

The Effect of Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge on Students Writing Ability

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*Siti Nurashimah Binti Suardi^a 

¹English Education Department, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia.

Corresponding Author: siti.22717@mhs.unesa.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Writing remains a challenging skill for many English learners due to difficulties in developing ideas, using correct grammar, and choosing appropriate vocabulary. This study used a quantitative pre-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design to examine the effect of the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge on students' writing ability. The participants were 15 eighth-grade students at MTsN 1 Kota Surabaya. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, the Shapiro-Wilk test, and the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test. The results indicated that the mean score increased from 69.58 to 93.33, with a p-value of 0.003, indicating a statistically significant improvement ($p < 0.05$). The Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge effectively improved students' writing ability.

Keywords: *Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge, Writing Ability, Journal Writing, EFL Students, Pre-Experimental Study*

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INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the most important productive skills in learning English because it allows students to organize information, communicate ideas, and express viewpoints. Writing requires students to actively produce language by combining vocabulary, grammatical understanding, sentence structure, cohesiveness, and text organization into a coherent document, in contrast to receptive abilities like hearing and reading. Writing serves as a communication tool, but it also fosters critical thinking creativity, and self-expression since students must turn ideas and experiences into cohesive written discourse. Writing is widely acknowledged as a crucial measure of students' language proficiency in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts since it shows their capacity to arrange ideas rationally while utilizing suitable linguistic elements (Bora, 2023). Therefore, developing students' writing ability has become one of the primary objectives of English language instruction, particularly at the junior high school level where students begin producing more structured written texts (Abdurakhmonova, 2023). However, producing effective written texts is a demanding process because learners must simultaneously consider vocabulary selection, grammatical accuracy, sentence construction, coherence, and cohesion (Asis et al., 2024).

Writing is still one of the most difficult language skills for EFL students, despite its significance. Many students struggle with coming up with ideas, structuring their ideas into cohesive paragraphs, using the right vocabulary, and correctly using grammar rules (Ainun Nissa et al., 2021). These challenges often reduce students' confidence and motivation to write because they perceive writing as a complex task rather than a meaningful form of communication (Made Febyana Sri Aryanti et al., 2025). As a result, many EFL learners experience difficulties in developing writing fluency and producing well-organized texts, indicating that continuous writing practice is essential to gradually improve their writing competence.

Furthermore, there are few opportunities for pupils to frequently practice writing since

writing education in many classrooms still places more emphasis on the finished product than the writing process (Phi et al., 2021). Consequently, students have insufficient experience in expressing their ideas independently and receive minimal opportunities to improve their writing fluency through continuous practice. This situation indicates that students require instructional strategies that encourage regular writing practice while creating a supportive learning environment in which they can gradually develop their writing competence (Demera Macías & Fajardo Dack, 2023).

These difficulties are also evident in Indonesian junior high school classrooms, including the setting of the present study. Students frequently engage writing with limited opportunities to write independently or express their personal experiences in English. As a result, many students still have trouble structuring their thoughts, growing their vocabulary, and creating grammatically correct phrases. Students' confidence and willingness to communicate through written language are further limited by a lack of consistent writing practice. Therefore, English teacher must employ instructional techniques that not only raise students' writing proficiency but also foster good writing habits via regular, purposeful practice. (Liao & Wong, 2010).

Therefore, instructional strategies that provide students with meaningful, continuous, and low-pressure opportunities to write are needed to address these challenges. One instructional strategy that has gained considerable attention is journal writing.

