FOREMOST JOURNAL | **e-ISSN: 2721-642X**
Vol. 7, No. 2, July 2026, Pg.230-241
http://ejournal.unis.ac.id/index.php/Foremost

Dialogue Journal Writing and Eighth Grade Students' Writing Skills: An Experimental Study

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Article Info

Article History:

Submission: 2026-06-06

Revised: 2026-07-12

Accepted: 2026-07-26

Published: 2026-07-31

Keywords:

Dialogue Journal Writing;

Junior High School Students;

Quasi-Experimental Research;

Recount Text;

Writing Skills

ABSTRACT

Writing is a language skill that needs to master. However, many students experience difficulties in developing ideas and organizing their writing effectively. This study aimed to investigate the effect of the Dialogue Journal Writing technique on the writing skills of eighth-grade students. A quantitative quasi-experimental design was employed, involving 68 eighth-grade students assigned to experimental and control classes. The data were collected through writing pre-tests and post-tests and analyzed using descriptive statistics, the Mann-Whitney U test, and the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test with SPSS version 25. The results showed that the experimental class demonstrated greater improvement in writing scores than the control class. However, the Mann-Whitney U test indicated no statistically significant difference between the post-test scores of the two groups ($p = 0.772$). Meanwhile, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test showed significant improvements in all aspects of writing in the experimental class ($p < 0.05$). These findings suggest that Dialogue Journal Writing may serve as an alternative technique for teaching writing to support students' writing development through regular practice and teacher feedback, although its superiority over conventional methods was not statistically established

To Cite This Article:

Aulianisa, S., Sudarmaji, I., & Forsia, L. (2026). Dialogue Journal Writing and Eighth Grade Students' Writing Skills: An Experimental Study. *Foremost Journal*, 7(2), 230–241. https://doi.org/10.33592/foremost.v7i2.9209

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is a fundamental productive language skill which students can communicate their ideas, thoughts, and personal experiences in a clear and organized manner (Austrus et al., 2025; Gulo et al., 2023; Utami & Arianti, 2023). It also supports communication, knowledge sharing, and the development of vocabulary and grammar (Indriani et al., 2023). Therefore, students need regular writing practice to communicate their ideas clearly and improve their writing skills.

Nevertheless, writing poses difficulties for students as it involves arranging ideas logically and selecting suitable vocabulary and grammatical structures (Arviana & Yusup, 2026; Hajan et al., 2025). Indonesian students often experience difficulties in writing

e-ISSN: 2721-642X

in English because English is taught and learned as a foreign language in Indonesia, students may have limited vocabulary and confidence (Emir & Yangın-Ekşi, 2023; Kaluge & Halimi, 2024; Sulhah & Oktaviana, 2024). These challenges may be compounded by conventional teaching techniques and limited interaction between teachers and students, which can reduce students. Motivation and opportunities to practice writing (Chan & Aubrey, 2024; Mogesse et al., 2026).

One alternative technique to address these challenge is Dialogue Journal Writing. Dialogue Journal Writing facilitates continuous, two-way written communication between students and teachers. Students regularly write journal entries about their experiences and ideas, while teachers respond with comments, questions, and feedback to encourage futher elaboration (Hammad, 2022). Through regular practice and teacher feedback, students may develop confidence, expand their ideas, and improve their writing skills (Mogesse et al., 2026). In this study, DJW was implemented through prompts about students' past experiences, followed by written responses, questions, and feedback from the teacher to support students' writing development.

Previous research has reported benefits of DJW for students' writing skills, particularly in content and vocabulary (Foroutan et al., 2013). Furthermore, the use of Dialogue Journal Writing in Junior High School settings, particularly among eighth-grade students, remains relatively limited compared with DJW use in higher education (Hammad, 2022; Pieper et al., 2021; Yürekli & Afacan, 2020). Therefore, further investigation is needed to examine its application in Junior High School English writing instruction.

The present study seeks to investigate the extent to which Dialogue Journal Writing influences the writing proficiency of eighth-grade students at SMPN 12 Tangerang City during the 2025/2026 academic year. It also examines students' writing performance following the implementation of the technique. By comparing students' writing results before and after the treatment and between the experimental and control classes, this study seeks to provide evidence of the role of DJW in English writing instruction.

