

## IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL THROUGH REFLECTIVE JOURNAL: A STUDY AT A SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN ACEH

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### Abstract

**Purpose of the study:** The purpose of this study was to find out whether there is any significant difference between the students who are trained through reflective journal writing and those who are not trained through reflective journal writing. It also wanted to know students' responses toward reflective journal writing the implementation.

**Methodology:** The methodology of this study is an experimental research which used a quasi-experimental design. Quasi-experimental research is used to know the differences between classes that are given training and classes that are not given. The research design used in this study is the non-equivalent control group design. In this research, there were two classes taken as samples, namely experimental group and control group which consisted of 30 students of each group. The author used tests (pre-test and post-test) and questionnaire as the instruments to collect the data. The quantitative data was obtained from the result of pre-test and post-test scores of students' writing in experimental and control groups. Then both scores were analysed through the SPSS program to calculate t-test.

**Main Findings:** The findings of the research showed that the mean score of post-test of the experimental group 76.73 is higher than the mean score of control class 63.10. Furthermore, the result of *p-value* obtained from the post-test of the experimental and control group was 0.00 is less than the level of significance degree  $\alpha = 0.05$ . In other words, there was a significant difference between the students who were trained through reflective journal writing and those who were not trained through reflective journal writing.

**Applications of this study:** The implications related to this study the authors suggest to use Reflective Journal Writing Strategy to help students to be critical thinking writers and for the next researcher to use this strategy in other kinds of texts. Teachers are suggested to use this strategy to teach writing skills for other aspects of writing.

**Novelty/Originality of this study:** This strategy has never been used by English teachers in South Aceh and it can contribute to the teachers to use this strategy in teaching writing, especially for senior high school students. In conclusion, the use of Reflective Journal improved students' writing skill, especially in writing recount text of senior high schools first-grade students in South Aceh.

**Keywords:** Student, Writing Skill, Senior High School, Reflective Journal, Teaching.

### INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the most difficult English language skills to master (Hill, 1991; Labbo, et al., 1995; Warnock, 2009; Santangelo, 2014). Many students have problems expressing their idea through writing (Santangelo, 2014; Kirkman & Turk, 2002; Nik, et al., 2010). Writing is not an easy job. It takes time, concentration, motivation, knowing what to write, how to write, knowing the mechanics of writing, and other aspects (Dobrin, 1985; Colyar, 2009; Van Manen, 2006; Hirvela & Du, 2013). Various methods and strategies have been used by English teachers to increase students' performances in writing. However, the results are still insufficient enough. Due to the problems, it motivates the authors to conduct an experimental teaching at senior high school students in South Aceh.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate whether using reflective journal strategy can improve students' writing skill.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing is one of the language skills that are important in our life. In the global era, writing skill is needed as a part of the requirements in many aspects of life. In an educational setting, for instance, writing takes an important part especially for the educational practitioners, which students are expected to be able to write a kind of academic writing. Therefore, the schools should supply their students with sufficient skills to face the real-world situation with the real language use (Inayah & Nanda, 2016).

One kind of writing which is worth exploring is reflective journal writing. As [Boud \(2001\)](#) stated that reflective journal writing can facilitate students in reflecting on their personal opinions, activities, and learning experiences and then obtain new awareness and understanding in learning activities. The reflective thinking is mainly concerned with the mastery and application of technology which means to achieve educational goals. Writing reflective journals in learning through reflection can allow learners in better learning process understanding and learning active involvement. In senior high school, the students are emphasized to learn writing from grade one up to grade three. They are expected to be able to write in good English under several expressions and texts as suggested in the curriculum. One of the texts which should be taught is recount text. Nonetheless, the students are not able to produce a piece of writing, because they feel that writing is one part of English language skill that is still difficult for them. They still feel difficult to transfer their thinking into writing.

From interviewing several students of SMAN 1 Tapaktuan, the researcher found that some difficulties of the students are about expressing main ideas, limited vocabulary and produced many grammatical errors in the writing. In addition, the students are seldom asked by their teacher to reflect on what they have already learned in writing. The teacher considers that the students still lack writing skill.

Referring to the problems above, the teacher should have used a more appropriate strategy to reach a good development in the teaching and learning process. The teacher should find creative ways to design activities in the classroom that can recommend and motivate students to learn. [Harmer \(1998\)](#) states the teachers should apply effective strategies which can encourage the students to be more active and motivated in the teaching-learning process. This condition was hoped to be able to improve the students' achievement in writing. Hence, the writer perceives reflective journal writing is able to improve students' writing skill by practising it in each meeting of the English class. The students can be motivated to write in every meeting.

