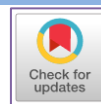


The students' writing activities at Yogyakarta private elementary schools



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Abstract: Previous research studies have demonstrated that writing is a hard skill, particularly in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesia, yet essential English language skills that students need to master. In this context, writing activities are expected to be adapted to the characteristics and needs of the students to effectively support the development of this skill. Therefore, the aim of this study is to describe the variety of writing activities for private elementary school students in Yogyakarta. This research is a case study conducted at two private elementary schools in Yogyakarta, both of which share a similar background in achieving numerous accomplishments in the field of English language learning. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and document analysis. Observations were conducted in grades I-IV at both schools. Interviews were conducted with the principal, five English teachers, and eight students. The researcher also analyzed documents including lesson plans, teacher guides, and student textbooks. The results of the study showed that The English teachers of ES A and B provided three forms of assistance to develop children's writing skills namely controlled, guided, and free writing activities. The controlled writing activities are carried out by implementing some techniques, i.e. copying, matching, and dictation. Guided writing activities were conducted using exercise of filling incomplete blank, dictation, and media such as invitations and postcards. Free writing activities were carried out through five distinct stages of writing, including finding a topic, holding a brainstorming session, organizing ideas into text, receiving feedback, and revising a draft. Although this study has described the variety of creative writing activities, it has not measured the extent to which these activities improve writing skills. Therefore, future researchers may explore studies that measure the impact of these activities, as well as the development of media and teaching materials, to support the enhancement of students' writing skills.

Keywords: Writing Activities; English as a Foreign Language (EFL); Elementary Education; Creative Writing Pedagogy; Private Schools in Yogyakarta

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INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, the English language is an international language. It caused parents to urge their children to learn the language early on. One of the considerations is the implementation of learning English from an early age in the hope that it will be easier for children to master it (Pinter, 2020). Due to that expectation, the students are encouraged to master all English language skills, including writing. Writing skill enables students to express ideas, thoughts, feelings and experiences. Those ones are expected to be media in supporting the intellectual, emotional, and social development of learners.

On the other side, the development of writing skills is not as easy as it was imagined. Mastering writing skills, particularly in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Indonesia, presents several challenges as highlighted by previous studies. The first challenge relates to the limited availability of human resources and infrastructure. Research conducted in ten elementary schools revealed that there is still a shortage of supporting facilities for English language learning, as well as a lack of training for elementary school English teachers (Mutiah et al., 2010).

Similarly, Pramesty et al. (2022) confirmed these challenges, which include: (1) English being classified as a local content subject, resulting in less attention being given to it; (2) the majority of teachers not having an educational background in English language teaching; (3) the curriculum being less compatible with the teaching conditions; and (4) the socioeconomic status of students, particularly those not from upper-class backgrounds, which hinders both their motivation and ability to learn English. Challenges related to human resources were also revealed in a study by Diyanti, Nurhayati, and Supriyanti (2020), which showed that although the majority of teachers have qualifications to teach English, only a few have participated in pre-service or in-service training specifically designed for teaching young learners.

Consistent with previous findings, Laila et al., (2023) added that teacher-related barriers include classroom management and the difficulty of creating a conducive English learning environment. To address these challenges, teachers employed strategies such as providing individual instruction, using translation, repetition techniques, and integrating games into the learning process.

Another challenge in elementary English education involves government policy. Many teachers feel uncertain about their career prospects, as there is no official government policy regarding English for elementary schools (Diyanti, Nurhayati, & Supriyanti, 2020). This concern may undermine teachers' motivation to improve the quality of education. Research by Cathrin et al. (2023) showed that many parents enroll their children in online tutoring services at the elementary level. Students reported feeling bored and viewed traditional elementary school teaching as ineffective.

The third challenge pertains to students' linguistic and non-linguistic barriers. Research by Franscy and Ramli (2024) indicates that linguistic barriers are more prominent compared to non-linguistic ones. The linguistic barriers include: (1) comprehension, (2) pronunciation, (3) vocabulary, (4) grammar, and (5) fluency. On the other hand, non-linguistic barriers involve: (1) nervousness, (2) low motivation, (3) fear of making mistakes, and (4) lack of participation. Robah and Anggrisia (2023) further identified linguistic barriers, such as confusion in using verbs, a lack of understanding of grammar, and difficulties in selecting appropriate vocabulary. Psychological barriers include nervousness, low self-confidence, fear of making mistakes, and fear of being ridiculed.

