

*Investigating the Way Contextual Teaching and Learning Approach Improves
Senior High School Students' Writing Skill in Indonesia*

Adzkiya Noor Ifadha Rahman, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
Maneerat Ekkayokkaya, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

WorldCALL 2023 – CALL in Critical Times
Conference Proceedings

Abstract

The English language has become a compulsory subject for high school students in Indonesia, and one of the most essential skills that students are required to acquire is writing. Nevertheless, it has been noted in previous research that students continue to encounter challenges when it comes to performing a task of writing. This study aims to investigate how contextual teaching and learning approach facilitates students' improvement in their writing skill. The study involves 35 eleventh grade students in one public high school located in Kabupaten Bogor, West Java province, Indonesia. The study employed a qualitative research design, utilizing a learning journal as the primary instrument for data collection. The data was analyzed by content analysis based on the four characteristics of contextual teaching and learning approach as outlined by Johnson (2002). These characteristics include doing significant work, fostering self-regulated learning, promoting collaboration, and facilitating the development of critical thinking skills. The findings of the study indicate that the contextual teaching and learning approach contributes to the enhancement of writing skills among high school students through four distinct ways. The components encompassed includes: 1) the creation of meaningful task, 2) the obtainment of information independently, 3) collaboration within a group setting, and 4) the practice of asking questions. All in all, it is recommended that the implementation of contextual teaching and learning be considered as a viable alternative approach for writing within the senior high school context.

Keywords: Contextual Teaching and Learning, Senior High School, Writing



WorldCALL Conference 2023 in Chiang Mai, Thailand

Introduction

Indonesia, as the populous country in the non-English-speaking world, remains a significant market for English language education (Hamied et al., 2013). Additionally, English is regarded as a foreign language in Indonesia. However, the language holds great importance for the country because of its multiple regional and worldwide attractions. Indonesia's present language policy regulates the instruction of the language at three educational levels: primary, secondary, and tertiary education (Lotfie & Hart, 2018). In the Indonesian education system, the senior high school level is equivalent to secondary education. The English subject is currently taught according to the 2013 Character-Based curriculum, as stated in National Minister's Regulation No.69 (Zein et al., 2020). This curriculum prioritizes the development of four language abilities in English language learning: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Furthermore, writing is seen as a crucial skill that students are expected to possess (Toba & Noor, 2019). The primary rationale for emphasizing the development of writing skills among senior high school students is the implementation of the Genre-Based Approach in the 2013 National Curriculum. This approach introduces the study of English by exposing students to learn a wide range of texts in English (Putra, 2014). On top of that, the objective of studying English in the 2013 National curriculum is to enhance the students' proficiency in four key areas. These areas encompass: 1) recognizing the social function of spoken and written text structure in their everyday activities; 2) employing interpersonal, transactional, and functional communication; 3) organizing and revising spoken and written text to ensure accuracy and coherence; and 4) utilizing language features effortlessly and precisely (Riadi, 2019).

Undoubtedly, despite the emphasis on developing writing proficiency in the 2013 National Curriculum, senior high school students encounter challenges while attempting to write in English. A study conducted by Novariana et al. (2018) identified that senior high school students are faced with two issues when attempting to write in English: internal issues, such as students having low motivation in learning English, having difficulty understanding the context or topic in writing, difficulty in selecting appropriate words, and writing the sentence in accurate structure, having a lack of vocabulary and being passive learners in the classroom; and external issues, such as lacked of writing exercise and receiving no feedback in writing.

In addition to the challenges students encounter in writing, it is worth mentioning that the writing instruction used in the classroom can also be a contributing factor that impedes students' progress in writing. Ariyanti (2016), found that in the writing instruction, students tend to replicate and memorize example texts provided by the teacher without understanding how to apply the subject matter to their real-life context and practical communication. As a result, employing an effective instructional approach is crucial for fostering students' writing skill. To enhance students' writing skills, it is important to employ teaching approaches that are relevant to their real-life situation, experiences, and interests (Kusuma et al., 2010; Sears, 2002).