[Williams, et al. \(2012\)](#) explained that reflective journal writing provides concise and practical guidance on how students can improve their academic writing through self-reflective thinking, reading and writing. This teaching technique allows students to practice their writing skills in an open-ended format that encourages the same thought process that is used in analytical writing. Moreover, writing in this sense serves as a discovery process. The students are able to use many different topics from classroom experience that they can explore through reflective journal writing. They reveal how to describe and present the teaching-learning activity in a second language classroom into their own personal writing, to identify some concerns they had about the lessons, and to remind what they decide to use in the future. For example, students' personal reactions to things that occur in the classroom activities, questions and observations about problems that happen in a learning activity, descriptions of significant lessons aspects, ideas for future analysis or reminders of things to take an action. Therefore, the teacher can assess the students' understanding and writing skill by doing this reflection. Then the results of the study can be helpful for enhancing students' learning process. The students are expected not to encounter difficulties in writing skill anymore. They also look forward to considering that writing is an enjoyable activity.

To support this research, there are some previous studies related to this case. One study was conducted by [Habibi, et al. \(2018\)](#). They investigated the impact of reflective journal writing on students' writing ability of narrative text from 273 students at tenth-grade students of SMA Triguna Utama, South Tangerang. The result showed that the use of reflective journal writing got a positive effect on students' writing ability in narrative text. Another study was conducted by [Farrak \(2012\)](#). He focused on the benefits of keeping reflective journal writing on improving English writing skills, increasing motivation, enhancing creativity, and critical thinking among university students. The result indicated that reflective journal writing gave positive effects in enhancing motivation and self-confidence. It also improved the students' learning and writing skills in particular. While the above studies provided evidence that the learners' writing is affected by using reflective journal writing.

### **What is Reflective Journal Writing?**

According to Finkle in [Waltson \(2010, p.2\)](#), the most effective ways to reflect on experience is by writing. [Sukino \(2010\)](#) said that writing is a media to communicate ideas to others. Smith as cited in [Sukino \(2010\)](#) said that the more important writing is writing for our self, clarifying and stimulating the mind. According to a study prepared by The Learning Centre, The University of New South Wales in 2008, reflective journal writing is a response toward the experiences or events, thoughts and feelings, a way of thinking to explore learning, a way to achieve clarity and a better understanding of what you are learning, or a way of making meaning out of what you study, an opportunity to gain self-knowledge, and a chance to develop and reinforce writing skills. [Merly and Edgargo \(2016\)](#) say reflective journal writing means a kind of learning in which students are able to capture their learning experiences through writing a journal. [Fisher \(1996\)](#) stated that writing a journal is very helpful for students in connecting their experiences. [Scanlon and Chernomas \(1997\)](#) discuss the reflective stages used by [Kenneth \(2012\)](#) in implementing reflective journal writing, namely; awareness of an event that stimulates the thinking about the event, analyse critically which touches on experience and new knowledge, develop new perspectives achieved in the second step. [Dyment and O'Connell \(2003\)](#) say reflective journal writing is the daily event notes, personal reflections, environment observation, and experiences response. It describes that writing in this sense serves as a discovery process. The students are able to use many different topics from their classroom experiences that they can explore. They are asked to write what they have learned during the teaching and learning

process and try to relate to the environment, they can ask what they do not understand in their writing and explain what they need to know for the next meeting. The students may better develop flexibility and engagement as learners in the field of writing instruction. Moreover, Reflective journal writing supports the learning and helps students develop perspectives that will increase their success in the classroom. Regarding some definitions above, reflective journal writing in this study is the learning procedure where students write and associate new information learned with previous experience through a journal so that students can construct a concept in-depth understanding. In addition, reflective journal writing is a tool to develop students' writing skill.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Reflection is closely related to the experience. [Moon \(1999\)](#) proposed reflection as “a form of mental processing with a purpose and anticipated outcome that is applied to relatively complex or unstructured ideas for which there is not an obvious solution”. [Rodgers \(2002a\)](#) makes an insight into the reflection criteria proposed by Dewey. One of the criteria is that reflection is the process of making meaning where students associate information with the experience they have had in-depth and connecting with other ideas ([Rodgers, 2002a](#)). Starting from Dewey's thoughts about the definition of reflection, [Rodgers \(2002b\)](#) identified four stages in the reflection process namely; presence in experience: learning to see, description of experience: learning to describe and differentiate, analysis: learning to think critically and create theory, and experimentation: learning to take intelligent action. Similarly, [Kolb \(1984\)](#) believes that experiential learning can directly engage the learners. In line with [Kolb \(1984\)](#), learning means a process of what we experience in life and present us new insight. [Kolb \(1984\)](#) outlined a four-stage model that directs to powerful learning. Reflective journal writing can support learning through Kolb's four stages, where the learners actively observe and reflect on their classroom activities into journal writing. [Rodgers \(2002b\)](#) identification results are in line with the learning through [Kolb's \(1984\)](#) four stages. It is a cyclical model of learning where learners can initiate at any stage then follow the sequence; concrete experience. Learners talk about a specific experience, reflective observation. Learners reflect back on their experience, abstract conceptualization. Learners attempt to explore the meaning of the experience, and active experimentation. Learners attempt to connect their experiences with the new information to decide and solve problems in order to have better interpretations of their experiences.

