

Cinquain Poem: A Stimulating Instructional Media in Teaching Writing

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Abstract

Writing, a skill that involved multiple facets of a language, is commonly considered to be the hardest skill to master. Using appropriate instructional media in teaching writing may make an enormous contribution to the achievement of students. This study explored the impact of cinquain poems as an instructional media on the ability of students to compose paragraphs by implementing a quasi-experimental research method. Sixty first semester students from English Education Study Program, Bengkulu University, chosen using total population sampling, were evenly divided into experimental and control groups. To assess their writing skills, the students were given a writing test as pre-test at the first meeting and a post-test at the sixteenth meeting. Inter-raters were used to eliminate bias in rating the work of students. The results of the paired sample t-test showed that implementing cinquain poems significantly improves the ability of students to compose paragraphs. In addition, independent sample t-test analysis also showed that the abilities of the students in paragraph writing were significantly higher than those who were not taught using cinquain poems. These findings indicate that it is beneficial to teach writing through cinquain poems to help students develop and organize their ideas, improve their vocabulary, and build an engaging learning atmosphere.

Keywords: Cinquain poem, instructional media, writing skills

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Introduction

English is an international language since it has been largely spoken among foreign language speakers (Marzulina, Mukminin, Habibi, Asyraf, Makmur, & Marzulina, 2018). As one of the productive language skills, writing is not an easy skill for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to master because of its complexity. Richardson and Morgan (2009) state that within the communicative arts, writing can be the most complex communication medium. The thoughts, ideas, and experiences of writers are converted into written form in the writing process (Mora, 2009). Additionally, Clark (2007) proposed 5 components of writing: pre-writing, drafting, revising, publishing, and reflecting. The need to achieve linguistic aspects that deal with the need to choose sentence structures and how to link and sequence phrases is one of the difficulties faced by EFL learners when writing English text. In addition, another issue that has often arisen in writing class is

that most teachers prefer writing in a cognitive field rather than in the psychomotor field (Alwasilah & Alwasilah, 2005).

In particular, based on the interview results conducted by the writers to the second semester students of English Education study program in University of Bengkulu who took the Paragraph writing course, one of the difficulties of the students in writing an English text is that they do not know how to start writing or deciding the topic. As a result, it took the learners a long time to only think about how to arrange their text. Another problem is that the students often need time to choose words for their text. In addition, grammar and text structure are two factors that have affected the poor quality of students' writing. Those obstacles can then reduce the interest of students in writing and the encouragement of students in the classroom. In fact, the learning achievement of students may be influenced by their interest and motivation (Megawati, 2020; Saputra & Marzulina, 2016). Therefore, the quality of the students' writing still needs to be improved in terms of content, organization, and language used.

Using appropriate instructional media in writing class may be a solution for developing the writing skills of students, one of which is using Cinquain poems. Cinquain is a type of poem that can be used in writing class. Janeczko and Paul (2014) reported that Cinquain was developed by American poet Adelaide Crapsey around 100 years ago, and it is similar to Japanese poetic forms: Haiku and Tanka. Cinquain is a type of poetry consisting of five short, non-rhyming lines. Writing a rather short story consisting of three elements is another way to write a cinquain; they are beginning, middle, and an end. Stories often have at least one character, e.g., the story is about a human, animal, or object (Simons, 2014). Therefore, students will benefit not only from finding a way to draft their text as one of important component in writing (Clark, 2007), but also by enhancing their interest during the learning process through the implementation of the cinquain poem.

Moreover, in English Language Teaching (ELT), there are several studies related to the use of cinquain in teaching writing. Northern Territory of Australia (2006) and Kautzer (2012) found that cinquain is an excellent learning medium that involves EFL students in writing with a short and interesting mini-lesson. Additionally, Putra and Aryusmar (2012) discovered some advantages of cinquain as an educational medium: 1) students could enrich their vocabulary, 2) students become more conscious of the use of punctuations and words spelling on their writing, 3) students could connect their thoughts while writing poems, and 4) students enjoy writing Cinquain poetry by their own choices, once the students follow the phase of writing process, they will find the easier way of writing.

