

The Effect of Mindful Learning on Students' Writing Competency

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Abstract

Students' writing competency, teacher's strategy and engagement in writing process is very crucial. The strategy of teaching writing should not only focus on language aspects but also should help the students in developing their critical thinking and problem solving skill. The current study investigated the effect of mindful learning on students' writing competency. This study was an experiment study with posttest only control group design. 71 EFL students were involved in this study. In collecting the data, this study used writing competency test and rubric for assessing. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The result of descriptive statistics showed that the mean score of writing competency of experiment group (82.25) was higher than the control group (78.67). The result of effect size test showed a medium effect (.68). Thus, it can be concluded that mindful learning significantly affects students' writing competency.

Keywords: Mindful Learning, Writing, EFL

1. Introduction

Human resources are required to have the ability or skills that can encourage them to progress and continue to develop. In the current era, one must have 21st century skills. Skills in the 21st century include (a) critical thinking and problem solving, (b) communication (c) collaboration, and (d) creativity and innovation (Bishop, 2018). Someone must possess these abilities in order to compete with the outside world (Afandi et al., 2019; Boholano, 2017; Jan, 2017). In addition, proficiency in using English as an international language is very important in order to be able to compete with world citizens. English language skills are the main skill that someone needs to master in addition to competing, it can also be used to build international networks (Clement & Murugavel, 2019).

The ability to use English will also be an added value for someone in finding a job and supporting a career (Lauder, 2008). The policy for the application of English as a subject has been implemented since the junior high school level in Indonesia. However, the results of the National Examination in English as a parameter of the success of English education and teaching show unsatisfactory results, especially in Bali. For three years (2017, 2018, 2019) it turned out that there were still many students in the moderate mastery category (score range 4.50 - 5.49) and less (score range 4.50 - 5.49).

Internationally, the Indonesian students' English skill is still categorized low. Based on the result of English Proficiency Index (EPI) conducted by international education company, (Yasmine, 2016) reported that Indonesia is ranked 32nd out of 72 countries in 2016 with a score of 52.91, the study put Indonesia below Vietnam, which ranked 31st and fell under the Moderate Proficiency Band category. Surprisingly, Indonesia fell seven spots from 32 to 39th out of 80 countries in 2017 (Valentina, 2017). In the following year, Indonesia's EPI still experienced a decline where in 2018 it was ranked 51 and in 2019 it decreased again to rank 61. The average score in Asian countries is 53.60. According to the report, the score of 52.15 is categorized low proficiency. This indicates that it is necessary to improve the quality of learning and teaching English in order to produce human resources with better English skills.

The low level of students' English skills is certainly influenced by various factors. These factors arise both internally and externally. Internally, the factors of study habits, motivation, anxiety and self-efficacy greatly influence the success of students in mastering English (Badia et al., 2016; Balta, 2018; Fareed et al., 2016; Mahmoudi & Mahmoudi, 2015; Mitsalina, 2015;

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Riswanto & Aryani, 2017; Torres & Turner, 2016). Externally, factors such as curriculum, teaching strategies by teachers and support from parents really support students in achieving adequate English competency (O. Akbari & Razavi, 2016; Pei-Shi, 2012; Ratminingsih et al., 2018).

It is widely accepted that mastering a foreign language is a difficult task. Indonesian students do not use English as their daily communication so they have limited time to practice English (Getie, 2020; Souriyavongsa et al., 2013). Besides that, there are four skills should be mastered namely speaking, writing, reading and listening. Among the four skills, writing requires a special intention since it is a productive skill (Golkova & Hubackova, 2015; Hasibuan, 2013). There are two reasons why writing skill is very important (Langan, 2001). The reasons are that, first, writing ability is a basic need for English learners to support their academic success. English learners are often asked to do written assignment and their English competence can also be seen from their writing performance. Second, English writing skill is a practical need to support their future carrier. Since writing is taught from earlier stage of learning in Indonesia, teachers need to implement effective teaching strategies in order to make the students able to convey their ideas and concept through writing.