The experiential learning cycle can be entered by the learner at any point, but its stages must be followed in sequence. At stage 1 the students might start to think about their certain experience. Then at stage 2, they reflect back on that experience, describe what happened and how they feel about the experience. At the third stage, learners think and try to evaluate what was good and bad about the experience. They explain the meaning of the experience and analyse what sense they can make of the situation. Finally, at stage four, learners try to conclude what else they could have done by connecting with the new information, and make an action plan if it arose again what they would do. Furthermore, the students solve problems resulting in better interpretations, or better understandings of their experiences.

### **The Procedure of Reflective Journal Writing Strategy**

The experience of someone who has tried to write is close to similarity, namely the difficulty in expressing ideas ([Sukino, 2010](#)). Therefore, reflective journal writing is assisted with journal entry which is the framework for thinking through a learning process. Reflective journal writing contains questions that help students in describing the experiences that are asked in prompting questions. Students use a reflective journal guide that has been prepared by the teacher in the learning process. According to [Watson \(2010\)](#), reflective journal writing allows writers or students to record experiences, reflect on experiences to achieve the objectives of the analysis, and review it by sharing insights with other students.

In this study, the general description of reflective journal writing strategy refers to the reflective process revealed by [Rodgers \(2002b\)](#) and [Scanlon and Chernomas \(1997\)](#), namely:

#### **1. Presence in experience: Learning to see**

Learning begins with activities where the teacher recalls previous knowledge by encouraging students through reflective questions presented in journal entries such as: what you have learned, what difficulties you have found, how you have overcome them, what is the relationship of prior knowledge with the material to be learned. The teacher presents activities related to the material so students get information through interactions with friends. The environment, as well as reading issues related to the material. Activities undertaken can be in the form of discussions about a phenomenon related to teaching material and in accordance with learning objectives.

#### **2. Description of experience: Learning to describe and differentiate**

Students write all the information related to the material obtained from previous activities in the journal. To facilitate students, the teacher has provided a journal which consists of some relevant questions related to previous activities. Next, students reread everything that has been written and choose the information related to the concept and cross out the unrelated things.

#### **3. Analysis of experience: Learning to think critically and create theory**

Students analyse and relate the information with the experience of the cognitive structure that students have as a reference in constructing concepts.

#### 4. Experimentation: Learning to take intelligent action

Students apply the concepts which they have learned to other things such as in daily life. The teacher gives problems with reflective questions such as how you use the concepts learned to solve problems. In addition, students are given reflective questions related to the material such as: the concepts that still make you difficult, how you deal with them, why you need to study the material, how you apply the material in other respects.

Below are the steps of the strategies and activities of students in reflective journal writing that can be applied in this study with the following details:

##### 1. Presence in experience: learning to see

- a. Students recall previous knowledge related concepts learned.
- b. Students participate actively in activities to obtain new information related to the concepts being studied.

##### 2. Description of experience: Learning to describe and differentiate

- a. Students describe information-information obtained from the activities and knowledge they have through writing.
- b. The teacher gives different situations so students are able to think and answer the problems given by the teacher.

##### 3. Analysis of experience: Learning to think critically and create theory

- a. Students associate new information with the knowledge they have by answering questions in a journal critically.
- b. Students are able to construct new knowledge from the results of the analysis.

##### 4. Experimentation: Learning to take intelligent action

- a. Students apply this new knowledge in their daily life.
- b. Students solve problems that are examined by the teacher.

