

Conference Paper

Contextual Approach for Expository Essay: A Study of Writing Achievement and Quality

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the influence of a contextual approach to students' writing achievement and quality based on some categories (excellent, good, average, and poor). Quantitative and qualitative methods were used in this study. An experimental method was used for the quantitative approach and essay analysis was used for the qualitative one. One hundred and eight of the tenth graders of SMAN 7 Palembang became the sample of the study. The results showed that the writing quality (content, organization, and language) of the students who were taught using a contextual approach was better than that of the students who were taught using an inductive and deductive approach. Students' writing as being categorized of excellent or good quality was more predominant in classrooms taught using a contextual approach.

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1. Introduction

Writing is the most complicated study in language as students find difficulty in the process of both writing and reading since, in that process, both cognitive and language skills are required to get the idea, whereas students' writing skills must be supported by the teacher in order for them to improve. Conventional teaching approaches adopted by teachers in the classroom also play a role in the low writing achievement of students. The weakness of an inappropriate teaching approach will hinder students' writing achievement [1, 2].

Although there are many studies about a contextual approach in writing, research on expository writing is still limited. Satriani et al. [3] study is about the application of

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a contextual approach in English recount text. However, there is no study about clear contextual teaching in expository writing.

On the other hand, there is no special investigation into the quality of writing achievement categories: excellent, good, average, and poor. Previous studies have been about general writing achievement. Ariningsih et al. [4], Tuningsih et al. [5], and Nurbaya et al. [6] studied the expository writing of students based on organization and language. However, those studies did not provide explanations about writing categories.

The issue of gender should affect writing achievement. While previous studies about the correlation between gender and writing achievement were definitive, they tended to focus on gender and science. Temitayo and Abayomi [7] investigated the gender difference in regard to the achievement and attitude of students in learning science. Then, Nnamani and Oyibe [8] examined the gender and academic achievement in middle schools in a social study in Ebonyi. These studies found that there were differences in the achievements of males and females. In addition, Adeyemi [9] and Peterson and Parr [10] studied the correlation between writing and gender. However, both studies were still limited, as they did not investigate the quality of expository writing based on the categories mentioned earlier.

Therefore, the writer was interested in conducting a study related to taking a contextual approach to expository writing with senior high school students in Palembang. The REACT (relating, experiencing, applying, cooperating, transferring) strategy of Crawford [11] was used in this study. The objectives were: (i) to investigate the significant difference in students' expository writing achievements with an inductive, deductive, and contextual approach based on gender; (ii) to describe the quality of content, organization, and language in regard to students' expository writing achievements using a contextual approach based on the categories excellent, good, average, and poor.

2. Methods

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used in this study. An experimental method was used for the quantitative approach [12] and essay analysis (*verbatim code*) was used for the qualitative approach [13]. The tenth graders of SMAN 7 Palembang became the sample. This study used simple random sampling. The sample comprised 108 students, with 36 students in the inductive group, 36 students in the deductive group, and 36 students in the contextual group. Each group consisted of 18 male and 18 female students. Two-way ANOVA was used to analyze the data for the quantitative

method, and verbatim code was used to analyze the data for the qualitative method. Figure 1 shows the research design.