The other previous studies also showing many factors affecting elementary school students' difficulties in writing. From the results of their research, Sarwat et al (2021) discover that the main problems of students' English writing are due to poor command over English grammar and insufficient vocabulary. Lack of creative ideas, writing anxiety, and dependence on L1 are also the major cause of learners' poor writing in English. A study conducted by Inayah, Kuntarto (2024) reveals that factors influencing students' initial writing difficulties are students' lack of interest and motivation in learning, lack of focus in learning, lack of mentoring and support. A study by Nisak et al (2023) show that factors influence students writing errors, namely, the level of student preference for English subjects and difficulties experienced during the writing process.

The next challenge related to the curriculum has been highlighted in several studies. In implementing the *Merdeka* curriculum, teachers feel that the time allocated for elementary-level English instruction is insufficient, with lessons being conducted only once a week for two class hours (Noviyana, 2023). The marginal position of English in the national curriculum also hinders teachers from having a clear framework for teaching. Teachers feel that their teaching abilities are lack, which leads to a reliance on textbooks. Textbooks are viewed as a substitute for the curriculum, as they contain information on themes, teaching objectives, materials, and exercises (Hawanti, 2014).

Research by Primary et al. (2023) also indicates that the uncertainty of the curriculum poses difficulties for teachers in lesson planning, material development, teaching methods, and assessment practices. Teachers see the need for program evaluation as part of the curriculum development process to enhance curriculum reform. They hope for a contextual, character-based, and school-based curriculum.

Based on the review of previous research studies, it is concluded that some teachers only focus on writing product and neglect the creative process of writing, so the optimal development of students' writing skill is not achieved yet. Actually, the teaching of free and creative writing in elementary schools has been examined in numerous studies. The application of diverse approaches and methods can support the development of writing skills. Research by Arief and Wiratman (2023) shows that image-based mind mapping can improve elementary students' ability to write descriptive paragraphs. Image-based mind mapping enables students to write more clearly and in a more structured manner. The effectiveness of mind mapping in enhancing elementary students' writing skills was also demonstrated in the research by Rosnaningsih and Putra (2019). In addition to mind mapping, the process approach (Mariana et al., 2018) and the What's Missing method (Retno et al., 2019) have also been proven to improve students' writing skills.

Writing instruction can also be supported by the use of technology. Several studies have shown that the utilization of technology, such as audiovisual media (Halimatussakdiah et al., 2021), digital technology (Suryani et al., 2024), Wappad (Zubaidi et al., 2023), multimedia (Rispatiningsih, 2022), and mobile learning applications (Linuwih, 2020), can enhance students' writing abilities. The implication of these five studies is the urgency of technology-based writing instruction in elementary schools.

In addition to the use of technology, the integration of cultural elements in writing instruction has been shown to offer several benefits for students. Several studies have noted that local culture should be incorporated into writing instruction not only to improve students' writing abilities (Garim et al., 2023) but also to enhance cultural awareness (Sofyan et al., 2017), cross-cultural knowledge (Hafidz & Aditya, 2019), and character education (Theresia, 2015).

In the context of EFL, several studies have explored current pedagogies in writing instruction. Research on creative writing conducted by Tarnopolsky (2005) presents several recommendations for teachers, including: (a) implementing a combination of process and genre approaches; (b) emphasizing the development of students' descriptive, narrative, and discursive skills in creative writing; (c) fostering the ability to provide commentary and critique; (d) encouraging peer review, feedback, and evaluation of students' writing; and (e) allowing students freedom in free writing. In contrast, research by Abdulqader et al. (2023) on the application of literary devices suggests that their varied use for different purposes can support students' skills in writing short stories and allegories. Herawati et al. (2022) also recommend that teachers utilize media and implement creative methods to prevent writing activities from becoming monotonous

and to enhance students' abilities.

Another study in the EFL context, conducted by Mardiningrum (2024), found that while students recognize the importance of creative writing for self-expression and imagination, they also face numerous challenges. The implications of these findings suggest that teachers should carefully consider and plan the integration of language in creative writing classes or activities.

Previous research has shown that writing is a challenging skill to master, particularly in the context of English as a foreign language in Indonesia. At the elementary school level, the implementation of creative writing pedagogy is essential to ensure that writing activities are engaging and not monotonous for children. Sriklaub and Wongwanich (2014) suggest that the learning activities should be innovative, interesting and attractive to students. The teachers should provide students opportunities to express their opinions and offer a wide range of activities to help generate more interest in learning among them.