## METHODOLOGY

This study used quantitative study in nature. Quasi-experimental teaching was used as the design of the study. Two classes were selected using random sampling techniques. One class is taught wiring skill through reflective journal strategy and another one is taught by using conventional strategy. The study was conducted to the first-grade students of SMAN 1 Tapaktuan, South Aceh. The technique used to select the sample of the study the authors divided the students based on their own classroom to be selected as the sample. The procedure was carried out as follows; first, the number of classes of the first year were written down on small paper and rolled up. Then, all rolled papers were mixed and shaken. Finally, two classes chosen were taken as the sample. The first one was the experimental group and other one was the control group. For the experimental group, the sample was represented by class XMIA U1 which consisted of 30 students, whereas for the control group the sample was represented by class XMIA U2 which consisted of 30 students. Therefore, the total samples were 60 students. The teaching materials used in this study were writing the text Test and questionnaire were used as the instrument of the study. The SPSS was used to analyse the data.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

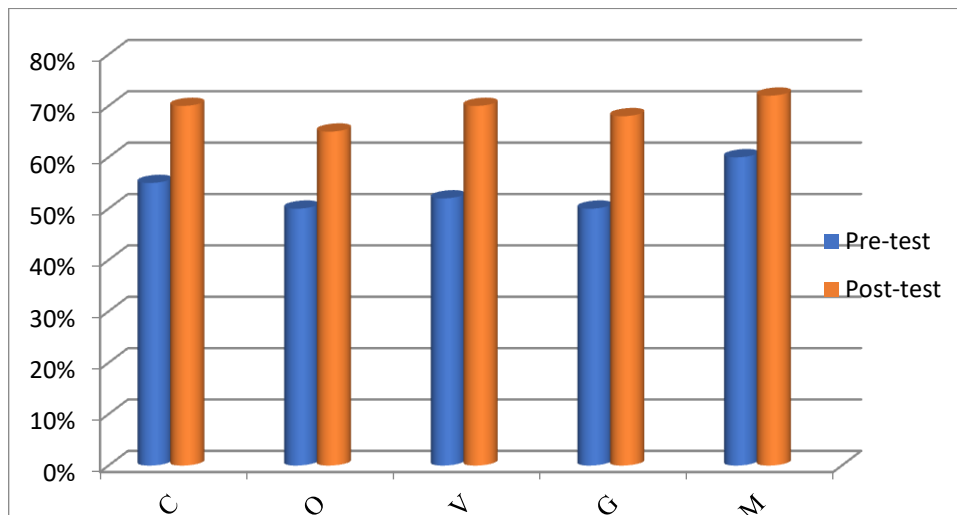
The objective of the present study is to investigate whether the use of a reflective journal strategy can improve students writing skill to the first grade of students of senior high school 1 Tapaktuan, South Aceh, Indonesia. In the experimental group, the lowest score of pre-tests achieved by students is 39. Meanwhile, the highest score is 72. Afterwards, the lowest score of pre-tests got by students of the control group is 38. It is slightly less than the achievement in the experimental group. Meanwhile, the highest score achieved in this group is 68 and reached only by one student.

The lowest score of post-test of the experimental group is 65. Meanwhile, the highest score got by the students of this group is 88. It means that there is better improvement compared to the pretest score. In the control group, the lowest score of post-tests that was reached by the students is 50. Meanwhile, the highest score obtained by this group is 78. In other words, there is also an improvement in this group compared to the pre-test scores. In order to answer research questions, the researcher follows the suitable statistical procedures such as Mean, Standard Deviation, and T-test in examining the data collected. However, the normality and homogeneity test should be first analysed.

### Analysis of Writing Aspects

As the aim of study, the researcher wanted to find out a significant difference in students' writing performance between those who were taught by using reflective journal writing strategy and those who were not. In addition, the analysis of students' improvement on writing was described specifically by focusing on the aspects of writing. There are several components that should be emphasized in writing assessment such as content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and