In addition to complexity, writing is a very active process that allows writers to write based on words and ideas in making meaning over ideas and topics developed (Anwar & Ahmed, 2016). Furthermore, writing is the process of thinking to invent ideas, thinking about how to express an idea into a good writing, and arranging the ideas into statement and paragraph clearly (Nunan, 2003). It indicates that the learners are expected to explore the ideas and make them into good paragraph. Besides, writing is both a physical and a mental act. It is the physical act of committing words or ideas to some medium, whether it is an object or a symbol or an email message. Evidently many studies have found that students encounter many difficulties in the process of making a writing (Fareed et al., 2016; Okumuş, 2019; Siddiqui, 2020). The difficulty is found in the lack of students' ability to develop ideas, grammar and the ability to compose coherence sentences. (Ariyanti, 2016; Rahmatunisa, 2014; Tanyer, 2015; Toba et al., 2019). In general, writing problems include linguistic, psychological, cognitive and pedagogical (Fareed et al., 2016; Haider, 2012). The difficulties cause students to be unable to express their ideas or thoughts in English (Ratminingsih et al., 2018; Torres & Turner, 2016). Furthermore, the low ability to write also characterizes the lack of critical thinking skills and literacy skills (Mostafa & Crossley, 2020; Sheldon, 2011)

In addition, the teacher is also a factor that determines the success of learning to write. Many teachers still use traditional approaches such as translation and drilling which have been studied as ineffective in the 21st century learning era (Boholano, 2017; Zafari, 2019). Many of the strategies used in teaching writing focus solely on language aspects such as grammar and vocabulary (Cheung, 2018; Dirgeyasa, 2016). In fact, a writing consists of many components. Teachers are expected to implement strategies that place students as the focus of learning so that students become independent and have responsibility for the learning process (Handayani, 2017; Santosa, 2017). The strategies should be also helping the students to develop their critical thinking and problem solving skill (Changwong et al., 2018; Matthee & Turpin, 2019).

Teachers should see writing as a process. In the writing process, students go through several stages (Bayat, 2014; Carolan & Kyppö, 2015; Faraj, 2015; H. Wang, 2018). Commonly those stages are prewriting, drafting, editing, revising, and publishing (Bayat, 2014). In prewriting stage, ideas are collected, and the topic and target reader are determined (Mogahed, 2015). During the drafting stage, specified ideas are put on paper. Ideas and the organization are addressed again in the revision stage (P. Wang, 2015). In the editing stage, mistakes in logical coherence among sentences and paragraphs are corrected. Finally, in the publishing stage, the produced text is shared with others. The process approach emphasizes the writing stage rather than the final result. In this way, students have the opportunity to improve the quality of their writing by looking at the edits and revisions given by either the teacher or their peers (Cheung, 2018; Ningsih, 2016; Panavelil, 2015). Therefore, teachers need to emphasize appropriate writing teaching strategies by focusing on the process.

One strategy that can be used by teachers is mindful learning. The concept of mindfulness is rooted in Buddhist philosophy but now has grown both practically and theoretically in the realm of modern Psychology (Tuyen, 2015). Mindfulness is the consciousness arising from giving attention to a present experience intentionally and without judgment to be able to respond with acceptance (Kabat-zinn, 2003; Kolb, 2009). The word mindfulness itself can be defined as psychological constructs, psychological processes (being mindful), forms of psychotherapy, or forms of exercise that can shape the condition of mindfulness (Pagnini & Phillips, 2015; Siegel et al., 2009). Mindfulness deals with the ability of human being to be aware and inquire (Y. Wang & Liu, 2016).

Mindfulness has been adopted as a learning model. The mindfulness learning model, emphasizes students to have capacity to: (a) observing: the ability to observe and to be aware of thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and sensations; (b) describing: the ability to describe in words; (c) acting with awareness: (d) non-reactivity: non-reactive attitude towards personal experience, and (e) non-judge: attitude without assessment of personal experience (Baer et al., 2006). Those characteristics can encourage the students to build their critical thinking, reflect on their learning, and make use of their learning (Teper et al., 2013; Teper & Inzlicht, 2013; Y. Wang & Liu, 2016). Besides, the use of mindful learning helps the students to concentrate and feel motivated during the teaching and learning process (Tuyan & Kabadayi, 2018).