Based on the background outlined above, the objective of this research is to describe the varieties of students writing activities at Yogyakarta private elementary schools that have outstanding English achievement. Mathew and Pani (2009) explained that the education patterns at private schools are viewed as having a positive side, that is, providing quality learning, although they are different from public education offered at public schools, private schools. It is expected to reveal their learning activities to improve writing ability of EFL students who often face numerous challenges in this area.

METHOD

This research focused on case study. This research is conducted at two private elementary schools at Yogyakarta. The selection of the research site was done using purposive sampling based on predetermined criteria (Stake, 2005). The criteria included: being a private school, offering intensive English language instruction starting from the first grade, having numerous achievements in English-related fields, and having the majority of students able to actively speak English. This is evidenced by numerous awards, particularly in speech contests, storytelling competitions, national Olympiads, and spelling bees. Initial observations indicated that students were able to communicate in English with their peers, teachers, and staff. Based on the said criteria, the researcher chose 2 schools, namely, Elementary School (ES) A and B. According to Timmons and Cairns (2010), in a case study, researcher must maintain its secrecy. Therefore, on the list of participants, the researcher used pseudonyms.

In this research, data can be obtained through interview, observation, and document analysis. The researcher conducted interviews with headmasters, English teachers, and eight students. The observations were performed four times on each elementary school by sitting at the back of the classroom, recording the teaching-learning process and making special notes. The documents needed to support data sufficiency include syllabus; lesson plans; teaching materials, test materials; and students' workbooks.

The validation of the instruments was conducted by two lecturers with backgrounds in English education and educational research and evaluation. A summary of the changes to the instruments before and after validation includes: (1) teacher interviews: changing the word "teacher" to "you"; (2) interviews with teachers and the principal: reorganizing the sequence of questions according to the order of events and the difficulty level of responses; (3) student interviews: (a) modifying the question "What facilities does the teacher provide to support your writing skills?" to "What tools does the teacher

use when teaching writing?"; (b) changing the question "What stage of writing do you find difficult?" to "What difficulties do you experience when writing?" and "What does the teacher do to help you when you face difficulties?"; (c) advising against asking "What is your opinion on the teacher's ability to teach writing?"; (d) rearranging the questions from simple to complex responses.

The data analysis technique to be used in this research referred to Miles et al. (2014) which stated that activities in qualitative data analysis are conducted interactively and continuous until completion. The activities in data analysis are data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The English teachers of ES A and B provided three forms of assistance to develop students' writing skills namely controlled, guided, and free writing activities (Scott & Ytreberg, 2004). The collected data based on observation, interview and document analysis at ES A and B are shown in the Table 1.

Table 1. The Students' Writing Activities at Yogyakarta Private Elementary Schools

No.	Types of Writing Activities	Techniques
1.	Controlled Writing Activities	Copying Matching Dictation
2.	Guided Writing Activities	Filling in the Blank Dictation Using Invitations Postcards
3.	Free Writing Activities	Finding a Topic Holding a Brainstorming Session Organizing Ideas into Text Receiving Feedback Revising a Draft

Controlled Writing Activities

The first type of writing activity is controlled writing. Based on the data collected, there are three techniques commonly used in this activity: copying, matching, and dictation.

Copying

First, copying is frequently implemented in writing activities, particularly in the lower grades, such as Grades 1 and 2 in both ES A and ES B. Interviews with teachers revealed that the primary goal of writing in Grade 1 is for students to imitate both words and short sentences. Teachers also noted that the words or sentences being copied do not originate from the student's own ideas.

"The strategy for lower grades, especially Grade 1, involves more imitation and copying. They are not yet writing from their own ideas. What they copy could be words or sentences, but they are still short and simple. The important thing is that students understand how to read and write correctly (Int_A_1)."

"In Grade 1, there is a lot of copying, so it is identical. By Grade 3, students are starting to write independently, although they are still finishing incomplete paragraph (Int_B_1)."

Teachers usually select words or sentences for students to copy from storybooks they have read, as evidenced by the following observation and interview results.

“The teacher asks students to take the story books used and choose 5 sentences from the book to be copied. The teacher goes around seeing the student's work while checking the spelling (Obs_B_1).”