Based on the description above, the writers composed three research questions as the objectives of this study: 1) is there any significant improvement in the students' writing skill after they are taught using Cinquain poem?; 2) is there any significant improvement in the students' writing skill who are not taught using Cinquain poem?; 3) is there any significant difference between the writing skill of the students who are taught using Cinquain poem and those who are not?

Literature Review

Teaching writing

Teaching writing is complicated and teachers often face problems with teaching writing on what kind of materials are suitable for students. Teachers often have problems with the subject range for writing activities (Setyowati, Sukmawa, & Latief, 2018). In line with this, Lestary (2018)

states that teaching writing is more than just a traditional activity that a teacher gives a subject and the students write an essay on it. In this context, teachers should understand that writing requires practical exercises, guidance, and feedback as well. Therefore, in this study the writers use a stimulating instructional media in teaching writing which is cinquain poem.

There are some activities that teachers can do to guide the students in writing class as suggested by Finocciaro and Bonomo (1973) Copy read or spoken model sentences or dialogues; write orally practiced sentences; write multiple sentence patterns; change sentences into a simple dialog or short paragraph; write a dialog by using newly learned structures and vocabulary; address a series of specific questions from a reading passage; complete a series of sentences; write a review from a read passage; Write an outline of the material they have read; Write a letter; Write a short paragraph; Write an original ending to a story they have read; Write an ending to a story they have not read; Write a basic dialog using knowledge structures; Complete a dialog after the first few lines have been given; Prepare a dialog for a narrative paragraph; reconstruct a dialogue from one or two words given in each utterance. In this study, the writers use cinquain poem as the outline of the text that will be developed by the students.

The procedure of cinquain poem

A cinquain is a type of poetry which, because of its simplicity, is very popular. There are only five lines of Cinquains, with only a few words on each line, making it easy to write. There is only one word in the first and last lines, although there are more in the middle lines, so they end up with a diamond-like shape, similar to the poetic form called the diamante (Nesbit, 2008). It is not easy to write well, although the form appears simple. It does, however, require frameworks for an inexperienced writer. Furthermore, Cinquain's basic structure can help students understand descriptive terms that are necessary for them to convey their feelings in poetry (Norton, 1991). In Table 1, the structures of Cinquain poems can be seen.

Table 1. The structures of cinquain poems

Line	Content	Explanation	Example
1	One word	A noun which is the subject of the poem	Fadhli (name)
2	Two words	Two adjectives that describe the subject in line 1	Zealous, Sanguine
3	Three words	Three verbs that relate to the subject in line 1	Learning, Mastering, Teaching
4	Four words	a phrase that relates feelings about the subject in line 1	Life for your afterlife
5	One word	a synonym for the subject in line 1 or a word that sums it up	Servant

Teaching writing through cinquain poem

Using poems as one of the instructional media can give some benefits. Susikaran (2013) stated that poem is a piece of writing in which the words are selected and carefully arranged by the author for its beauty. In addition, poems sometimes use lines instead of phrases and each line does not have to be full thoughts; often a line has just one word and it is very important how words sound in

poetry. It is really fitting to teach writing by poetry as a warm-up before the students write their text. There are many educators who want to get their students to compose poetry because it helps them to express themselves in a way that other genres cannot include (Harmer, 2007). In addition, Harmer (2007) notes that writing practices are the justification for getting students to write in and out of class, allowing them more time to think than they get when they attempt casual conversation.

The idea of writing the text, particularly narrative, and descriptive text, can be created by teacher and students on cinquain. The first line becomes the title of the poem, and then it is possible to extend each word in the poem into sentence forms, and the last word is used to restate the title. Gonzales (2010) suggested that one of the most or very important rule is that students may not repeat any words in writing a cinquain poem. Language characteristics of the text are provided during a teaching process. Writing is a long process of encouraging creative writing for students; various titles of cinquain poems should be implemented by a teacher (Putria & Aryusmar, 2012).