Journal writing is one teaching method that has gained widespread recognition for resolving these issues. Through regular writing exercises in a less stressful learning environment, journal writing provides students with opportunities to express their thoughts, emotions, and everyday experiences. Journal writing highlights the writing process by letting students write freely without being overly concerned about making mistakes during the first drafting stage, in contrast to traditional writing assignments that primarily concentrate on the final output. Students progressively strengthen their capacity to come up with ideas, arrange material, expand their vocabulary, and enhance grammatical precision through regular writing practice (Albashir Jamoom, 2021). In addition, journal writing encourages self-reflection, enhances writing fluency, and increases students' confidence because learners become accustomed to expressing themselves in written English. Building upon this concept, the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge was implemented in the present study as a structured daily writing activity. Students were encouraged to write short journal entries based on familiar and meaningful topics related to their daily lives. Since the activity emphasizes brief but continuous writing practice, it enables students to focus on idea development and language use while gradually establishing positive writing habits through regular engagement (Rusmiati et al., 2025).

The effectiveness of journal writing has been supported by numerous previous studies. (Izzazi Zatalini & Peter Yaw-kan, 2025) found that the implementation of daily journal writing significantly improved eighth-grade students' writing performance by enhancing writing fluency, coherence, confidence, and overall writing quality. Similarly, (Makmun Mi et al., 2022) reported that students' writing achievement was strongly influenced by continuous writing practice, which contributed to improvements in vocabulary mastery, grammatical accuracy, and paragraph organization. Furthermore, (Ali Bin-Hady et al., 2020) demonstrated that journal writing techniques significantly enhanced students' writing ability, particularly in organizing ideas, developing vocabulary, and producing more coherent texts. More recently, (Rusmiati Rusmiati, 2025) investigated the effect of journaling practice on EFL students' writing ability using an experimental research design. The findings revealed that the students who participated in regular journaling activities achieved significantly higher writing performance, particularly in ideas development, paragraph organization, and overall writing quality. Likewise, (Khansa Salsabila, 2024) examined the implementation of daily journal writing and found that consistent journal-writing practice significantly improved students writing skills by strengthening their vocabulary use, grammatical accuracy, and ability to express ideas more effectively. These findings consistently suggest that journal writing serves

as an effective instructional strategy for improving students' writing competence while simultaneously fostering greater confidence and motivation to write in English.

Despite these encouraging finding, several important issues remain unresolved, indicating the need for further investigation. Although previous studies consistently reported positive effects of journal writing, several research gaps remain. Most existing studies investigated journal writing as a general classroom activity without specifically examining the implementation of a Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge as a structured daily writing strategy. Furthermore, numerous earlier research emphasized journal writing as general learning exercise rather than structures, brief daily writing exercises that motivate students to write regularly over. In addition, relatively few studies have assessed the effectiveness of the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge in Indonesian junior high school EFL classrooms using a quantitative pre-experimental research methodology. Moreover, differences in participants, educational settings, and research designs indicate that further investigation is necessary to determine whether this strategy is equally effective in different learning contexts. To address this gap, the present study implemented the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge among eighth-grade students at MTsN 1 Kota Surabaya using a quantitative pre-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design. Accordingly, this study aimed to investigate the effect of the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge on students' writing ability and to provide additional empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of structured daily journal writing as a practical instructional strategy for improving students' writing performance.

METHOD

This study used a pre-experimental research design with a one-group pre-test and post-test design in this quantitative investigation. This quantitative study employed this design. This design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to measure changes in students' writing ability before and after implementation of the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge within the same group of participants. In order to evaluate the effect of the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge on students' writing abilities, this design was employed to compare their writing performance prior to and following treatment. By asking the same group of participants to complete a pre-test before and a post-test after the intervention the researcher was able to gauge changes in the students' writing abilities. A control group was not included because the primary objective of the study was to see whether the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge could significantly improve students' writing abilities in a real-world classroom setting.

Participant

The study's population comprised all 310 eighth-grade students from ten classrooms at MTsN 1 Kota Surabaya in the 2025-2026 school year. Purposive sampling was used to choose the sample after consulting the English teacher. Class VIII-G was selected since it was accessible throughout the research period and shared similar characteristics in terms of students' English proficiency and learning background. Due to some students taking part in other school-related activities throughout the data collection period, only 15 of the 31 pupils in the class finished both the pre-test and the post-test. As necessary for the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, only the full paired data from the fifteen participants were used into the statistical analysis.