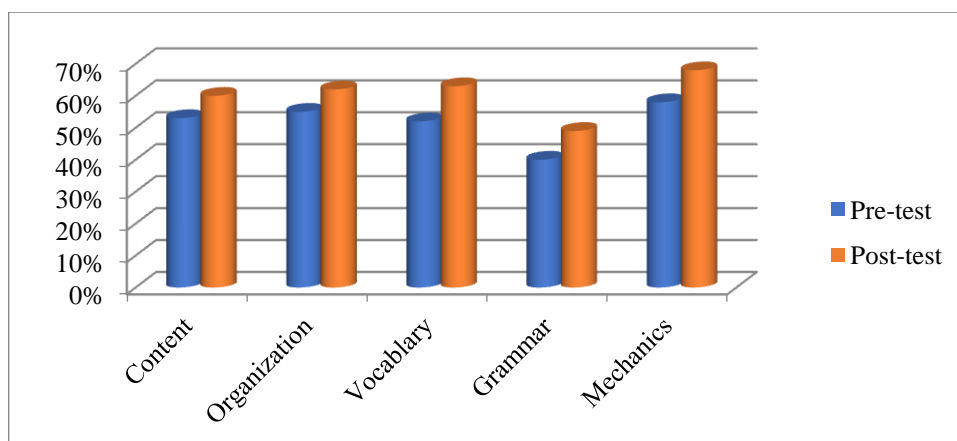
mechanics as mentioned in the writing ability rubric score by Heaton (1988). Each category has a different maximum score. Content is given the maximum score 30, if the students are able to write very well, it means that their writing has excellent support and match the purpose of the text. Organization is given 20 if the writing is well organized, the topic sentence is clear, cohesive and coherence. While the aspect of vocabulary also has a maximum score of 20 if the writer uses effective word form. Moreover, the grammar aspect is given 25 if the writing presents correct grammar. The last aspect is mechanics which is given score 5 if the writing has good essay format and good use of capitalization, punctuation and spelling. Therefore, the total score for those categories is 100. Then, the percentage of each aspect is calculated to see the progress between pre-test and post-test score. The percentage is also used to observe the difference between experimental and control groups.



**Figure 1:** The students' score of writing aspects of pre-test and post-test in the experimental group

Figure 1 shows the score of writing aspects achieved by students in experimental class in both pre-test and post-test. The score described a significant improvement in each aspect of writing. In the aspect of content, the students' percentage was 55% in pre-test and reached the percentage 70% in post-test which means that they generated the idea better after applying a reflective journal writing technique. The students made significant improvements of about 25% in the content aspect. Therefore, they could make such good progress in post-test. Regarding the organization aspect, the students achieved 50% in pre-test and then scored up to 15% to a score of 65%. There was also a significant improvement in this aspect. At the beginning of this research, most of the students could not organize the ideas well in writing recount text. Then, they were able to organize their ideas much better after the implementation of reflective journal writing technique.

In the vocabulary aspect, the students were able to make improvement as much as 18% by reaching a score of 70% in the post-test. Before the implementation of reflective journal writing technique, the students score of pre-tests was 52%. In other words, the students could choose and use effective words in writing the text. Then, in the grammar aspect, it seemed that most of the students were lacking in grammar mastery. The grammatical of their writing is dominated by errors. The pre-test score of the students was 50%, then up to 68% after applying the technique. However, they could make a significant improvement. It means that they reached 18% progress in the post-test. The last aspect was mechanics. The students got 60% in the pre-test. Then, the score increased to a level of 72%. Most of the students were not concerned about punctuation, capitalization, and spelling in writing. But after the researcher described those were important. So that the result of their writing just needs little editing or did not need editing at all.