2. METHOD

2.1. Design of the Research

The research was conducted using a quasi-experimental research design. This type of research is similar to a true experimental design; however, the researcher cannot fully control all external variables that may affect the outcome of the experiment (Sugiyono, 2013). This design was based on the theory proposed by Rubin (1974) that causal relationships can be determined by comparing the observed outcomes of a group receiving a particular treatment (the experimental group) with a group not receiving the treatment (the control group) (Anantasia & Rindrayani, 2025). A non-equivalent control group design was used, whereby the experimental and control groups were formed without random assignment. The design consisted of one experimental group and one control group, both of which received a pre-test and post-test,

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but only the experimental group received the treatment (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Shadish (2001) argued that the control group was intentionally not given the treatment to obtain a valid comparison between the treated and untreated groups (Ballance, 2024).

In this research, the design was implemented in two groups. The dialogue journal writing technique was applied in the experimental class for teaching recount text writing, while the control class was taught without using the dialogue journal writing technique. In other words, the researcher taught recount text writing using a specific teaching technique only to the experimental group. The following section presents the illustration of the research design model.

2.2. Data and Data Sources

The term population describes a whole set of individuals possessing particular characteristics relevant to a study (Thacker, 2019). It can be stated that a population is the total number of subjects or individuals targeted by the research. The population in this study consisted of all eighth-grade students at SMPN 12 Tangerang City. There are 10 classes, with 358 students. Sampling is the procedure of selecting samples from a population group for research purposes (Bhardwaj, 2019). The number of samples was 68 students, and these samples were taken from two classes, namely class VIII.2 and class VIII.4.

2.3. Data Collection

The research data were obtained by administering pre-tests and post-tests. The pre-test was conducted at the beginning of the research to identify students' skills before receiving the treatment. The post-test was conducted to measure the final results after the treatment. The post-test provided the final results regarding the effect of the Dialogue Journal Writing technique on students' writing skills. Additionally, data were obtained through dialogue journal entries and students questionnaires. These data served as supporting data for this research.

Written assessments were administered to obtain information about the students' writing skills. In the pre-test and post-test, both classes were given tests with the same level of difficulty. The tests were intended to assess students' abilities in both groups and identify any differences between their performance before and after the treatment. In addition, a questionnaire was administered to obtain supporting data regarding students' responses toward the implementation of Dialogue Journal Writing. The questionnaire focused on students' perceived improvement in writing skills as well as their interest in writing activities.

2.4. Data Analysis

2.4.1. Normality Test

The normality test aims to assess whether the collected data follow a normal distribution. In this study, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied to examine the distribution of pre-test and post-test scores obtained from both the experimental and control groups. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was selected because the total sample size exceeded 50 students. In addition, the normality test to calculate the writing scores of experimental class students from each writing aspects using Shapiro-Wilk. The researcher utilized

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IBM SPSS version 25 to perform the calculation.

2.4.2. Homogeneity Test

The homogeneity test was performed to examine whether the variances between the two groups were equal. This study used Levene's Test to assess the homogeneity of variances. Levene's Test is a statistical procedure used to determine whether the variances of the two groups are equal.

2.4.3. Hypothesis Testing

After the data had been tested for normality and homogeneity, the hypothesis was tested using an independent samples t-test. This statistical test is used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the mean scores of two independent groups. In this research, the test aimed to examine the differences in mean scores between the experimental and control groups and to identify whether the implementation of the Dialogue Journal Writing Technique significantly influenced students' writing skills.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Findings

This research was conducted at SMPN 12 Tangerang City. The researcher selected eighth-grade students as the population and class VIII.2 and VIII.4 as the samples. The Dialogue Journal Writing technique was implemented in Class VIII.4 during the teaching of recount text, whereas Class VIII.2 received instruction on the same material without applying this technique. This study employed a quantitative research approach. The data collection process involved administering pre-tests and post-tests. The pre-test was administered to the students at the first meeting, while the post-test was administered at the final meeting. After the pre-test and post-test were administered to the students in the experimental and control classes, the researcher analyzed the students' scores. The resulting scores were treated as research data and processed using SPSS version 25.

