex sentences.

As mentioned before, students usually face difficulties with vocabulary, and grammar. Therefore, DJW is proposed to help cope with these problems. In order to see the effect of DJW in assisting learners to improve their writing, the following discussions expand on this.

Improving the Students’ Vocabulary

Vocabulary is one of the most significant elements in writing since it will be useful for students to understand the meaning of sentences within a text. The use of DJW is significant to improve the capability of students to enlarge their vocabulary.

Referring to Haynes-Mays, et al. (2011), Remiasova (2009) and Valigurova (2010); these researchers have proved that DJW helps young learners to improve their vocabulary.

In research performed by Haynes-Mays, et al. (2011), they found that the students applied a variety of vocabulary. In this research study, the students were asked to talk about their writing to the teacher in front of the class. Furthermore, the students also shared their entries with the class therefore they could read the writings of their friends and learn from it. This procedure, it is believed, helps to improve the capability of the students in vocabulary.

Moreover, in research done by Haynes-Mays, et al. (ibid), Remiasova (ibid) and Valigurova (ibid) when the teachers introduced new topics and raised questions as a result the responses from the students became more directed and more elaborate.

These teachers also answered questions raised by their students and provided responses based on their comments. They also gave information, suggestions, and requests in their responses. They attempted to motivate the students to elaborate their thoughts and to encourage the continuity of the dialogues.

The researchers reached similar conclusions that the improvement of vocabulary happened since the students felt comfortable and free to
explore their ideas without feeling threatened by shame for producing mistakes in their writing.

One of the things done in these research studies was that the teachers used vocabulary which was adjusted to the students’ level of comprehension. This was is in line with Krashen’s (1981) input hypothesis and use of comprehensible input where teachers should provide input which is slightly above the student proficiency level to push them to enhance their language skills.

Another factor that helps brings about success is that with DJW, the students become braver and try to use new words in writing and expressing their ideas. So, their writings become more fluent and smoother. This is because in DJW, the students are producing writing in a relaxed atmosphere and they feel free to explore and use new words because their writing will not be graded. Therefore, their anxiety or fear of shame in making mistakes in writing is diminished.

The teachers and their students also performed negotiations for meaning where the students and their teachers interacted with each other. In this process, both the teacher and the students give comments and raised questions in order to reach understanding. This is based on ZPD theory namely “the distance travelled in the actual development level is determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers”. This implies that tasks given to students should be based on the previous knowledge and skills of the students. In DJW, the writing tasks involve the teachers as the more proficient person who will guide the learners in developing their writing skills.

**Improving Grammar**

Similar to vocabulary, grammar is an essential part of writing because good grammar is needed to understand texts. Therefore the teaching of grammar has to be emphasized.

Regarding grammar problems, Haynes-Mays, et al. (2011), Datzman (2011), and Valigurova (2010) all found that DJW also improves the grammar of students in their writings.

In their research, they all suggested that teachers model appropriate sentence grammar and also more complex grammar in their responses so that the students can expand their knowledge of grammar and apply it in their own writing. Furthermore, through the modeling from their teachers students will become more aware of their own grammatical errors and will improve their grammatical mistakes by themselves.
Research on DJW done by Haynes-Mays, et al. (2011), showed improvement in terms of grammar namely in usage of AAVE (African American Vernacular English) especially in features such as possessive forms and pronouns. In this research, Haynes-Mays, et al. (2011) adopted the practice of introducing AAVE grammatical features before the students began writing. It is believed this practice assisted the students to be aware of those grammatical features.

CONCLUSIONS

DJW has been proved to help school students to improve their writing and their vocabulary (Haynes-Mays, et al., 2011; Remiasova, 2009; Valigurova, 2010). This happened because the teachers modeled appropriate vocabulary and grammar in the sentences in their comments. Furthermore, these teachers adjusted the introduction of new vocabulary based on the comprehension levels of the students. The writing of the students improved due to the comfortable atmosphere and because the writing was not directly graded which made the students freer to try new words in their writings and thus their writings also became more fluent.

In terms of grammatical points, the researchers Haynes-Mays, et al. (2011), Datzman (2011) and Valigurova (2010) all found that DJW was effective for improving the grammatical aspects of writing by students. They came to the conclusion that DJW is beneficial in enhancing the grammar of learners. In their research, these teachers provided modeling of appropriate good grammar in their responses. Furthermore, the teachers also rephrased sentences which were considered to be ambiguous to be more comprehensible by the learners and these teachers provided explanations regarding grammar topics at the beginning of the lessons. These researchers, such as Haynes-Mays also conducted pre-teaching of grammar points which assisted the learners to be aware of grammatical aspects and provided chances for the students to talk with their teacher in order to consult her about difficulties they were having in their writing.

Referring to the researches above, it is even better to apply Dialogue Journal Writing in Indonesia in order to develop the writing skills of learners. This is because by practicing DJW, students will learn how to express their feelings and thoughts in writing within a relaxing and friendly atmosphere that will encourage them to write freely, to take risks in their writing and to have the opportunity for
dialogue with their teachers in discussing their problems with writing English ESL.

REFERENCES