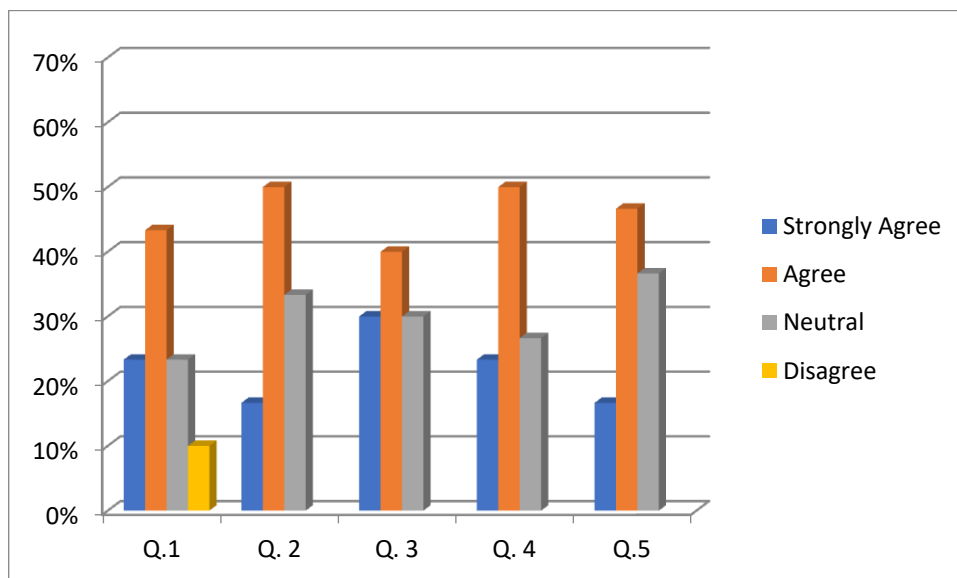


**Figure 2:** The students' score of writing aspects of pre-test and post-test in the control group

Figure 2 shows the score of writing aspects achieved by the students of the control class in both pre-test and post-test. The score described a significant improvement in each aspect of writing. In the content aspect, the percentage of the students' score in pre-test was 53%, and then increased to 60% in post-test. The students could only make the improvement as much as 7%. As for the organization aspect, the students reached 55% in pre-test and their achievement increased to 62% in the post-test. There was no significant improvement in the aspect of the organization. Concerning the vocabulary aspect, the students got 52% in the pre-test. Then, the score increased up to 11% to the score 63%, it was the highest aspect that improved in the control group. In the grammar aspect, the improvement reached by the students in the control group was 9%. It increased from 40% in the pre-test to 49% in the post-test. As the last aspect was mechanics. The students achieved 58% in the pre-test, and then increased to 68% in post-test. Based on the result of the writing, the percentage of the experimental class was higher than the control class. It means that the implementation of reflective journal writing technique could improve the students' writing especially in the five aspects of writing.

### The Results of Questionnaire

The questionnaire was given to the students in order to get the information about the students' perception toward the implementation of reflective journal writing strategy. It consisted of 15 statements about reflective journal quality. The researcher served 5 possibilities of answers as proposed by Likert scale. There are strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The questionnaire only given for experimental groups knowing students' responses toward the reflective journal writing implementation. There are 30 students, the percentage of content value is 100 % and most of the students got a greater percentage after the experimental conducted.