Research Question

The contextual teaching and learning approach can be employed as an alternative approach to enhance the writing skill of senior high school students. The rationale behind the selection of this approach was that both students and teachers occasionally encounter an issue where writing lessons and instructions lack context. Hence, employing a contextual teaching and learning approach can serve as a practical option to address the aforementioned issues.

Johnson (2002) defines contextual teaching and learning as a pedagogical approach that involves students in meaningful activities that enable them to establish connections between their academic studies and the real-world situation. Recent studies have shown a growing interest in investigating the effectiveness of contextualized and meaningful learning environments, particularly in the context of writing instruction in senior high school level (Jayanti & Rozimela, 2022; Jubari et al., 2022; Nawas, 2018; Satriani et al., 2012; Windi & Suryaman, 2022). Previous studies have consistently revealed effective outcomes when employing the contextual teaching and learning (CTL) approach in quantitative research. Specifically, these studies have demonstrated considerable improvements in English writing skills after learning with the CTL approach. However, the exploration on the way the approach can help improve students' writing skill remain insufficient. Therefore, the objective of this study was to investigate the way in which the contextual teaching and learning (CTL) approach help improve students' writing skill. The study addressed the research question as follows:

1. How can the CTL approach improve students' writing skills?

This research was carried out using a qualitative method. According to Gonzalez et al. (2008), qualitative research offers a comprehensive meanings, actions, both observable and non-observable events, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. In addition, Cohen et al. (2018) stated that qualitative research allows participants to express their perspectives and explores underlying concerns that may not be immediately apparent in their behaviors and actions.

The research instrument used in this research is a learning journal, and it was employed by the end of the experiment, requiring nine students that were taken based on the posttest performance, which include high, average, and low scores, to submit their responses on the classroom platform (Google Classroom). Moreover, the content written in the learning journal was derived from the English textbooks specifically designed for eleventh-grade students in Indonesia, and it has been adapted to meet the objective of this research. Within the learning journal, students are required to document both successful aspects and areas in need of improvement encountered throughout the writing lesson with CTL approach. In addition, they were instructed to select the CTL elements that contribute to enhancing their writing proficiency, along with providing the rationale behind their choices.

The research was performed in one of public senior high schools, located in Bogor, a city in West Java province, Indonesia. The study included 35 male and female students enrolled in the academic year of 2023 who have mixed proficiency in English. In addition, the focused genre of writing used in this study is analytical exposition, which develops students' skills in writing a topic based on factual information. Furthermore, the duration of the study was ten weeks, during which the students participated in the class twice a week, with each session lasting for 90 minutes.

The data collected from the learning journal was subjected to content analysis using the four key characteristics of the contextual teaching and learning approach as defined by Johnson (2002: 24), which consist of 1) doing significant work, 2) self-regulated learning, 3) collaborating, and 4) enhancing critical thinking. In addition, the table presented below displays the frequencies and percentages of the terms identified in the students' learning journal.

Students' answer from learning journal	Frequencies	Percentages
Execution of meaningful task (doing significant work)		
Enhancing student's skill in topic understanding and promoting the work to a broader audience by employing an online writing blog.	21	52.5%
Conducting independent research (self-regulated learning)		
Enhancing student's skill in acquiring reliable facts independently in order to support their thoughts in writing.	5	12.5%
Working with a group (collaborating)		
Enhancing student's skill in writing through collaborative group work and having the opportunity to receive constructive feedback.	13	32.5%
Asking questions (enhancing critical thinking)		
Enhancing student's skill in critical thinking through the implementation of questioning activities.	1	2.5%
Total	40	100%

Table 1: Frequencies and percentages of key concepts from students' learning journal