“The teacher writes some names of the animals found in the book. She reads in front of the students. The teacher and students read the names of the animals 3 times. Students are asked to write the names of the animals under the pictures on the worksheet given by the teacher (Obs_A_1).”

“Yes, one of the goals of using those books is for students to imitate the writing style from the books they read (Int_B_1).”

According to the data, writing activities are aimed at providing students with language models they can imitate. Teachers also want students to understand the spelling of the words they write, so they check students' work as they circulate around the classroom. In addition to spelling, writing activities are also used by teachers as a way to practice pronunciation. Before writing, the teacher will lead the class in reading the words several times. As the students write, the teacher observes their work while pointing to the words they are writing to check their pronunciation.

“The teacher distributes paper that should be colored by the students. The teacher guides them to describe the picture. The teacher paraphrases the students' answers. The teacher writes the sentence on the blackboard. The teacher and the students read the sentence. The students copy sentences. The teacher goes around hearing them read while pointing at the word they are reading (Obs_B_2).”

“The teacher writes three sentences about objects in class on the board. Students read the sentence under the guidance of the teacher. Students are then asked to copy the sentences they have written and read (Obs_A_2).”

In addition to using books, teachers often draw examples of words or sentences from pictures or objects around the classroom. Observations of a Grade 2 writing activity showed that the teacher guided students in expressing ideas for their writing. Before writing, the teacher also provided examples of how to pronounce the words.

Matching

The second technique in controlled writing activities is matching. Based on observations, the medium used by the teacher for this activity is images. In other words, the teacher asks students to match the images with sentences that illustrate the expressions or activities depicted in them.

Direction: Put the following expression into the pictures!

Please hurry!

Take your time

Come in

Follow me, please

Wait here, please

Watch out

Look out

Be careful

Take care (Obs_B_3)

The point is to copy the correct answer and practice spelling (Int_B_3)

Observations in Grade 3 at ES B showed that students were asked to match various expressions with the provided images. Through this technique, the students' ideas were not yet reflected in their writing. The goal, similar to the copying technique, is to imitate a writing model in order to become more familiar with spelling.

Look at the picture then choose the best answer to complete the sentences below!

... the window

... the door

... the book

... the answers

...the room

Choices: read, open, clean, write, close (Obs_A_2)

To complete the sentence, students choose the correct answer based on the activity in the picture. Once finished, we discuss it together (Int_A_2).

Observations in Grade 2 at ES A revealed that the teacher distributed worksheets containing images with incomplete sentences beneath them, along with multiple-choice answers. Students were instructed to select the appropriate answers based on the images. After completing the task, the teacher and students discussed the answers together.

Dictation

In controlled writing activities, another technique employed is dictation. Based on observations at ES A, teachers in Grades 2 and 3 asked students to write down both words and sentences they heard.

“The students write what I dictate. Initially, it was nouns, but now we’re working on using adjectives in sentences, so they write sentences (Int_A_3).”

“I dictate five simple sentences. These are based on activities they’ve done in class or things they do in their daily lives at home (Int_A_2).”

“The teacher said that he would read a brief paragraph about someone's life. Besides listening, students also have to write it down. The teacher will read twice for each sentence. Students must make an appropriate title for the text they hear (Obs_A_3).”

The words or sentences dictated by the teacher have simple structures and are familiar to the students. This allows students to simultaneously develop their listening skills and vocabulary knowledge.

“I dictate numbers 1-10. They write what they hear. Once they finish spelling, I collect the worksheets so they don’t have a chance to change their answers. ‘Ok, number 1, what did you hear? Let’s spell it together.’ After everyone finishes, I write it on the board (Int_B_2).”

The dictation technique is also used by teachers at ES B to introduce spelling. The teacher dictates the spelling of several words, which is then discussed with the students. After the oral discussion, the teacher writes out all the spellings that were initially dictated.

Guided Writing Activities

The second type of writing activity is guided writing. In this activity, students do not fully imitate the writing model provided by the teacher, but they also do not entirely express their own ideas.

Filling in the Blank

Students receive significant guidance but are still given the opportunity to contribute their own ideas. This approach is evident from the following interview and observation results.

“Students complete the missing words, but in paragraph form, not just vocabulary. The goal is for students to understand how the word is used in a sentence, not just to memorize it. Each student’s answer might vary because they may use synonyms (Int_A_2).”