Instrument

In order to assess students' writing skills both before and after the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge was implemented, the study used a writing test that was given as a pre-test and a post-test. Within thirty minutes, students were to write a paragraph titled "My Daily Life." The writing task was designed as a personal descriptive paragraph writing activity, allowing students to describe their daily experiences while demonstrating their ability to organize ideas, apply grammatical rules accurately, use appropriate vocabulary, and construct coherent paragraphs. To ensure that students writing performance before and after treatment

could be compared, the same writing question was utilized for both assessments. An analytical scoring rubric comprising four assessment component: content relevance, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, and paragraph organization- was used to grade students writing. Each component was scored on a four-point scale, resulting in a maximum raw score of 16, which was subsequently converted into a 100-point scale to align with the school's grading system. The analytical scoring rubric was selected because it enabled a more detailed evaluation of students' writing development across multiple aspects rather than providing only an overall score.

Procedure

The research was conducted over five meetings. During the first meeting, students completed the pre-test to identify their initial writing ability. The treatment was then implemented over the next three meetings through the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge. At the beginning of each treatment session, the researcher explained the learning objective, reviewed the relevant vocabulary and grammatical structures, and introduced the writing topic to help students generate ideas before starting the writing activity. Before each writing activity, the researcher introduced the writing materials related to descriptive and recount texts, including vocabulary, grammar, simple present tense, simple past tense, and paragraph organization. Students subsequently completed short journal writing activities based on different topics, namely *My Favorite Place*, *What I Did Yesterday*, and *An Experience I Will Never Forget*. Students were given sufficient time to write individually, allowing them to express their ideas based on their own experiences and understanding of the assigned topics. Throughout the treatment, students received guidance and feedback to improve the quality of their writing. The feedback focused on content development, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary use, and paragraph organization. After receiving feedback, students were encouraged to reflect on their mistakes and apply the suggestions to their subsequent journal entries, enabling them to improve their writing progressively throughout the treatment sessions. In the final meeting, students completed the post-test using the same writing prompt (*My Daily Life*) to evaluate changes in their writing ability after the treatment.

Table 1. Table 1

Meeting	Activity	Description
1	Pre-test	Students wrote <i>My Daily Life</i>
2	Treatment 1	Journal writing: <i>My Favorite Place</i>
3	Treatment 2	Journal Writing: <i>What I Did Yesterday</i>
4	Treatment 3	Journal Writing: <i>An Experience I Will Never Forget</i>
5	Post-test	Students wrote <i>My Daily Life</i>

Data Analysis

IBM SPSS Statistics was used to analyze the gathered data. Descriptive statistics were first used to calculate the mean, minimum score, maximum score, and standard deviation of the students' pre-test and post-test findings. The Shapiro-Wilk test was then employed to evaluate the normality of the data because the sample consisted of fewer than fifty participants. Because the data were not normally distributed, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was employed to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the students' pre-test and post-test scores. Cronbach's Alpha was used to evaluate the analytical scoring rubric's internal consistency, and the effect size was calculated to measure the magnitude of the treatment effect following the implementation of the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Effect of the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge on Students' Writing Ability

The descriptive statistics of students' writing scores before and after the implementation Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge are shown in Table 1. The findings show that students' writing performance significantly improved after the intervention.

Prior to the intervention, the students' scores ranged from 31.25 to 93.75, with a mean score of 69.58 (SD= 19.03). After the implementation of the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge, the mean score increased to 93.33 (SD = 9.59), with scores ranging from 68.75 to 100.00.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Test	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Pre-test	15	31.25	93.75	69.58	19.03
Post-test	15	68.75	100.00	93.33	9.59

Students who participated in structured daily journal writing exercises demonstrated improved writing performance, as evidenced by the mean score gain of almost 23.75 points. Additionally, the standard deviation dropped from 19.03 in the pre-test to 9.59 in the post-test, indicating that students' writing performance became more consistent following the intervention. This finding suggests that the improvement was experienced by both lower- and higher-achieving students, resulting in a more homogeneous distribution of writing scores after the treatment.

