

IMPROVING STUDENTS' EXPRESSIVE WRITING ABILITY USING BRAINSTORMING TECHNIQUES

Dian Fera Pratiwi¹, Rahmah Julianti²

STKIP YPUP Makassar^{1,2}

*Corresponding email: dianferapratwi@ypup.ac.id

Abstract

This research aims to find out whether the use of brainstorming significantly improves the expressive writing ability of the first-year students of the accommodation department of SMK Negeri 8 Makassar, South-Sulawesi, Indonesia. The research employed a pre-experimental method with a one-group pretest and posttest design. The sample was chosen by applying a cluster random sampling technique. The data were collected through writing tests. The results of the test were analyzed using the SPSS 16.00 version. The use of brainstorming as part of the treatment was chosen because it can attract the interest of the students and trigger more ideas. In line with that, the research results showed that there was an improvement in the students' expressive writing ability between the pretest and posttest after the treatment. Based on the result, it can be concluded that the use of brainstorming significantly improves students' expressive writing abilities. More research is needed to improve learning quality, and future researchers are hoped to address any flaws discovered in this study.

Keywords: Expressive writing, Brainstorming technique

INTRODUCTION

Language is an important part of people's life. It helps us to interact with one another. Indeed, it is the principal form of interaction. However, there is more than one language that is used by people in the world. A language sometimes can only be used by one ethnic group or community. To build effective communication between people all over the world, a universal language is needed. English answers the challenge and has become the universal language used in economic, social, political, and other aspects of life. In addition, (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) state that English became the accepted International language of technology and commerce.

In Indonesia, English function is a foreign language and it still has a significant role to play, it is an important subject, used in the students' textbooks and used to pass an examination to enter a university. (Richard, 1992) says that it may be required for people who work in tourism, business, and some sections of the civil service. There are four basic language skills in learning English, they are listening, reading, speaking, and writing (Harmer, 1991). He also classifies the language skills into: speaking and writing involving language production and therefore often referred to as productive skills. Listening and reading, on the other hand, involve receiving messages and are therefore often referred to as receptive skills.

Loban (1963) shows that four language skills are positively related. Thus, competency in writing is usually accompanied by competency in the other three skills. Alternatively, poor achievement in one skill often means poor achievement in the others. Writing is the most complicated and difficult skill to learn out of all of them. It requires many ideas or thoughts. Writing is defined broadly, and it encompasses all forms of writing, from informal jokes and slogans to formal essays and articles.

Why write? In very general terms, there are two major reasons for writing. First is "writing to learn" which means the value of draft writing in relation to learning is that it allows us to concentrate on ideas and explore thoughts. We can concentrate on what we say. Second is

writing to communicate which means when the purpose of our writing is to communicate to a wider and often unknown audience, we need to clarify our writing for the intended audience so they receive a message that is clear and precise, without ambiguity. This means that we must attend to what we say and also the surface features of how to say it. In line with that (Wiener & Schneider, 2002) on their writing state that Students who struggle with writing have a much harder time succeeding academically and may also struggle socially.

One of the writing functions according to (Britton, 1970) is expressive writing. He states that his writing that is closest to self and it tends to resemble speech, written down. It is relatively unstructured as researchers explore their feelings, emotions, and opinions by almost thinking aloud on a paper. Expressive writing does not have to be shaped for a reader. Diaries, journals, and personal notes are all forms of expressive writing that you should encourage in your classroom.

Based on observations at SMKN 8 Makassar, the researcher found that most students at schools identify that writing is the most difficult to learn and can be quite stressful at times, that they are reluctant to write, and that they do not know how to begin and organize their writing. (Pulvertaft, 1989) says that for years many teachers have been dissatisfied with their approach to teaching writing. Why does it happen? Many English teachers just give the topic and then the students will have to write directly without involving them in discussions to bring out more ideas in them.

As a result, teachers must be creative in their teaching in order for students to be interested and enjoy writing classes. One of the ways is by using the Brainstorming technique. The researcher hopes that by using Brainstorming students more interested in learning especially in writing subjects. By using brainstorming as a teaching technique for vocational high school students, it is very helpful for the students in generating and organizing their ideas in expressive writing. Based on the above statements, the researcher conducted a study titled "Improving Students' Expressive Writing Ability using Brainstorming technique at SMK Negeri 8 Makassar".