“Students are asked to complete their worksheet. The worksheet is a paragraph with 5 missing words (Obs_A_2).”

Students are asked to finish incomplete paragraphs with vocabulary words for which no answer choices are provided. They are given the freedom to choose words they believe fit the context of the paragraph. As a result, there is the potential for different responses from each student, which also helps to expand their vocabulary.

“By Grade 3, students are writing paragraphs, although not entirely from their own ideas. We prompt them with 2-3 words at the beginning of each sentence, and then they continue based on their personal experiences—since the topic was 'holiday,' it was quite personal (Int_B_3).”

Interviews with teachers at ES B indicate that guided writing activities involve students extending the words provided by the teacher to form new sentences. These sentences are then combined into a paragraph on a topic familiar to the students.

Dictation

In guided writing activities, the dictation technique is also found. However, the key difference lies in the opportunity for students to express their own ideas. This is reflected in the following observation.

“The teacher read a story of a family. Besides listening, students also have to write it down. The teacher asks the students to write the continuation of the story (Obs_A_3).”

In a Grade 3 writing activity, the dictation technique was used where the teacher read a story aloud, and the students were tasked with writing the continuation of the story. In other words, students did not merely replicate what they heard but were also given the chance to incorporate their own ideas into their writing.

Using Invitation

Based on observations, teachers used postcards and invitations as media in guided writing activities. This was explained by a teacher in the following interview

“For the worksheet, it can be varied. I once used a birthday invitation. Initially, on the PPT, there was an example of an invitation, and we discussed its content together. Afterward, the students filled out an incomplete worksheet for a different birthday invitation. They were free to fill it in with their own ideas, and later they could decorate and color it as well (Int_B_2).”

After discussing the content of a sample birthday invitation, the teacher provided a worksheet where students could fill in the missing parts according to their own ideas. This worksheet was given to Grade 2 students, who were also given the opportunity to

color and decorate the invitation. This approach aimed to make the writing activity more enjoyable.

“Students need to write a postcard:

They write (a) the greeting and the receiver’s name; (b) the body (how you felt and what you are doing next); (c) the closing phrase and your name; and (d) your friend’s name and address (Obs_B_3).”

The teacher assigned a writing task using postcards. Observations showed that the teacher provided postcards containing a few words as sentence starters in an incomplete paragraph. Students were asked to continue the sentences, creating coherent sentences and paragraphs. Additionally, the teacher had prepared a framework to guide students on which aspects to include in their postcards.

Free Writing Activities

Observations and interviews revealed the stages of free writing activities, including finding a topic, holding a brainstorming sessions, organizing ideas into text, receiving feedback, and revising drafts. This is demonstrated by the following data.

Finding a Topic

Topic formulation is an essential initial activity that teachers must conduct to provide students with a clear understanding of the scope of their writing. This step is necessary to ensure that students' writing remains focused and does not stray into irrelevant aspects. Based on observations, teachers at both ES A and ES B used visual media, such as images, to explore writing topics.

“In the pre-writing activity, the teacher shows a picture of a family and asks the students about the feelings of the people in the pictures. The teacher also asks about the activities carried out by the family. The teacher then asks them to write the answers and propose some topics (Obs_A_4).”

Teachers used images to engage students in question-and-answer sessions. Students were asked to write responses about the emotions and activities of the people depicted in the images, and then to formulate a relevant topic for their writing.

“The teacher tells the students that they will make a poster. The teacher provides a description according to the steps for making the poster. The teacher asks students to write the date, time, location, and other important information. The teacher tells that the information should be put at the bottom of the poster (Obs_B_3).”

At ES B, teachers also used posters as a visual medium to guide students in formulating topics. The teacher led students in observing the content of an example poster, and then asked them to create a new poster, specifying the purpose of the writing and identifying the intended audience for the poster.

Holding a Brainstorming Session

Brainstorming activities were conducted by teachers at both ES A and ES B. This activity is crucial for equipping students with the information necessary for developing their writing. The media used by the teachers included music and posters. The observational data is presented as follows.

“The teacher turns on music and asks students to pretend to be at a party. The teacher asks students to talk in pairs while dancing. The topic is about vacation. After talking, students are asked to write their answers (Obs_A_4).”