In the context of teaching English, mindful learning is seen very effective in enhancing students' language skill and furthermore on critical thinking, collaboration, communication and creativity (Davenport & Pagnini, 2016; Piscayanti, 2018; Rahman, 2017; Y. Wang & Liu, 2016). Considering Mindful Learning can offer greater benefits upon students' learning achievement and analyzing the characteristic of Mindful Learning itself, it is appropriate to be implemented in teaching writing. Implementing mindful learning in teaching writing is seen very effective because, the learning process is predicted to be more active because it is based on the characteristic of Mindful Learning. It also helps the students to be able increase their participation and motivation during the teaching and learning process (Piscayanti, 2018).

Looking at the benefits that mindful offers to the teaching and learning process, the current study is interested in investigating whether or not the implementation of Mindful Learning gives a significant effect on students' writing competency.

2. Method

The current study is an experiment study with posttest only control group design. This study involved an experiment and control group (Cresswell, 2012). The experiment group is taught using mindful learning while the control group is taught with conventional teaching. This study was done at SMA Negeri 1 Kediri which located at Jalan Bingin Ambe, Banjar Anyar, Kediri, Banjar Anyar, Kec. Tabanan, Kabupaten Tabanan, Bali 82123, started from January 20th –April 20th 2019. In this design, there are two groups that are chosen randomly. The experimental group is taught using Mindful Learning, while the control group is taught using conventional teaching strategy. At the end of the treatment, both group are given post-test to identify the difference in the writing competency. The result of the treatment is (Q1: Q2). This study involved 71 students (30 Male, 41 female).

In assessing students' writing competency, a rubric for assessing writing was used. The rubric consists of five dimensions of writing namely: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics (Brown, 2004). Each dimension consisted of several indicators and had different weight in scoring. A validity and reliability test were conducted as well to make sure the appropriateness of instrument used in this study. The result of validity from expert judgment show .82 while the result of reliability test show .90. According to Pallant (2016), a valid and reliable instrument can be achieved if the value exceeds .80. Therefore, the instruments used in this study are valid and reliable.

A descriptive and inferential analysis was conducted in order to analyze the data. A descriptive analysis covers identifying mean score and standard deviation score (Loeb et al., 2017). In inferential analysis, it involves normality, homogeneity, t test. An effect size test was also included to identify the category of effect from the treatment (Fritz et al., 2012).

3. Results and Discussion

The result of data descriptive analysis can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The Result of Descriptive Analysis

Group	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Experiment	82.25	5.761
Control	78.67	4.708

From the result of descriptive analysis, it can be seen that the mean score of experiment group (82.25) with 5.761 standard deviation is higher than mean score of control group (78.67) with 4.708 standard deviation. The mean difference between experiment and control group is 3.38. To test if the mean difference is significant, a mean comparison test is conducted. The first test conducted was to identify the normality of data. The normality and homogeneity of data is presented in Table 2

Table 2. Normality of Data

Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	Homogeneity
Experiment	.200	.283
Control	.200	

Based on the table 2 above, by using Kolmogorov-Smirnov, it can be known that the significance value of the experimental class was 0.200 and the significance value of the control group was 0.200. These significance value exceeded 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). It means that both classes were normally distributed. It also can be seen that, the significance value (sig.) in homogeneity test based on mean is .283. It can be assumed that the significance value of both experimental and control group exceeded 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). It means that both groups were homogeneous. Since the data are normal and homogeneous, the t test to identify the significant of mean difference can be run. The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The result of t test

Group	Analysis			t Test (Sig. 2 tailed)
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Difference	
Experiment	82.25	5.761	3.58	.005
Control	78.67	4.708		