The above table illustrates how the contextual teaching and learning approach enhances students' writing abilities in four specific areas, according to the four key characteristics of the CTL approach. The initial response, involving the execution of a meaningful task, in accordance with the first CTL characteristic (doing significant work), achieves a score of 52.5%. Based on the student's feedback in the learning journal, they stated that the process of writing in the class is more impactful following instruction using this particular approach. The improvement is demonstrated through the students' ability to convey their ideas clearly in the introduction to the conclusion paragraph, as they acquire knowledge about a topic that they can understand and that is relevant to their previous experiences. The finding is consistent with the research conducted by Salima and Hidayat (2020). Prior to using the CTL approach, the aforementioned research indicated that participants faced challenges in composing a piece of writing due to the complexity of the topics assigned by their teacher and described in their textbook, thereby limiting their ability to write in English. Conversely, when receiving the CTL approach, there was a noticeable improvement as the subject matter addressed during the classroom intervention was relevant to the students' previous experiences, enabling them to develop a strong understanding of the writing topic. Furthermore, students also conveyed that they had the chance to engage in meaningful activities during the writing process. The students' task in this research was to submit their work on an online blog. Consequently, it provided students with the chance to exhibit their work for a wider readership.

Following this, working with a group corresponding to the third CTL characteristics (collaborating) gains the second highest percentage at 32.5%. Throughout the writing process, students can engage in collaborative discussions and produce ideas collaboratively. As a result, they can offer valuable feedback and suggestions to each other while revising their work. It aligns with what Xiang et al. (2022) said in their study, who emphasized the importance of integrating collaborative learning into process-based English writing classrooms. While implementing collaborative learning in their studies, students can participate in activities such as brainstorming, reviewing outlines, revising, and editing their peers' writing. Additionally, they can share feedback and reflections as a group. Consequently, students are able to obtain access to learning resources within a community

dedicated to learning. Additionally, conducting independent research, corresponding to the second CTL characteristic (self-regulated learning), results in 12.5%. In terms of this area, students documented in their learning journal that learning how to search information independently, following the instructions given by their teacher, enhanced their capacity to substantiate their writing with relevant and reliable sources. The result from this statement is aligned with Derseh (2020) as well as Wale and Bogale (2021). These studies highlight that the phase of gathering information through self-regulated learning enables students to independently conduct research and gather information to enhance their writing skills, particularly in terms of paragraph structure. Finally, a minor percentage was found in asking questions, corresponding to the last CTL characteristic (enhancing critical thinking), which gains 2.5% from the students' learning journal. The questioning activity can provoke students' cognitive process in evaluating their comprehension of the paragraph structure and linguistic elements employed in English writing. Only one student documented in her learning journal that engaging in questioning activities helps her to validate the knowledge she has acquired during the class. In addition, she expressed that during this stage, she was compelled to discover the answer independently, as the teacher only posed a concept-check question to stimulate their thinking. According to Johnson (2002), the inclusion of a questioning element in the CTL approach offers various benefits. These benefits include helping teachers evaluate students' understanding, promoting student engagement, encouraging students to ask more questions, and reinforcing their knowledge.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the way of the contextual teaching and learning (CTL) approach on enhancing the writing skills of eleventh grade senior high school students in Indonesia. The study's findings indicate that using the contextual teaching and learning (CTL) approach can support students in four key areas identified by Johnson (2002): doing significant work, self-regulated learning, collaborating, and enhancing critical thinking. Nine students, acting as respondents, exhibited a favorable reaction towards every essential characteristic of CTL. They documented their response through a learning journal, highlighting how each CTL characteristic might specifically aid in enhancing their writing skills, particularly in analytical exposition texts. Although the application of the approach was seen to be a success, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. Initially, the number of participants is restricted as they were selected to serve as a representative sample and grouped according to their test scores. In order to obtain more robust results for each key CTL characteristic, it is necessary to include a larger number of respondents. Furthermore, it is essential to provide students with thorough training on the questioning method during a pre-meeting prior to discussing the application of the four CTL characteristics. The teacher should improve the questioning strategy employed to strengthen students' writing skills in critical areas. Additionally, the activity should be tailored to meet the individual needs of each student, ranging from high-scoring to low-scoring students, in order to ensure that all of them benefit from it.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank her thesis advisor, Assistant Professor Maneerat Ekkayokkaya, Ph.D, for her guidance during the completion of this project. Moreover, the author would like to send her deepest gratitude to Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, for granting her with Graduate Scholarship Program for ASEAN and Non-ASEAN Countries.