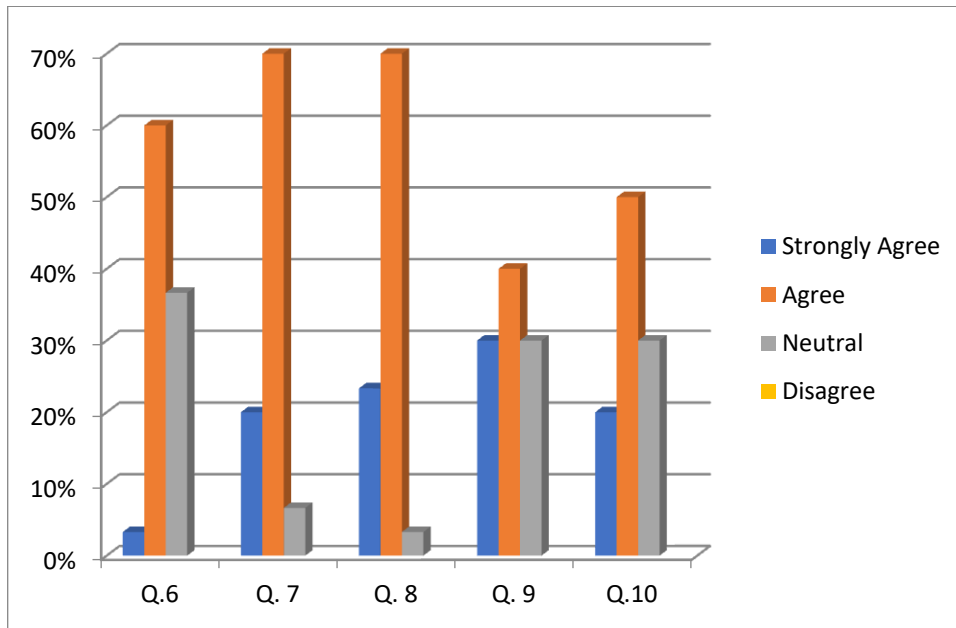


**Figure 3:** Percentage of questionnaire number 1 until 5 dealing with motivation dimension

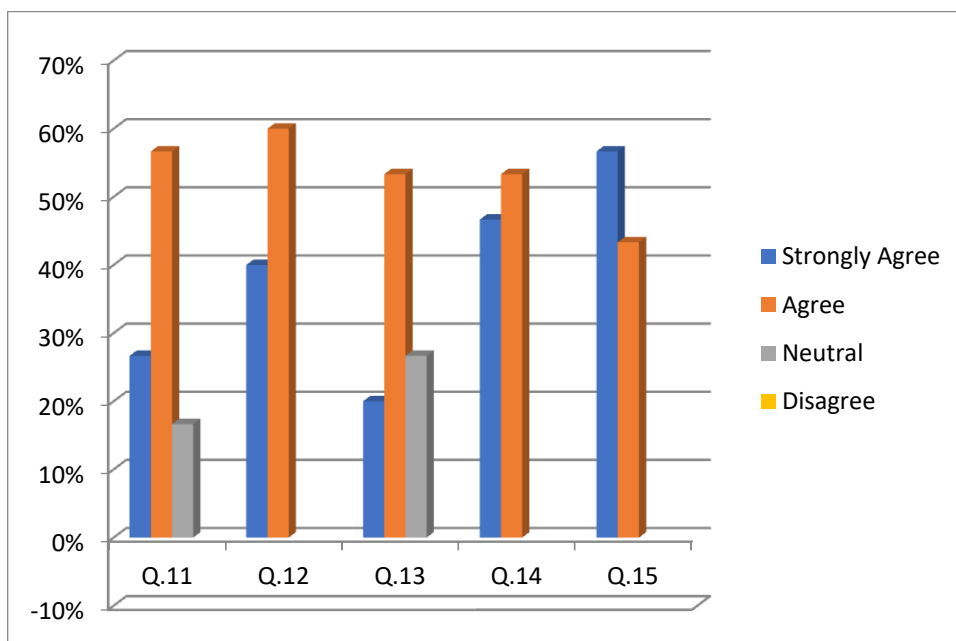
Figure 3 shows almost all of the students agree that reflective journals helped them for starting the writing. While the rest of 10 % of the students chose to disagree on the statement. The statement number 1 shows that 23.3 % of the students answered strongly agree, 43.3 % agree, 23.3 % felt neutral. It revealed that practising writing by using a reflective journal helps students to talk about their experience. Statement 2 showed that 16.6 % of students selected strongly agreed, 50 % felt agreed, 33.3 % answered neutrally. None of them chose to disagree and strongly disagree on the statement. So, the result is effective which means reflective journals helped students a lot to express the ideas in writing. The statement number 3 attracted 30 % of the students to strongly agree, 40 % agree, and 30 % felt neutral. None of the students chose to disagree and strongly disagree. It means that learning to write by using a reflective journal helps them to respond to their feelings and thoughts. The statement number 4 got the following responses: 23.3 % chose strongly agree, 50 % agreed, and 26.6 % neutral. Nobody chose to disagree and strongly disagree. This statement indicated that by using reflective journals, it stimulated students' critical thinking. The statement number 5, there are 16.6 % of students selected strongly agree, 46.6 % agree, 36.6 % neutral, and also none of them chose to disagree and strongly disagree. It implied that every student felt reflective journals are a way of thinking in exploring their learning.

Figure 4 indicates that most students agree that reflective journals improve students' skill in writing. The statement number 6 showed that there was only 3.3 % of students who chose strongly agree, but 60 % of them selected agree, and 36.6 % of them chose neutral. None of them choose to disagree and strongly disagree. So, the response of students is still quite good. The seventh statement, there are 20 % of students who strongly agree, 73.3 % agree, and 6.6 % felt neutral, and nobody chose to disagree and strongly disagree. So, the percentage of agreement is higher than another answer. The statement number 8, there are 23.3 % of students selected strongly agree, 73.3 % agree, and 3.3 % neutral. Nobody chose to disagree and strongly disagree. It revealed that the students felt easy to describe what they understood by using Reflective Journal writing. The statement number 9 got the following responses: 30 % of students answered strongly

agree, 40 % agreed, 30 % neutral, and none of them chose to disagree and strongly disagree. The statement number 10, there are 20 % of students who strongly agree, 50 % agree, 30 % neutral, nobody chose to disagree and strongly disagree. The total of students who chose to agree is about 15 persons.



**Figure 4:** Percentage of questionnaire number 6 until 10 dealing with writing improvement dimension



**Figure 5:** Percentage of questionnaire number 11 until 15 dealing with convenience/self-confidence dimension

Figure 5 shows the benefit of reflective journals in increasing students' self-confidence and convenience in writing. The statement number 11 attracted 26.6 % of the students to strongly agree, 56.6 % agree, 16.6 % neutral, and nobody selected disagreed and strongly disagreed. So, most of the students agree that reflective journals increase their creativity. The statement number 12, there are 40 % of students who strongly agree, 60 % agree, and nobody chose neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. The thirteenth statement, 20 % of students selected strongly agree, 53 % agree, 26.6 % chose neutral, and also no one of them chose strongly disagree and disagree. The statement number 14 showed that 46.6 % of students strongly agree, 53.3 % agree, and nobody felt neutral, disagreed, and strongly disagreed. The last statement, there are 56.6 % of students strongly agree, 43.3 % agree, and none of them chose neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. It indicated that reflective journals gave them a worthwhile experience. Regarding the statements that addressed the value of the chart above, it can be summarized that most students in the experimental class had a good response toward the use of reflective journals in practising their writing skill. Furthermore, students presented better scores in the post-test. Most students agree that the Reflective Journal Technique has effectively helped them in improving writing ability. Another positive influence of reflective journals is that the students become motivated to write

more, increase and enhance their creativity in writing. More importantly, based on the questionnaire, it was found that about 50 % of students agree that reflective journals improve their writing ability. Therefore, it can be concluded that the implementation of reflective journal strategy improves students' writing ability to the first-grade students of SMAN 1 Tapaktuan, Aceh Selatan.