Methods

Research design

A quasi experimental research method was applied in this study. According to Creswell (2005, p.283), “in an experiment, you test an idea (or practice or procedure) to determine whether it influences an outcome or dependent variable”. In this study, Cinquain poem is a teaching media which is applied to improve students’ writing skill. (see Table 2).

Table 2. *Research design*

Groups	Pretest	Treatment	Posttest
Experimental	O ₁	(X ₁)	O ₂
Control	O ₁	(X ₂)	O ₂

Where:

O₁ : Pretest

O₂ : Posttest

(X₁) : using Cinquain poem

(X₂) : without cinquain poem

Research site and participants

This study was conducted at University of Bengkulu. The research population was all 60 first semester students of the English education study program. Since there are less than 100 students in the population, total population sampling was used in this study. Then, the students were divided into experimental and control group equally.

Data collection and analysis

The writer used a writing test for the purpose of collecting the data. The students were asked to write a narrative text and descriptive text in not more than 90 minutes about some optional topics given. The test was used in the pre-test and post-test to assess the writing ability of the students. The holistic scale consisting of five elements (content, organization, vocabulary, language used, mechanics) (Brown & Douglas, 2007) was used as a rubric for the writing test; then inter-rater was used to prevent bias in scoring the students’ text.

To analyze the data, version 22 of the SPSS program was used. To analyze the significant difference between the pre-test and the post-test in each group, a paired sample t-test was used. Independent t-test has been used to assess the significant difference in writing abilities between the students who are taught using Cinquain poem and those who are not.

Findings

In order to answer the research questions, the study data was analyzed using some statistical analyses. However, before carrying the statistical analysis, the normality and homogeneity of the data were checked.

Normality and Homogeneity of the Data

In this study, Shapiro-Wilk test was used to analyze the normality of the data. Then, to analyze the homogeneity of the data, Levene's test was used. The results of normality and homogeneity of the data are presented in Table 3. In conclusion, As presented in Table 3, since all the p-values (Sig.) of the normality and homogeneity tests exceeded 0.05, the data are both normal and homogeneous.

Table 3. The result of normality and homogeneity analyses

Variable	Normality Shapiro-Wilk				Homogeneity	
	Experimental Group		Control Group		Levene Statistic	Sig.
	Statistic	Sig.	Statistic	Sig.		
Pre-test Experiment & Control group	.935	.135	.938	.250	.112	.760
Post-test Experiment & Control group	.925	.059	.970	.719	.451	.421
Pre-test post-test Experimental Group					.059	.467
Pre-test post-test Control Group					.053	.841

Paired sample t-test

In order to answer the first and second research question, the writers compared the results of the pre-test and post-test in each group by using paired sample t-test (see Table 4). When p (Sig.) is lower than 0.05, the scores were considered to have significant improvements within the group.

Table 4. The Result of paired sample t-test

Writing Skill	Group	Mean Pre	Mean Post	Mean Difference between Pre and Post	T value and Sig. between Pre and Post	
					t	Sig.
Score	Experimental	51.90	84.50	32.60	27.607	.000
	Control	50.50	68.20	17.70	9.357	.087

As shown in Table 4, the results of the paired sample t-test indicate that the implementation of the Cinquain poem (Sig.000) significantly improved the writing ability of the students in experiment group. Next, in control group, although the mean score of the post post-test is higher than the pre-test, statistically the writing ability of the students in control group was not significantly improved.

Independent Sample t-Test

Furthermore, the independent sample t-test was used to answer the third research question by comparing the post-test results between the experiment and the control group (See Table 5). The scores were considered to have significant difference between experimental and control group when p (Sig.) is lower than 0.05.

Table 5. The Result of independent sample t-test

Writing Skill	Group	Mean Post	Mean difference of Post-test between Experiment and Control groups	T Value and Sig. post-test between Experiment and Control groups	
				T	Sig.
Score	Experimental	84.50	14.90	2.321	.024
	Control	68.20			

As presented in Table 5, since the Sig. value is less than 0.05, statistically it is proved that that the student' writing skill in experiment group is better than that of those in control group.