There are many pieces of research on writing to improve student achievement. (Imelda, 2001) conduct research under the title "Facilitating Semester of English Department Students in Writing Activity" she reports that Brainstorming can help learners to find as many ideas as possible for the topic chosen. They can continue their writing task by listing information from their selves. She argues that brainstorming is a technique that guides the writer whether skilled or unskilled writers to select an inspiring topic, she also adds that every learner has his / her own way of coming down to writing activity. Generally, before coming down to a writing activity there are some steps to find ideas, one of them brainstorming technique.

Another study (Cullen, 1998) also reports that Brainstorming is a very useful activity to facilitate learners in employing their knowledge, which can be developed in the classroom activity. He also points out that this kind of activity is more dynamic and enjoyable since every student is given the chance to speak or write their opinion ideas or comment. Similarly (Chakraverty & Gautum, 2000) found that brainstorming help students who are still in the learning process of thinking and activate the learners' creative thinking, in addition, brainstorming encourage the student to reason, which is essential for achieving coherence in the written course.

Furthermore Scott et al. (1990) used the brainstorming technique in writing with seven-year-old beginners in New York. He discovered that students fail in writing mechanics. Additionally Nur (2003) conducted a study titled "The Writing Skill of the Sixth Semester Students of English

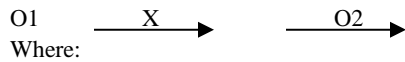
Department from Tarbiyah Faculty of IAD Alaudin Makassar in Free Composition." She discovered that free composition improves writing skills by writing freely until new ideas emerge.

Based on the statement above, the researcher can draw the conclusion that in teaching writing we can use some techniques or methods to master writing skills in different ways. So, the writer knew about English especially writing skills by using the brainstorming technique of the first year of the accommodation department in the school. Teaching, writing skills can be useful for them as new writers. This method makes it easy to start their writing and helps to stimulate the student's minds to be more creative and bring up more ideas in them. The students can use the dictionary to help them.

METHODS

The researcher used a pre-experimental approach. One group was involved in this procedure, which included pre-, treatment-, and post-testing. The goal is to determine whether or if using the brainstorming technique can help pupils write more expressively. The pre-test is administered to determine the student's prior knowledge or abilities, and the post-test assesses the students' growth in expressive writing following brainstorming-based instruction.

The following is a description of the research's design:



O1= Pre-Test

X= Treatment

O2= Post-Test

(Gay, 2006)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This research conclusion is related to the student's grade. They are the t-test result, the mean scores and standard deviation, and the classification of the student's scores.

1. The Students' scores in Pre-test and Post-test

This section deals with the answer to the problem statement which aims to improve the student's ability to write expressive writing. It can be seen through the pre-test- and post-test as follows :

a. Final Score of writing skill

The following data table displays the frequency and rate percentage of students' writing component scores on both the pretest and posttest.

Table 4.1: The Rate Percentage and Frequency of Students' Writing Skills (Final Score) on Five Components of writing

No	Classification	Score	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
			Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	Very Good	86-100	-	-	2	6.7
2	Good	71-85	-	-	25	83.3
3	Fair	56-70	11	36.7	3	10
4	Poor	41-55	19	63.3	-	-
5	Very Poor	0-40	-	-	-	-

	Total		30	100	30	100
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Based on the result of data analysis for the test in the table above indicates that, in the pre-test, none (0%) of students were classified into the very good and good scores, there are 11 (36.7%) of a student were classified into a fair score, 19 (63.3%) of a student classified into a poor score, and none (0%) of a student classified into a very poor score. From the result, it can be concluded that the student’s score in five components of writing in the pre-test is poor.

On the other hand in the post-test, there are 2 (6.7%) students classified as having a very good score, there are 25 (83.3 %) students categorized as having good scores, 3 (10%) students categorized into fair scores, and none (0%) of students categorized into a poor and very poor score. From the result, it can be concluded that the student’s score in five components of writing in the pre-test is good. This indicates that after applying the brainstorming technique, there is a substantial change between the students' expressive writing abilities on the pretest and post-test.

b. Content

The following table shows The frequency and percentage of the student’s scores in content areas on both the pre-test and post-test are displayed in the following table.

Table 4.2: The Rate Percentage and Frequency of Students’ Scores in Component of Content

No	Classification	Score	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
			Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	Very Good	27-30	-	-	1	3.3
2	Good	23-26	-	-	26	86.7
3	Fair	22-20	3	10	3	10
4	Poor	17-19	4	13.3	-	-
5	Very Poor	13-16	23	76.7	-	-
	Total		30	100	30	100

Based on the data shown in the table above that in the pre-test, none (0%) of students classified as a very good score, or a good score, there are 3 (10%) of students classified with a fair score, 4 (13.3%) of a student classified into the poor score and there are 23 (76.7%) of a student classified into the very poor score. The outcome indicates that the student received a very low score on the component of content in the pre-test.