References

- Ariyanti, A. (2016). The Teaching of EFL Writing in Indonesia. *Dinamika Ilmu*, 16(2), 263-277. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21093/di.v16i2.274>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research Methods in Education*. Routledge.
- Derseh, B. (2020). Enhancing EFL Students' Writing Performance through Inquiry Based Learning. *Italian Journal of Educational Research*(24), 138-156. <https://doi.org/10.7346/SIRD-012020-P138>
- Gonzalez, L. E., Brown, M. S., & Slate, J. R. (2008). Teachers who left the teaching profession: A qualitative understanding. *Qualitative Report*, 13(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2008.1601>
- Hamied, F., Bigalke, T., & Sharbawi, S. (2013). ELT intricacies within the Indonesian language policy. *English for ASEAN Integration: Policies and practices in the region*, 32-40.
- Johnson, E. B. (2002). *Contextual teaching and learning: What it is and why it's here to stay*. Corwin Press.
- Kusuma, D., Hermana, D., Supardan, D., & Undang, G. (2010). *Contextual Teaching and Learning: Sebuah Panduan Awal dalam Pengembangan PBM*. Yogyakarta: Rahayasa.
- Lotfie, M., & Hart, H. (2018). Language Policy and Practices in Indonesian Higher Education Institutions. *Intellectual Discourse*, 26.
- Novariana, H., Sumardi, S., & Tarjana, S. S. (2018). Senior High School Students' Problems in Writing: A Preliminary Study of Implementing Writing E-Journal as Self Assessment to Promote Students' Writing Skill. *English Language and Literature International Conference (ELLiC) Proceedings*, 2, 216-219.
- Putra, K. A. (2014). The implication of curriculum renewal on ELT in Indonesia. *Parole: Journal of Linguistics and Education*, 4(1), 63-75. <https://doi.org/10.14710/parole.v4i1%20April.63-75>
- Riadi, A. (2019). An empirical studies on Indonesian English-curriculum changes: opportunities and constraints in an underdeveloped region. *Indonesian TESOL Journal*, 1(2). <https://doi.org/10.24256/itj.v1i2.835>
- Salima, R., & Hidayat, M. T. (2020). Developing Students' Writing Skill in Analytical Exposition Text Through Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL). *EEAL Journal (English Education and Applied Linguistics Journal)*, 3(1), 35-42.
- Sears, S. J. (2002). *Contextual Teaching and Learning: A Primer for Effective Instruction*. Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.

Toba, R., & Noor, W. N. (2019). The current issues of Indonesian EFL students' writing skills: Ability, problem, and reason in writing comparison and contrast essay. *Dinamika Ilmu*, 19(1), 57-73. <http://doi.org/10.21093/di.v19i1.1506>

Wale, B. D., & Bogale, Y. N. (2021). Using inquiry-based writing instruction to develop students' academic writing skills. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, 6(4), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-020-00108-9>

Xiang, X., Yuan, R., & Yu, B. (2022). Implementing assessment as learning in the L2 writing classroom: a Chinese case. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 47(5), 727-741. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2021.1965539>

Zein, S., Sukyadi, D., Hamied, F. A., & Lengkanawati, N. S. (2020). English language education in Indonesia: A review of research (2011–2019). *Language Teaching*, 53(4), 491-523. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444820000208>

Contact email: nooradzkiya06@gmail.com