Overall, the descriptive data offer initial proof that the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge had a beneficial impact on students' writing skills. Descriptive statistics by themselves, however, are unable to establish the statistical significance of the observed improvement. In order to assess the data's normality and ascertain the significance of the variation between the pre-test and post-test scores, inferential statistical analyses were carried out.

Table 3. Normality Test

Variable	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-test	0.891	15	0.069
Post-test	0.715	15	0.000

Prior to assessing the research hypothesis, a normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk test was carried out because the sample consisted of fewer than fifty individuals. Determining whether the distribution of the pre-test and post-test scores satisfies the assumption of normality was essential for selecting the appropriate inferential statistical test.

According to Table 2, the pre-test scores had a significance value of 0.069, which is higher than the significance level of 0.05 and indicated that the pre-test data were normally distributed. In contrast, the post-test results produced a significance value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, indicating that the post-test data were not normally distributed. The paired data could not be examined using a parametric test like the paired-sample t-test because one of the datasets did not meet the assumption of normality. In order to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between students' pre-test and post-test writing scores after the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge was implemented, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, a non-parametric statistical test, was utilised.

Table 4. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test

Test	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test	-3.000	0.003	Significant

Following the normalcy test, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between students' pre-test and post-test writing scores after the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge was implemented. This non-parametric test was selected since the post-test finding did data did not satisfy the normality assumption.

As seen in Table 3. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test yielded a Z value of -3.000 and an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.003. Since the significance value was below the predetermined significance level ($0.003 < 0.05$), the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, whereas the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. These findings demonstrate a statistically significant difference between students' writing scores prior to and following the implementation of the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge.

The statistical outcome indicates that the pupils' writing skills improved as a result of the treatment. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, when combined with the descriptive statistics shown in Table 1, which demonstrated an increase in the mean score from 69.58 to 93.33, confirms that the observed improvement was related to the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge and was not the result of chance. These findings suggest that the treatment contributed significantly to the improvement in students' writing ability.

Table 5. Effect Size of the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge

Effect Size (r)	Interpretation
0.77	Large Effect

To determine the degree of the treatment impact, the effect size (r) was calculated based on the results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank-Test. Cohen's (1988) interpretation stated that an impact size of 0.10 is viewed as small. 0.30 as medium, and 0.50 or above is considered large. As presented in Table 4, the calculated effect size was 0.77, indicating a large effect.

The obtained effect size indicated that the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge had a strong practical impact on students' writing abilities. This outcome demonstrated that the improvement was statistically and educationally significant. Students were able to create more coherent compositions, use more suitable language and grammatical structures, and communicate their thoughts more successfully after participating in the daily journal writing exercises. This implies that the kids' writing growth was significantly impacted by the treatment. These improvement suggest that regular journal writing practice positively influenced multiple aspects of students' writing performance. The results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, the descriptive statistics, and the effect size consistently show that the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge successfully enhances students' writing skills. In order to understand why the treatment resulted in notable gains in students' writing performance, the next section examines these results in light of earlier research and pertinent hypothesis.

CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to investigate the effect of the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge on eighth-grade students' writing ability at MTsN 1 Kota Surabaya. The findings demonstrated that the implementation of the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge had a significant positive effect on students' writing ability, indicating that the research objective was successfully achieved. The improvement in students' writing performance suggests that regular and structured journal writing provided continuous opportunities for students to develop ideas, improve grammatical accuracy, expand vocabulary, and organize their writing more effectively. These findings imply that consistent writing practice through structured daily journal activities can effectively enhance students' writing skills. Therefore, the Short Daily Writing Journal Challenge can be recommended as an effective instructional strategy for English teachers to encourage consistent writing practice and improve students' writing ability in EFL classrooms.

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