On the other hand in the post-test, there are 1 (3.3 %) student classified as a very good score, 26 (86.7%) students classified with a good score, there are 3 (10%) students classified as a fair score, and none of the students classified into a poor and very poor score. From the result, it can be concluded that the student’s score in the component of content in the post-test is good.

c. Organization

The following table shows the frequency and rate percentage of the students’ scores in components of the organization both pre-test and post-test

Table 4.3: The Rate Percentage and Frequency of Students’ Score in Component of Organization

No	Classification	Score	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
			Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	Very Good	18-20	-	-	2	6.7
2	Good	15-17	5	16.6	19	63.3
3	Fair	12-14	13	43.3	9	30
4	Poor	9-11	12	40.1	-	-
5	Very Poor	5-8	-	-	-	-
	Total		30	100	30	100

Based on the data shown in the table above that in the pre-test, none (0%) of students classified as a very good score, there are 5 (16.6%) students classified with a good score, 13 (43.3%) students classified into the fair score, there are 12 (40.1%) of a student classified into the poor score and none (0%) of students classified into the very poor score. From the result, it can be concluded that the student's score in the component of organization in the pre-test is fair.

Unlike in the pre-test, in the post-test, there 2 (6.7 %) students classified with a very good score, 19 (63.3%) students classified with a good score, there are 9 (30%) students classified with a fair score, and none of the students classified into the poor and very poor score. From the result, it can be concluded that the student's score in the component of organization in the pre-test is good

d. Vocabulary

The following table shows the frequency and rate percentage of the students' scores in the component of vocabulary both pre-test and post-test

Table 4.4: The Rate Percentage and Frequency of Students' Score in Component of Vocabulary

No	Classification	Score	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
			Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	Very Good	18-20	-	-	7	23.3
2	Good	15-17	4	13.3	16	53.4
3	Fair	12-14	16	53.4	7	23.3
4	Poor	9-11	9	30	-	-
5	Very Poor	5-8	1	3.3	-	-
	Total		30	100	30	100

Based on the data shown in the table above that in the pre-test, none (0%) of the students were categorized as a very good score, there are 4 (13.3%) students categorized with a good score, 16 (53.4%) of student categorized into the fair score, there are 9 (30%) of student categorized into the poor score and there are 1 (3.3 %) categorized into the very poor score. The results indicate that the student's performance on the vocabulary portion of the pre-test was fair.

While in the post-test, there are 7 (23.3 %) students categorized with a very good score, 16 (53.4%) students categorized with a good score, there are 7 (23.3%) students categorized with a fair score, and none of the students categorized into the poor and very poor score. From the result, it can be concluded that the student's score in the component of vocabulary in the pre-test is good.

e. Language use

The following table displays the students' frequency and rate percentages for the Language Use and Grammar components on the pre-test and post-test.

Table 4.5: The Rate Percentage and Frequency of Students' Score in Component of Language Use

No	Classification	Score	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
			Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	Very Good	23-25	-	-	3	10
2	Good	20-22	-	-	19	63.4
3	Fair	16-19	2	6.7	5	16.6
4	Poor	9-15	28	93.3	3	10
5	Very Poor	5-8	-	-	-	-
	Total		30	100	30	100

Based on the data shown in the table above that in the pre-test, none (0%) of students were categorized into “very good” and “good score”, there are 2 (6.7%) of students categorized into “fair score”, 28 (93.3%) of student categorized into the poor scores, and none (0%) of student categorized into the very poor score. From the result, it can be concluded that the student’s score in the component of language use/grammar in the pre-test is poor.