The researcher also collected data based on the assessment of each aspect of writing from the pre-test and post-test results of the experimental class. The writing aspects assessed included content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. The scores obtained for each of these five aspects were then processed using SPSS version 25.

Table 3. 1 Descriptive Statistics of Experimental and Control Classes

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-Test	68	50	40	90	5066	74.50	12.325
Post-Test	68	53	60	95	5550	81.62	8.699
Valid N (listwise)	68						

The data were derived from the pre-test and post-test scores obtained from both the experimental and control groups. The pre-test data consisted of

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68 students, with 34 from the experimental class and 34 from the control class. The lowest score was 40 and the highest was 90, resulting in a range of 50. The total pre-test score was 5066, with a mean of 74.50. The standard deviation was 12.325. This indicates considerable variability in the pre-tests scores. It can be concluded that student skills before the treatment still varied.

The post-test data consisted of 68 students, with 34 from the experimental class and 34 from the control class. The lowest score increased to 60 and the highest to 95, with a range of 35. The total post-test score was 5550, with a mean of 81.62. The post-test yielded a standard deviation of 8.699, reflecting a narrower score distribution than that observed in the pre-test. This suggests that students' writing skills showed a more consistent improvement following the treatment.

These results indicate an increase in the mean score, from 74.50 in the pre-test to 81.62 in the post-test. Furthermore, the standard deviation decreased from 12.325 to 8.699. This indicates that student learning outcomes after the treatment not only improved, but were also more consistent than before.

Table 3. 2 Descriptive Statistics of each Writing Aspects

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Content_Pre	34	13	27	22.74	4.501
Content_Post	34	17	30	25.35	4.206
Organization_Pre	34	9	18	14.41	3.036
Organization_Post	34	10	20	16.79	2.603
Vocabulary_Pre	34	9	17	13.47	2.585
Vocabulary_Post	34	12	18	15.35	1.824
Language_Pre	34	7	23	16.50	4.280
Language_Post	34	15	25	20.91	2.667
Mechanics_Pre	34	2	5	3.41	.743
Mechanics_Post	34	3	5	4.24	.781
Valid N (listwise)	34				

Regarding the content aspect, the average score rose from 22.27 in the pre-test to 25.35 in the post-test. Similarly, the lowest score improved from 13 to 17, while the highest score increased from 27 to 30. Meanwhile, the standard deviation showed a slight decline, from 4.501 to 4.206, suggesting a more consistent distribution of students' scores following the treatment. In the organization aspect, the mean score increased from 14.41 to 16.79. The lowest score rose from 9 to 10, whereas the highest score improved from 18 to 20. Additionally, the standard deviation declined from 3.036 to 2.603, suggesting a reduction in the variability of students' performance. For the vocabulary aspect, the mean score increased from 13.47 in the pre-test to 15.35 in the post-test. The lowest score improved from 9 to 12, whereas the highest score rose from 17 to 18. Furthermore, the standard deviation showed a decline from 2.585 to 1.824, suggesting greater consistency in students' vocabulary performance. The

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language use aspect showed the greatest improvement among all aspects. The mean score increased from 16.50 to 20.91. The lowest score rose from 7 to 15, whereas the highest score improved from 23 to 25. Moreover, a substantial reduction in the standard deviation was observed, declining from 4.280 to 2.667. This suggests that students' performance in the language use aspect became more consistent following the treatment. For the mechanics aspect, the mean score increased from 3.41 to 4.24. The minimum score increased from 2 to 3, while the maximum score remained at 5 in both the pre-test and post-test. The standard deviation changed slightly from 0.743 to 0.781, indicating relatively similar variability between two tests.

Overall, descriptive statistics indicate that students' writing skills improved across all five writing aspects after implementing the Dialogue Journal Writing technique. The increase in mean scores, accompanied by generally lower standard deviations across most aspects, indicates not only better writing skills but also more consistent achievement among students in the post-test.

In addition to the pre-test and post-test, the researcher obtained supporting data from questionnaire distributed and filled out by the experimental class. The aspects assessed in the questionnaire were students' interest, writing confidence, and writing improvement. The questionnaire contained 12 statements.