From the result of data analysis, it can be seen that the result of t test shows that there is a significant mean difference between groups (Sig.2 tailed $< .05$). A further effect size test shows the mean difference between groups is medium ($d = < 0.8$). The finding showed descriptively that the students who were taught by using Mindful Learning achieved better writing comprehension. It was proven by the result of the post-test that was administrated for both groups. The mean score of the students who were taught by using Mindful Learning (experimental group) was 82.25, while the mean score of the students who were taught by using conventional writing strategy (control group) was 78.67. In other words, after being analyzed, the students in the experimental group achieved better results than the students in the control group. It showed that Mindful Learning gave a significant effect on students' writing competency. However, the result of effect size test shows a medium significant difference, indicates that besides mindful learning as the strategy of teaching writing, there is another factor that contributing to students' writing competency.

In detail, the experimental group's ability to write English in terms of language components, namely grammar, vocabulary, and other assessed aspects such as content

organization and mechanics was better than the control group. According to [Myhill Watson \(2014\)](#), grammar is an important aspect in a language production that includes writing and speaking. The correct grammar will lead the reader to capture the message the writer wants to convey ([Z. Akbari, 2014](#); [Mart, 2013](#); [Olinghouse & Wilson, 2013](#); [Qosayere, 2015](#)). Students in the experimental group seem to use varied vocabulary. This indicates that they have a rich vocabulary. Students with rich vocabulary will be able to use the right words to represent the meaning or message to be conveyed to readers ([Lane & Allen, 2010](#); [Solati-dehkordi & Salehi, 2016](#); [Viera, 2018](#)). Students in experimental group showed a better content organization. In writing, a good content organization will make a good flow writing so that readers will more easily grasp the message ([Ruegg & Sugiyama, 2013](#); [Tosuncuoğlu, 2018](#)).

The findings supported the research conducted by [Wang and Liu \(2016\)](#) who found that activity helped those students focus on their work and reflect on their reading and writing experience. It is also supported by [Ager, Bucu, Albrecht, and Cohen, \(2014\)](#) who found that mindful learning can benefit the whole person, including the mind, body, and emotions. It can positively affect the well-being of both teaching staffs and students in school because it has been shown to reduce stress, support the development of core character traits such as empathy and awareness of self and others, and improve the happiness and well-being of teaching staffs and students. Besides, it also helps to focus the attention of both the mind and body, and assist with conflict resolution.

Judging from the results obtained in the control group, their writing competency is far from being compared to the experimental group. Teaching and learning process in the control group uses conventional methods such as lecturing which is proven to be less effective in improving students' writing skills. These results were also obtained from research conducted by [\(Al-sohbani, 2016\)](#) who found that conventional learning strategies had no significant effect on students' English skills. Learning English requires an active approach so that students are involved in the learning process ([Demirci, 2017](#); [Demirci & Yavaslar, 2018](#); [Rahayu, 2018](#)). Active learning will give students the opportunity to use English so that they will acquire language knowledge automatically.

Theoretically, Mindful Learning is a conventional approach with a student centered approach that accommodates openness to new information and learning awareness, so that students' creativity and mindset are more developed ([Noone et al., 2016](#); [Rahman, 2017](#); [Y. Wang & Liu, 2016](#)). Mindful Learning is learning where students find and build their own new knowledge and skills to understand, where the subject matter is delivered with students' own experiences, creating group learning makes students able to discuss, work together, and help each other with other friends so learning will be more fun and enjoyable. ([Davenport & Pagnini, 2016](#); [Noone et al., 2016](#)). The implementation of mindful learning in this study helped the students to pay their attention towards the learning process. Mindful Learning in this study gave benefit as a deterrent to the decline in the ability to concentrate student learning even in ineffective conditions. Previous studies had identified that using mindful learning in the classroom helps the students to train the ability to concentrate, the ability to calm down, increase self-esteem, self-confidence, and motivation ([Ghanizadeh et al., 2019](#); [Morgan, 2019](#)). The activity in mindful learning creates a focus learning process, encourage and motivate the students in learning, and trains students' social-emotional awareness ([Davenport & Pagnini, 2016](#); [Y. Wang & Liu, 2016](#)). Learning to focus can help increase their attention and develop greater patience and endurance for each activity. The students will also be free from automatic pilot conditions.