“Before asking students to write festival posters, the teacher helps students brainstorm to find ideas. The teacher asks questions about the circus and writes answers on the board. The teacher sets an example by asking students to imagine a circus. The teacher asks when and where students can watch circus, how many circus tickets are, and how the students feel when watching the circus. The teacher then drew a circus bear and gave an example of how to make a circus poster. Then the teacher displays an example of a circus poster on the PPT. Then, students are asked to make a circus poster according to their ideas (Obs_B_4).”

Teachers employed a question-and-answer technique during brainstorming sessions. At ES A, the teacher used music to create a comfortable environment for students to discuss holiday activities. At ES B, the teacher facilitated a question-and-answer session on the topic of circuses using posters as the media. Both teachers asked students to write down the information gathered from the brainstorming activities and then develop it according to their own ideas.

Organizing Ideas Into Text

In free writing activities, students are given the freedom to express their own ideas. Although the teacher provides examples beforehand, students are not strictly bound by these guidelines.

“Yes, so after I demonstrated creating a banana boat, it is now their turn to create their own version. I also provided an example of how to structure the text. I want to gauge their abilities and identify any common areas of error (Int_B_4).”

According to the interviews, teachers allow students considerable freedom in their writing. Free writing is used to assess students' understanding of previously explained concepts and their writing skills, including identifying common errors.

“Students are asked to write procedures for making favorite foods. Direction: the instruction must be specific and give the correct names of equipment required. Share your idea with your class! (Obs_A_4).”

Observations indicate that free writing is often associated with choosing personal topics, such as favorite foods. With personal topics, it is expected that students will face fewer difficulties with content since they have ample ideas to express.

Receiving Feedback

The following interview results illustrate a stage in free writing, specifically the feedback process. This is explained in an interview with a Grade 4 teacher.

“In Grade 4, I try peer review. After writing a paragraph, students exchange their work with a peer for review, checking for spelling or grammar errors. However, they still submit their work to me for further correction, although not in exhaustive detail. I do not insist on complete accuracy; instead, I focus on progress appropriate to their age (Int_A_4).”

The technique employed by the teacher is peer review. Students exchange their writing to check for spelling and grammar issues, and also receive corrections from the teacher. Although the work may not be perfect, the teacher values the progress students make.

Revising a Draft

In free writing activities, feedback received must be addressed in order to prepare the final draft. The following results are from interviews with teachers at ES A and B:

“This is the initial draft before peer review. This is after the corrections were made (Int_A_4).”

“Students learn a lot from the corrections provided. I find the benefits significant. Corrections are necessary (Int_B_3).”

Both teachers at ES A and ES B recognize the value of providing feedback on initial drafts. Following this, students are expected to revise their writing based on the feedback received.

Discussion

There are three types of writing activities for private elementary school students in Yogyakarta: controlled, guided, and free writing activities. Based on observations, interviews, and document analysis of English language instruction in grades I-IV at two private elementary schools (ES A and B), three types of controlled writing activities were identified: copying, matching, and dictation.

This finding is supported by some previous studies. Research studies conducted by Lumbangaol et al. (2022) and Sinambela et al. (2023) showed that the controlled writing technique can improve the student's ability in writing. A study held by Juriah (2015) claimed that controlled writing also improved the students' vocabulary mastery, spelling, and pronunciation.

The first controlled writing activity is copying. Copying is an important teaching strategy, forming a foundation for students to write more complex texts. It is also useful for instilling a concept or rule (Jones & Freeman, 2003). In this study, the benefits of the copying technique are evident in the writing activities used by the majority of grade I and II teachers to provide students with a language model. This finding is supported by Gunaningtyas (2016), who revealed that 92.6% of students found copying to be an effective technique for teaching spelling. The study further claimed a significant difference in student achievement between those taught using copying techniques and those taught without copying techniques.

Secondly, matching technique was also applied by lower-grade teachers. In addition to enhancing writing skills, this technique is intended to introduce new vocabulary and encourage students to better understand its spelling. Allen (2006) argues that matching can be a tool for practicing comprehension of words or concepts at the early stages. It can also help students identify relationships between words, definitions, images, synonyms, and antonyms. Previous studies have shown that using matching in writing activities can improve vocabulary mastery (Haronis et al. 2022; Matondang et al., 2018; Muslimin et al., 2017).