Table 3. 3 Table of Result from Question Questionnaire

No	Questionnaire Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1	Dialogue Journal Writing technique makes writing activities more interesting	23	11	0	0
2	I enjoy writing through Dialogue Journal Writing activities	22	12	0	0
3	The prompts given in Dialogue Journal Writing help me start writing easily	18	14	2	0
4	I feel motivated to participate in writing activities when using Dialogue Journal Writing	19	15	0	0
5	Dialogue Journal Writing helps me express my ideas more confidently	21	13	0	0
6	I am not afraid of making mistakes when writing in Dialogue Journals	10	24	0	0
7	I feel more confident writing recount texts after participating in Dialogue Journal Writing	15	19	0	0
8	The feedback given by the teacher helps me improve my writing	23	11	0	0
9	Dialogue Journal Writing helps me organize my ideas better	20	14	0	0
10	Dialogue Journal Writing improves my vocabulary	22	10	0	2
11	Dialogue Journal Writing improves my grammar	25	9	0	0
12	Dialogue Journal Writing helps me write recount texts more effectively	14	17	3	0

The questionnaire responses from 34 students in experimental class generally indicated positive perceptions of the Dialogue Journal

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Writing technique. Students reported that the technique made writing activities more interesting and enjoyablr, while the prompts and teacher feedback supported their writing process. They also perceived improvements in their vocabulary, grammar, confidence, and writing skills of recount texts. These responses provide supporting information about students' perceptions of the technique, but do nit establish DJW comparative effectiveness over conventional instruction.

A normality test was performed to assess whether the collected data followed a normal distribution. The analysis was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests with the assistance of SPSS version 25. The detailed results of the normality analysis are presented in the following table:

Table 3. 4 Table of Normality Test (Experimental and Control Classes)

Class	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-Test Experimental Class	.167	34	.017	.859	34	.000
Post-Test Experimental Class	.207	34	.001	.899	34	.004
Pre-Test Control Class	.148	34	.057	.910	34	.008
Post-Test Control Class	.147	34	.061	.883	34	.002

Table 3. 5 Table of Normality Test from Experimental Class (Each Writing Aspects)

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Content_Pre	.251	34	.000	.835	34	.000
Content_Post	.189	34	.003	.876	34	.001
Organization_Pre	.165	34	.020	.883	34	.002
Organization_Post	.196	34	.002	.904	34	.006
Vocabulary_Pre	.222	34	.000	.892	34	.003
Vocabulary_Post	.170	34	.014	.920	34	.016
Language_Pre	.223	34	.000	.868	34	.001
Language_Post	.195	34	.002	.918	34	.014
Mechanics_Pre	.286	34	.000	.827	34	.000
Mechanics_Post	.277	34	.000	.782	34	.000

The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that the experimental class scores did not follow a normal distribution for both the pre-test (p = 0.017) and post-test (p = 0.001). In contrast, the scores obtained by the control class met the assumption of normality (p = 0.057 for both tests). The Shapiro–Wilk test also indicated that all five writing aspects—content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics—in the experimental class had significance values below 0.05 in both the pre-test and post-test, indicating non-normal distributions. Consequently, non-parametric statistical analyses were applied, including the Mann–Whitney

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U test to assess differences between the experimental and control groups and the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test to evaluate changes in the experimental group's writing performance across five assessment aspects.

Table 3. 6 Table of Homogeneity Test

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Based on Mean	6.276	3	132	.001
Based on Median	5.543	3	132	.001
Based on Median and with adjusted df	5.543	3	92.727	.002
Based on trimmed mean	5.938	3	132	.001

The Levene's test indicated significance levels of 0.001 for both pre-test and post-test comparisons and 0.002 for the overall analysis. Since all values were lower than the 0.05 significance threshold, the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not fulfilled. Together with the findings of the normality test, these results justified the application of non-parametric statistical procedures. Accordingly, the Mann–Whitney U test was employed to determine whether significant differences existed in the post-test writing scores of the experimental and control groups. The test findings are displayed in the following table.