Discussion

The results of data analysis provided in Table 4 and Table 5 indicate that the implementation of Cinquain poem is successful in improving the writing ability of the students. This finding confirms the studies conducted by Norton (1991) and Kautzer (2012). However, since the mean score of the post-test in experiment group is still below 85.00 (the minimum score to get an "A" in University of Bengkulu), the writers then suggested that more practice in writing various topics is needed by the students in order to get a better achievement. One of the concepts for teaching writing, as stated by Nation (2009), is offering many opportunities for students to write. Since writing is the most complex medium in communication (Richardson & Morgan, 2009), a lot of practice is really required to improve students' writing skills. In line with this, Putria & Aryusmar (2012) and Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding (1988) and found that the amount of time spent on writing was correlated significantly with the quality of students' writing abilities.

The writers then break down several variables that may affect the students' improvement in writing skills. First, as found by Putria and Aryusmar (2012), one of the strengths of using Cinquain poems as an instructional media is that students can enhance their vocabulary. In this study, the students were given an opportunity to formulate a draft of their text by listing some unique vocabularies that the students could use in their text before they to begin writing a text. They were not allowed to repeat the same word in their poem as suggested by Gonzales (2010). This step is very effective in helping the students learn some new context-based vocabularies. The students were not asked to memorize the words, but they should include the words in their text. Using vocabulary

productively (in writing) can improve learning and can drive students to concentrate on aspects of vocabulary awareness (Swain, 1985). Furthermore, Simons (2014) notes that using cinquain poem as an instructional media will allow students to reflect on particular terms that other students might not think about. Therefore, the implementation of cinquain poems may increase the students' vocabulary, which then influences their writing ability.

Second, while developing their text, the students could connect their ideas easily. As stated by Mora (2009), it's very important for students to be able to transform their ideas into written form. In this study, the students were driven by the use of Cinquain poem to write about the text that consists of beginning, middle, and end as suggested by Simons (2014). Through this activity, the students can understand about the structure of narrative and also descriptive text (Norton, 1991). After that, the writers provided feedback on their draft and they need to revise their draft before beginning to write. Besides, the writers also reflect on the background knowledge of the students about the topic for writing. Because the students already have background knowledge about the topic, it will assist them to improve the quality of their writing. According to Anderson (2003) and Ur (1996), one of the elements that should be considered to teach writing is context information or prior knowledge.

Third, Cinquain poem is one of the instructional media that can foster more interesting and meaningful learning environments as also stated by Kautzer (2012). This finding confirms the previous studies conducted by (Saputra & Marzulina, 2016; & Megawati, 2020) who found that interest and motivation influenced students learning achievement. In this study, the Students were challenged to select unique words that will embellish their poem by following the structure of the cinquain poem. Then, they should develop a draft for their writing along with it, which can allow them to develop and organize their topics and ideas. As stated by Clark (2007), drafting is one of the important stages in writing process. Making a draft or outline before starting writing is very beneficial for students (Finocciaro & Bonomo, 1973) because it can help them to create a coherent and cohesion text.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Several conclusions can be drawn based on the results of the above research findings and interpretation. First of all, the use of cinquain poems greatly increases the writing abilities of students in writing narrative and descriptive texts. Secondly, cinquain poems are helpful in helping students create and organize their ideas. Finally, the implementation of the cinquain poem is successful in improving the vocabulary of students, creating an interesting learning atmosphere, guiding students to choose their topic, drafting their text, and developing their ideas.

As a follow-up to this study, there are some recommendations that can be offered. First, in teaching writing, it is important for English teachers to provide interesting techniques and instructional media that can assist students in drafting and revising their text, one of them is Cinquain poems. In addition, for learners, because writing is part of a physical activity that needs a lot of practice, learners need to do a lot of practice to develop their ability to write. Lastly, it is suggested for researchers who want to conduct similar studies to consider other skills when applying cinquain poems, such as speaking.

Disclosure statement

All authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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