In addition to copying and matching, dictation was also employed by lower-grade teachers in writing activities. Dictation is understood as an activity where students listen to language input that must be memorized in a short period and write down what they hear (Nation & Macalister, 2020). This technique can be used when presenting new structures, introducing paragraph texts, improving vocabulary, providing reading and listening exercises, and offering grammar practice. Several previous studies have even claimed that this technique is effective for teaching writing skills (Nurdianingsih & Rahmawati, 2018; Mulyani et al., 2019; Silalahi & Pratiwi, 2021).

The second category of writing activities is guided writing activities. Guided writing activities are applied by giving example paragraphs to the students. They are asked to change some of the information which are not in line with their condition. Apart from that, sentence-combining can be applied to beginner-level students. They are given

example sentences which are combined into several new alternative sentences. The other form of writing activity is rhetorical pattern exercises. The teacher gives the students a certain theme which they can develop using different perspectives and relevant examples (Tangpermpoon, 2008).

This study identified three types of guided writing activities: fill-in-the-blank exercises, dictation, and the use of letters/cards/invitations. Fill-in-the-blank exercises were frequently employed by teachers in grades II and III. Research conducted by Folse (2006) and Hashemzadeh (2012) found that these exercises help train memory and foster creativity.

The second type of guided writing activity is dictation. Although also used in controlled activities, the purpose in this context differs. Students are not only required to write exactly what they hear but are also given the opportunity to express their own ideas in writing. Nation and Newton (2009) classify dictation into various forms, including running dictation, one chance dictation, dictation of long phrases, guided dictation, dictation for mixed classes, peer dictation, completion dictation, perfect dictation, sentence dictation, and unexploded dictation. The type used by the teachers in this study is sentence dictation.

The third guided writing activity involves using postcards and birthday invitations. Through these media, teachers can highlight the distinctive structures in such writings. The benefits of using invitations are reflected in a study by Nilawati et al. (2022), which showed that teaching letter writing using project-based learning and expository models positively impacted the improvement of letter-writing skills in grade V students. However, the expository model proved more effective than the project-based learning model in enhancing student outcomes in writing invitations.

The third category of writing activities is free writing. In this type of activity, teachers can introduce free or creative writing. In free writing, students are asked to write about a topic without constraints. Creative writing is associated with enjoyable activities where students engage with language playfully (Kern, 2000). This study found that teachers implemented five stages in this writing activity: topic selection, brainstorming sessions, idea organization, feedback reception, and manuscript revision. Isni (2018) argued that free writing is highly effective in improving writing skills and recommended that English teachers use this technique in writing instruction. Similarly, Göçen's (2019) research showed that creative writing activities positively affect creative writing achievement, writing attitudes, and motivation among elementary students in grades one through four.

CONCLUSION

Writing activities in private elementary schools in Yogyakarta are implemented in a variety of ways to optimize students' mastery of writing skills. These activities are categorized into three types: controlled, guided, and free writing. Controlled writing activities consist of copying, matching, and dictation. The aim of these activities is to provide students with language models that they can imitate. In addition, these activities are beneficial in expanding students' vocabulary and enhancing their understanding of spelling. Controlled writing activities are most commonly observed in lower grade classes, particularly in grades I and II.

The second type of writing activity is guided writing. Unlike controlled writing, guided writing allows students to express their own ideas in their writing, though the teacher still provides significant support. Teachers supply words or sentences that students must

complete based on their own ideas. Examples of guided writing activities include fill-in-the-blank exercises, dictation, and the use of letters, cards, or invitations. These activities are frequently used in grades II and III.

Free writing activities are also observed in grades III and IV. While students are given significant freedom to create their own written works, teachers play an important role in guiding students to find topics and develop ideas before they begin writing. Moreover, teachers provide feedback on students' initial drafts to help them revise and improve their final versions. The selection of writing topics is also carefully considered by the teachers, who often choose personal topics to motivate students and inspire them to write based on their own experiences.

Although this study aimed to describe various writing activities, the researcher identified additional findings related to the progression of implementation, the use of instructional media, and peer involvement in the writing process. Therefore, three recommendations are offered for teachers. First, teachers should establish a clear distinction between writing activities for lower and upper grades. The principle of "simple to complex" should be observed to ensure that lower-grade students are not burdened with activities intended for higher grades, and to prevent overlap in teaching materials. Second, teachers should utilize instructional media not only for lower grades but also for upper grades to stimulate writing ideas. Finally, writing, typically seen as an individual activity, should be developed into a more collaborative process. This can be achieved by incorporating peer review, allowing students to become more critical in developing their writing.

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