Applying reflective journal writing was chosen as a strategy to improve students' writing skill. The implementation of this strategy was expected to support students' improvement in writing. They were attracted to write in every time of the meeting. The activities of reflective journal writing strategy have built students' involvement actively in writing. Besides the students are better in understanding the learning material using reflective journal writing, they also become active and creative in writing at the end of each meeting. Moreover, the students are more active in expressing ideas and sentences in writing. Based on the pre-test and post-test results, it clearly proved that reflective journal writing strategy significantly improved students' writing skill, especially in writing recount text. The improvement of writing in the post-test was in all aspects such as content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. Furthermore, the researcher related the result of these research findings to the result of other similar studies. There are some researchers who conducted the same research toward the use of reflective journal writing. The findings are suitable with [Farrah \(2012\)](#) who found that reflective journal writing is an effective strategy in students' writing process. The result indicated positive effects in enhancing motivation and self-confidence, improving the writing in particular. Similar findings were reported by [Henter and Simona \(2014\)](#) who found reflective journal writing significantly improves students' writing skill. The students also actively record their thoughts on their awareness, comment on their learning in writing. In addition, the students' achievement and students' awareness of learning strategies can be raised by using reflective journal writing.

The present study also supports a study conducted by [Habibi, et al. \(2017\)](#), the findings were reflective journal writing is significantly effective in improving students' writing ability of narrative text. This research was conducted in a quasi-experimental study at the tenth-grade students of SMAN Triguna Utama which the result of t-value of both post-test scores is higher than t-table in significance level of 0.05. So, it means that the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Generally, the result of the previous studies outlined above was similar to this research finding, this research found out the students' writing achievement in experimental class improved significantly after the implementation of reflective journal writing strategy. The result of the students' responses toward the implementation of reflective journal writing strategy from the questionnaire, found that most students gave positive responses within the use of reflective journals in writing, especially recount text. The students could express their ideas, and open their mind in starting the writing. It is in line with [Rawahi and Balushi \(2015\)](#) who revealed that reflective journal writing encourages students to express their ideas and thinking about the world around them. Then, the students think critically in writing. It means that reflective journal writing strategy effectively helps students in writing. In short, this activity increased their creativity to explore the language around them, most of the students could catch all information during the treatment sessions and it influenced their improvement in writing recount text in post-test.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the finding and discussion of the present study presented in the previous part, it can be concluded that the implementation of reflective journal writing strategy in teaching writing to the first-grade students at SMAN 1 Tapaktuan Aceh Selatan improved their ability in writing, especially in recount text. There is a significant difference between the students who are trained through reflective journal writing and those who are not trained through reflective journal writing. Data analysis shows that reflective journal strategy improves students' writing ability in terms of ideas/content, grammar aspects, vocabulary and mechanics usage. The result of the mean score of pre-tests of the experimental group is 53.10. Meanwhile, the mean score of post-test of this group is 76.73. There was a progress of 23.63 points. Then, the mean score of pre-tests of the control group is 49.13 and the mean score of post-tests is 63.10. There was a slight progress which is only 13.97 points. However, the score achieved by students in the experimental group is higher than the control group. The result of the independent sample t-test of post-test of both classes is 0.00. Thus,  $p\text{-value} < \text{level of significance } 0.05$ . It means that the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) is accepted. In other words, reflective journal writing significantly improves students' writing skill, especially recount text. The students also responded positively toward the implementation of reflective journals in teaching writing. The finding of the questionnaire indicated that the students can express their ideas in writing reflective journals, it improved their writing skill, built their motivation, and increased their confidence in writing reflective journals. Furthermore, the students agree that reflective journal writing helped them in improving their writing ability. The authors suggest that teachers who teach English especially teaching writing, should use this strategy as the best alternative technique.

## LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

This study is limited to the use of reflective journal strategy in teaching writing and engaging first-grade students of senior high school 1 South Aceh, Indonesia. It is also limited to teaching writing especially recount text. So, for the next study, other aspects of writing should cover a broad range of writing aspects through a reflective journal strategy.

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