While in the post-test, there are 3 (10 %) students categorized with very good scores, 19 (63.4%) students categorized with “good scores”, there are 5 (16.6%) students categorized with fair scores, 3 (19%) students categorized into the poor score and none of the students categorized into the very poor score. It is clear from the results that the students did well on the language use and grammatical components of the post-test.

f. Mechanics

The following table shows the frequency and rate percentage of the student’s scores in the component of mechanics both pre-test and post-test

Table 4.6: The Rate Percentage and Frequency of Students’ Score in Component of Mechanics

No	Classification	Score	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
			Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	Very Good	5	-	-	-	-
2	Good	4	-	-	2	6.7
3	Fair	3	4	13.3	27	90
4	Poor	2	23	76.7	1	3.3
5	Very Poor	1	3	10	-	-
	Total		30	100	30	100

Based on the data shown in the table above that in the pre-test, none (0%) of students were categorized into the very good and good scores, there are 4 (13.3%) of students categorized into the fair score, 23 (76.7%) of student categorized into the poor score, and 3 (10%) of student categorized into the very poor score. From the result, it can be concluded that the student’s score in the component of mechanics in the pre-test is poor. On the other hand in the post-test, none (0%) of students were categorized with a very good score, there are 2 (6.7 %) students categorized with a good score, 27 (90%) students categorized with a fair score, there are 1 (3.3%) of student categorized into “poor” score and none (0%) of students categorized into “very poor”. From the result, it can be concluded that the student’s score in the component of mechanics in the post-test is fair.

2. The Mean Score and Standard Deviation

After analyzing the mean score and standard deviation for the students' pretest and posttest results, the table below was created:

a. Students’ts final score

The table below displays the mean and standard deviation of the student's score in the Five Components of Writing.

Table 4.7: The mean score and standard deviation of the student’s score (Final Score) in Five Components of Writing.

		Paired Samples Statistics			
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Total_Post	78.47	30	5.077	.927
	Total_Pre	54.40	30	6.201	1.132

As shown in the table above, the mean score of students' expressive writing ability in the Five Components of writing on the pre-test is 54.40, which is classified as poor, and in the post-test is 78.47, which is classified as good after treatment. It indicates that the mean score of students' writing ability in the Five Component of writing in the post-test is higher than in the pretest. It increases by 24.07 points. The standard deviation in the pre-test is 6.20 and the standard deviation in the post-test is 5.07. It means that the standard deviation of the pretest is higher than the post-test.

3. Test of Significance

To determine whether the results of the pretest and posttest are significant, the researcher performs an analysis using SPSS16.00. If the value of probability is greater than the level of significance (p) 0.05 null hypothesis will be accepted and if it is smaller than 0.05 null hypothesis will be rejected. The t-test calculation's outcome is displayed in the table below.

a. The students' final score

The following table below shows the t-test of students' pretest and posttest on components of the final score

Table 4.8: The t-test of students' pretest and posttest in the component of the final score

		Paired Differences					t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Total_Post - Total_Pre	24.067	6.302	1.151	21.713	26.420	20.916	29	.000

Based on the statistical test above shows that the t-test value (20.916) with a value of probability 0.000. thus, the value of probability is lower than (p) 0.05. As a result, alternative hypothesis H1 is accepted whereas the null hypothesis H0 is rejected. It is concluded that there is a substantial difference in five writing-related skills between the pretest and posttest before and after treatments. In other words, after receiving treatment, the students' expressive writing skills improved across five writing-related aspects between the pretest and posttest. Thus, the practice of brainstorming can enhance the first-graders at SMKN 8 Makassar's expressive writing skills. So Brainstorming can be used as one alternative technique to improve students' expressive writing ability.

B. Discussion

The researcher presented the interpretation of test results from both the pre-test and post-test in the discussion section.

1. Students' writing ability.

The previous section's description of the data collected through the writing test revealed that the student's writing ability improved. It was supported by the result of the mean score, standard

deviation, rate percentage, and frequency of the students' post-test higher than the students' pretest from five components of writing.

The students were given a pretest in the first meeting. The researcher gave the students four subjects to choose from for the pretest before assigning them to write about that issue. The researcher examined five aspects of writing based on the students' pretest work and found that most students struggled to articulate their ideas in written language. While most students struggled to begin their writing task, some were also perplexed about how to construct their paragraphs. It was because some of them lacked ideas for the topic and were unsure of what and how to express their thoughts. They were also unsure of how to arrange sentence by sentence into a good paragraph. Aside from that, they still had a poor understanding of how to write, particularly the five components of writing.

a. Content

Basically, the student's writing content was classified as very poor score. The researcher found that the students have limited ideas and they got difficulties how to develop their idea into a good paragraphs. Besides that, their writing was not quite relevant and disconnected so the reader still confused to understand the message of their writing. For example :

The Best Present

The more best beautiful present in my life is Gift from My Parents and Marmut. They give me a presen, a small box, in beside book photoalbum is about me from in im still baby.