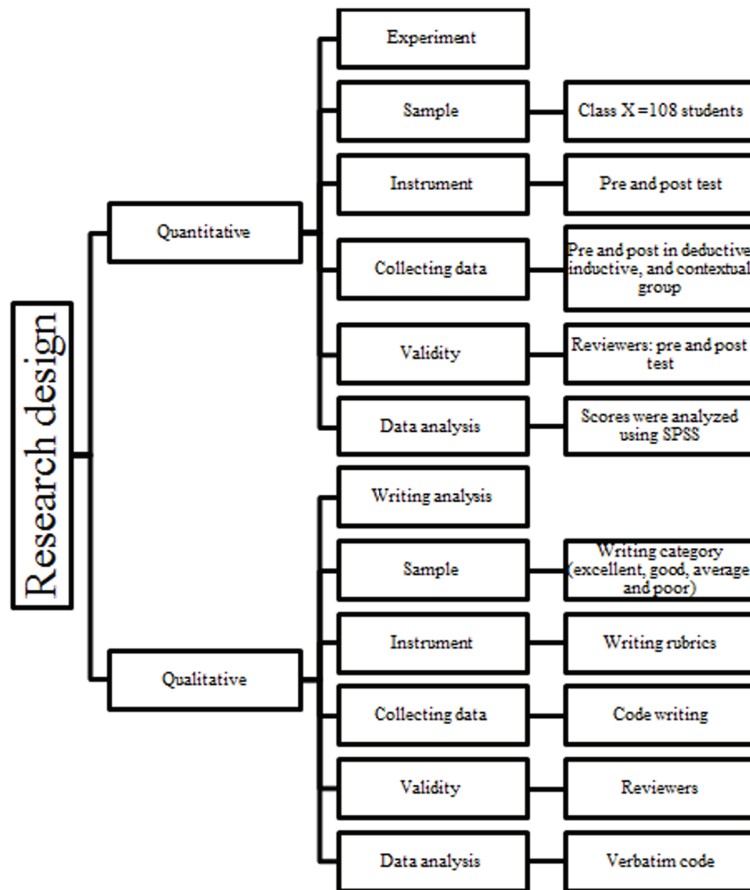


Figure 1: Research design.

3. Results

There were differences in achievement in expository writing between male and female students. Table 1 shows the significant differences in writing achievement.

TABLE 1: Gender, approach, and gender approach.

	Mean	F	Sig.
Gender	72.96	25.85	0.000
Approach	64.19	8.85	0.000
Gender*approach	68.57	0.82	0.44

The aforementioned table shows that F for gender was 25.85 at a significance level of $0.000 < 0.05$. In other words, there was a difference in the mean score between

males and females. in approach, F was 8.85 at a significance level of $0.000 < 0.05$. Therefore, there were different mean scores among deductive, inductive, and contextual approaches. For the interaction between approach and gender, F was 0.82 with a probability of $0.44 > 0.05$. Therefore, the students' mean score between approach and gender was equal and the students' mean score for each approach was different. This also happened with the mean score for each gender. However, when the approach was combined with gender properly, it influenced the students' mean score.

Table 2 presents the results of the content quality, organization, and language of students using a contextual approach.

TABLE 2: Content quality, organization, and language.

	Contextual												
	Content				Organization				Language				
	E	G	A	P	E	G	A	P	E	G	A	P	
Gender													
Male	2	5	9	2	1	10	6	1	0	8	8	2	
Female	7	8	3	0	7	9	2	0	3	15	0	0	

Note: E: excellent; G: good; A: average; P: poor.

As shown in Table 2, the writing quality (content, organization, and language) of female students was better than that of male students. The excellent-quality category was dominated by female students. Their writing was characterized by proper ideas and completed content full of facts and reasons. In terms of writing organization, the female students were better than the males. Their excellent writing organization featured logical reasoning. In addition, their writing began with an introductory paragraph with a thesis statement. Then, arguments were included in the content, and the writing was closed with a concluding statement containing a summary of the content. The correlation between paragraphs was coherent. The conjunctions in paragraphs, such as 'then', 'next', 'firstly', 'secondly', 'therefore', and 'because of that', were also used properly. The excellent writing was also characterized by good and truthful language. The vocabulary was chosen wisely properly. The general and specific vocabulary was used correctly. Finally, the sentences were complex and grammatically correct. In addition, the sentences used correct spelling.

In conclusion, a contextual approach enabled students to improve their writing achievement. The studies by Wolters [14], Johnstone [15], and Satriani et al. [3] showed that writing achievement can be improved by using a contextual approach. The results

also showed that female students' writing achievement was better than that of male students. This was in line with the studies of Adeyemi [9] and Williams and Takaku [16], who stated that gender was able to influence writing achievement. The difference between genders was caused by their different metacognitive skills [17] and by the difference in left-brain ability between males and females [18].

4. Conclusion

The results showed that the effectiveness of a teaching and learning approach fulfilled the prerequisites of validity, practicality, and the use of an effective approach. So, a contextual approach could be considered as an alternative approach in learning implementation in schools. Since this writing analysis used coding, it is suggested that future researchers should use computer data analysis programs such as NVivo or ATLAS.

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