Table 3. 7 Table of Mann-Whitney U Test

	Results
Mann-Whitney U	554.500
Wilcoxon W	1149.500
Z	-.290
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.772

The analysis using the Mann–Whitney U test revealed no significant statistical difference in the post-test writing performance of the experimental and control groups ($p = 0.772 > 0.05$). Consequently, the alternative hypothesis (H1) was not supported, suggesting that the Dialogue Journal Writing technique did not demonstrate statistically greater effectiveness than conventional teaching approaches.

Furthermore, the Shapiro–Wilk test indicated that the pre-test and post-test scores across all five writing aspects in the experimental group deviated from a normal distribution. For this reason, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test was employed to assess changes in each writing aspect before and after the application of the Dialogue Journal Writing technique. The findings are presented in the following table.

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Table 3. 8 Table of Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test

	Content_Post - Content_Pre	Organization_Post - Organization_Pre	Vocabulary_Post - Vocabulary_Pre	Language_Post - Language_Pre	Mechanics_Post - Mechanics_Pre
Z	-3.367[b]	-4.620[b]	-4.242[b]	-4.912[b]	-4.179[b]
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000

The results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test revealed statistically significant changes between pre-test and post-test scores in all five writing aspects within the experimental group ($p < 0.05$). The significance values were 0.001 for content and below 0.001 for organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. The results suggest that all five writing components experienced statistically significant improvements after the application of the Dialogue Journal Writing technique.

3.2. Discussion

The descriptive analysis revealed an increase in writing scores from the pre-test to the post-test in both groups, although the experimental group demonstrated a more substantial improvement. The decrease in standard deviations in both classes also indicated more consistent scores after the learning process. Improvements were observed across all five writing aspects in the experimental class: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Nevertheless, the Mann–Whitney U test indicated that the post-test scores of the two groups did not differ significantly ($p = 0.772$), indicating that Dialogue Journal Writing did not demonstrate significantly greater effectiveness than conventional instruction in terms of overall writing performance.

These findings differ from those of Mogesse et al. (2026) and Yurekli and Afacan (2020), who reported significantly greater improvements in writing performance through Dialogue Journal Writing. Differences in treatment duration, students' initial writing abilities, participant characteristics, and classroom conditions may help explain the varying results. Nevertheless, these results align with the study conducted by Foroutan et al. (2013), which reported improvements in both the experimental and control groups, although no statistically significant difference was identified in their overall writing performance. Unlike Foroutan et al., who reported no significant improvement in mechanics, the present study found significant pre-test and post-test differences across all five writing aspects in the experimental class.

The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test confirmed significant pre-test and post-test differences in content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics within the experimental class ($p < 0.05$). These findings suggest that students' performance improved across all assessed writing aspects following the implementation of Dialogue Journal Writing. Regular writing practice,

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continuous written interaction, and teacher feedback may have supported students in developing their ideas and improving different components of their writing. Nevertheless, these within-class improvements should be distinguished from the comparison between the two classes, which did not show a statistically significant difference.

Overall, Dialogue Journal Writing may serve as an alternative technique for supporting students' writing development through regular practice and teacher feedback. Despite exhibiting greater improvement in descriptive scores and statistically significant progress in all five writing components, the Dialogue Journal Writing technique did not demonstrate significantly higher effectiveness than conventional teaching methods in terms of overall post-test results. Teachers may consider incorporating Dialogue Journal Writing into writing instruction while allowing sufficient time for regular practice and feedback.

4. CONCLUSION

This study found significant pre-test and post-test improvements in all five writing aspects (content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics) within the experimental class, based on the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test. Nevertheless, the statistical analysis using the Mann–Whitney U test indicated that no significant difference was found between the experimental and control groups (p = 0.772). Thus, although students' writing scores improved following the implementation of Dialogue Journal Writing, the technique was not statistically more effective than conventional teaching methods in terms of overall writing performance.

This research adds to the existing literature on Dialogue Journal Writing by demonstrating progress in each writing component, although no statistically significant difference was identified in the overall post-test scores between the two groups. The results indicate that Dialogue Journal Writing can be considered an alternative approach to teaching writing at the junior high school level, particularly by encouraging consistent writing practice and providing feedback from teachers.

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