And maybe that just photo album I'm still baby, but that very , very best

The paragraph was into very poor score because it was not enough to evaluate. Besides that, this paragraph consisted of an introduction only and it was not meaningful because there were no conflict, climax, and no resolution. The paragraph should be completed by the end of the story.

b. Organization

The students' writing in an organization was classified into a fair score. It was found that the students still had a serious problem organizing and building their ideas to give strong endings in their paragraphs. Besides that, the students' writing was not organized well and confused. For example :

- 1) *Next after that, I to go to party. Happy she was.*

The sentences were not organized well and they were not communicated. This sentence should use connecting words between the sentences so the readers know why she was happy.

Should be :

After that, she went to the party and she was happy

c. Vocabulary

The students' writing in vocabulary was classified into a fair score. The students generally were lack of vocabulary and always opened the dictionary when they did a test. On the other hand, some of them used Indonesian words in their sentences if they didn't know how to write the word in English. Besides that, the student's writing has many errors of words/idioms, choice, and usage, and language was so vague and abstract, with many repletion of words. For example :

- 1) *My mother invited my brother to bertemu with my family.* In this case, the student wrote **meet** in Indonesian.

Should be :

My mother invited my brother to meet with my family

d. Language Use / Grammar

The students' writing in language use was classified as a poor score. The researcher should pay close attention to the application of grammatical rules pertaining to tenses.: conjunction and etc. Based on the pretest, some of the students made mistakes in form of past tense. In addition, the majority of the students' writing contained grammar mistakes, and could not be understood and evaluated, no mastery of sentences, or construction rules. For example :

- 1) *I go to the restaurant with my family.* In this case, the student used present tense. It should be used past tense.

Should be :

I went to the restaurant with my family

- 2) And another case, ideally, they were supposed to write **his mother** but in his case, the students wrote **has mother**. For example, "**has mother** went to the beach"

Should be :

His mother went to the beach.

e. Mechanics

The students' writing in mechanics was classified as a poor score. The majority of the students' writing contained spelling, punctuation, and capitalization problems. For instance:

- 1) *My last HOLIDAY was In beach.*

In this case, the student used lowercase in the first sentence and the student used capital in the middle of the sentence. Besides that, the student used capital in prepositions.

Should be :

My last holiday was on the beach

- 2) *Bira is the most Beautiful beach in bulukumba.* In this case, the student used capital in the middle of the sentence and she didn't put it at the last of the sentence.

Should be :

Bira is the most beautiful beach in Bulukumba

The researcher tested the hypothesis using inferential statistics with the SPSS 16.0 program based on the student's results as reported in the findings above. The statistical test result showed that the value of the t-test was (20.916) and the value of probability was 0.000. thus, the value of

probability is lower than (p) 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis H_0 is rejected and alternative hypothesis H_1 is accepted. It is concluded that there is a significant difference before treatment. In other words, there was an improvement in the student's writing ability after giving treatment.

Finally, the researcher stated that the use of Brainstorming significantly improved the students' expressive writing ability. It could improve students' knowledge and bring it out their ideas.

CONCLUSION

After performing research on the use of the brainstorming technique at SMKN 8 Makassar and based on the findings of the research in the preceding chapter, the researcher arrives at the following conclusion:

There was an improvement in students' expressive writing ability after being taught by using Brainstorming Technique. It was proved by the result of the student's pretest and posttest where the mean score of the posttest (78.47) was greater than the mean score of the pretest (54.40) and the value of the t-test (20.916) with the value of probability 0.000. thus, the value of probability was lower than (p) 0.05. As a result, alternative hypothesis H_1 was accepted while rejecting the null hypothesis H_0 . In other words, the student's capacity for expressive writing was much enhanced by the use of brainstorming.

The research's findings demonstrated that the brainstorming technique had been successful in enhancing the first-year students' expressive writing skills at SMK Negeri 8 Makassar during the academic year 2011–2012. Therefore, the researcher offers the following advice:

1. Applying the brainstorming technique as an alternative technique in the teaching and learning process is advised for all teachers, especially English teachers. Because this method can be used in all subjects at level elementary up to college. Brainstorming helps the student to generate and build up their ideas in writing.
2. The teacher should pay attention to teaching writing skills. They should teach students how to write using the five components (content, organization, vocabulary, language use/grammar, and mechanics).
3. It is recommended that the next researcher conduct a thorough investigation with the same skill and investigate the same area that was not covered in this research.

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