The implementation of Mindful Learning in this study led the students to see a situation from more than one perspective. Mindful Learning allowed students to be actively involved in the learning process by searching for and finding their own written review concepts based on students' own opinions. It allowed students to use their thinking skills to obtained material from various sources such as books, their own experiences, and material from the teacher. It involved the students in digging up the subject matter information. Implementing Mindful Learning required students to move using their minds. Students tried to get as much information about the subject matter as possible and then share it in the discussion before pouring it into the writing text. In addition, Mindful Learning was able to attract students'

attention in learning, able to arouse students' emotions and passion in expressing opinions, and able to stimulate students' critical thinking. This happened because in the learning process the students found out their own ideas from many sources and perspective, so that it was able to create a new atmosphere and enjoy learning. In line with that, [Y. Wang and Liu \(2016\)](#) found that mindful helps students to generate new thoughts and become aware of their thinking; mindfulness facilitates their learning process, cultivates creativity and intelligence; mindful cooperative learning provides students with an opportunity to discover their awareness, learn from others, reflect and think critically.

During the implementation of mindful learning, students were involved in discussion activities. They tried to get as much information about the subject matter as possible and then share it in the discussion before pouring it into the writing text. It was identified that the students were able to express their opinions and give comments and suggestions for other. These activities engages students' critical thinking skill, problem solving skill and creates an active and reflective learning atmosphere, which are very essential in teaching and learning process ([Noone et al., 2016](#); [Oakley, 2018](#); [Wen et al., 2013](#)). The implementation of mindful learning in the classroom in addition to improving student competency and learning outcomes is also useful for enhancing 21st century skills ([Davenport & Pagnini, 2016](#); [Teper et al., 2013](#); [Teper & Inzlicht, 2013](#)). It can be said that mindful learning applications in the learning process make students active. According to the results of research conducted by ([Lin, 2020](#)), mindful learning provides engagement to the students learning process. This engagement is important to make students motivated and eager to learn ([Marius et al., 2018](#)). The use of mindful learning in this study greatly affects students' awareness of their writing process ([Kong et al., 2014](#)). In this way, students know their mistakes and shortcomings during writing process. This can also be said to be a student's self-evaluation of their writing ability. Self-evaluation in a writing process is very important in order to improve the quality of student writing ([Bing, 2016](#); [Ratminingsih et al., 2018](#)).

Opinions that were expressed in the learning could make it easier for students to write review paragraph. Then students arranged several questions for the answers they want to know, so from these questions the writing goal was formed. After completion, students were required to answer the question that was previously formulated by the teacher through writing activity. Before arranging the answers into a summary to make a text, the students were asked to share their answer in a group. They share their own perspective to others.

In the mindful discussion, the students' thinking and understanding went deeper and they expressed their thoughts in a more accurate way that they agreed upon. With this, students felt facilitated and motivated in the learning process so that the ability of students to write paragraphs of the review increases. Carrying out the discussion before writing the review text will make it easier for students to compile the review paragraph itself. Besides, in Mindful Learning, the students also were allowed to think freely but remain in the guidance. There was no right or wrong answer of their thought because the opinions of students in Mindful Learning were not absolute because they were all based on thought.

The learning process and teaching of writing today must focus on students. Conventional strategies that are currently used are often not suitable for 21st century learning ([Boholano, 2017](#); [Handayani, 2017](#); [Sudirman, 2019](#)). The reason teachers continue to use conventional teaching methods such as lectures and drills is because these methods are easy to apply in the classroom ([Mokhtar, 2016](#)). The English teacher mainly needs to take an authentic approach and strategy so that students get the opportunity and experience that suits real conditions.

4. Conclusion and suggestions

There is a significant difference in writing competency between the students who are taught by using Mindful Learning and the students who were taught by using conventional writing strategy. The finding showed descriptively that the students who were taught by using Mindful Learning achieved better writing comprehension.

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