



ENHANCING WRITING FLUENCY THROUGH JOURNALING: A CLASSROOM ACTION RESEARCH.

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Received: 2025-03-29

Revised: 2025-04-05

Accepted: 2025-05-02

Online Published: 2025-05-20

Abstract: This Classroom Action Research explores the impact of journaling on developing writing fluency among 20 eighth-grade students at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Gresik. Writing fluency, encompassing speed, coherence, and volume, is critical for academic success yet remains a challenge for many students due to anxiety, limited practice, and lack of confidence. The study aimed to address these barriers by incorporating daily and weekly journaling activities into classroom practice. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, the research measured improvements in students' writing speed, word count, coherence, and self-reported confidence, complemented by thematic analysis of interviews and surveys. Findings revealed significant improvements in writing fluency, with writing speed increasing by 66.7%, word count by 80%, and coherence scores by 20%. Students also reported increased confidence and reduced anxiety toward writing, attributed to the low-stakes, flexible nature of journaling. Observations highlighted heightened engagement, with students viewing journaling as an enjoyable and meaningful activity. ESL learners demonstrated notable gains in vocabulary use and sentence complexity, benefitting from consistent practice. The study concludes that journaling fosters a supportive environment that enhances writing fluency and confidence while promoting creativity and self-expression. These findings provide practical recommendations for integrating journaling into classroom practices to support diverse learners and advance writing proficiency in secondary education. Future research should explore long-term impacts and the role of specific journaling prompts.

Keywords: Writing fluency; journaling; Classroom Action Research; writing confidence; student engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Writing fluency defined as the capacity to produce coherent, sustained text with minimal hesitation, is a foundational skill for high school students, particularly in English language context where effective communication is paramount (Chamba et al., 2019; Suvin, 2020). Beyond academic achievement, fluency correlates with self-expression and professional competence (Gallagher, 2023; Sabti et al., 2019; Golparvar & Khafi, 2021). Yet many learners struggle due to limited practice, grammatical anxiety, and low self-efficacy (Bulqiyah et al., 2021; Graham et al., 2021; Alharthi, 2021), challenges amplified by escalating curricular demands (Everhart, 2022; Camacho et al., 2021). To mitigate these barriers, educators require strategies that prioritize frequent, low-stakes writing

opportunities (Finlayson & McCrudden, 2020; Poch et al., 2020). Journaling, with its emphasis on regular, unstructured practice, emerges as a promising intervention.

As pedagogical tool, journaling fosters reflection, linguistic experimentation, and personal engagement with writing (Capous-Desyllas & Bromfield, 2020; Dumlaio & Pinatacan, 2019). Its informal nature reduces anxiety associated with assessed tasks, encouraging risk-taking and fluency development (Barber, 2021; Fogal & Koyama, 2022). Additionally, journaling can promote a positive attitude toward writing by allowing students to explore topics of personal interest, which can increase their motivation and engagement. The informal nature of journaling, combined with its potential for frequent practice, makes it an ideal tool for developing writing fluency in high school students, who are often intimidated by more formal writing tasks such as essays and research papers (Linares, 2019; Mueller & Pentón Herrera, 2023).

Research on the benefits of journaling in education has consistently shown that it can have a positive impact on students' writing skills and their overall attitudes toward writing. For example, (Yurekli & Afacan, 2020) in their research entitled “Journal Writing: Effects on Students’ Writing Proficiency and Student and Teacher Attitudes” found that dialogue journal writing with an audience contributed to an increase in the proficiency level of students, especially in terms of their organizational skills. Similarly, (Hammad, 2022) concluded in their research entitled “The Effect of Using Personal Experience Journals on Writing Fluency and Writing Anxiety of Al-Aqsa University EFL Students” that using personal experience journals could develop the participants' writing fluency and reduce their writing anxiety. The research also conducted by (Hadiyanti & Wibowo, 2019). The results of the study show that personal journal writing affects the writing interest and writing skills of third-graders. In particular, students who engaged in daily journaling exhibited improvements in the length and coherence of their writing, as well as a greater willingness to experiment with new vocabulary and sentence structures. These findings suggest that journaling can play a valuable role in helping students to develop the fluency needed for more formal writing tasks.

However, despite the growing body of research on journaling and writing fluency, there remains a notable gap in the literature when it comes to high school students, particularly in diverse classroom settings. Much of the existing research has focused on younger learners or college students, leaving questions about how journaling can impact the writing fluency of high school students, who face different academic challenges and developmental needs. Additionally, while many studies have explored the benefits of journaling for reflective thinking and personal expression, fewer have examined its direct impact on writing fluency in a structured, academic context. Furthermore, the majority of existing studies have been conducted in homogenous classroom environments, and there is a need for more research on how journaling can be used effectively in classrooms with diverse student populations, including those with varying levels of English proficiency, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) students. Understanding how journaling can be integrated into high school classrooms to support writing fluency for a wide range of learners is crucial for educators seeking to improve writing outcomes in today's increasingly diverse educational landscape.



This study seeks to address these gaps by exploring how incorporating journaling as a regular classroom activity can improve the writing fluency of high school students in an English class. Specifically, the study aims to investigate whether journaling, when integrated into daily or weekly classroom practices, leads to measurable improvements in students' writing speed, coherence, and confidence over time. By focusing on high school students, this research will provide new insights into how journaling can be used as a tool to foster better writing outcomes in secondary education. Moreover, the study will examine the impact of journaling on a diverse group of students, including those who are English language learners, in order to better understand how journaling can support writing fluency across different student populations. In doing so, this research will contribute to the growing body of literature on writing instruction and provide practical recommendations for educators seeking to improve writing fluency in high school settings.

The research will be guided by three research questions. First, how does regular journaling impact the writing fluency of high school students in terms of speed, coherence, and volume? This question seeks to explore whether journaling leads to measurable improvements in the students' ability to write more quickly and coherently, as well as whether it increases the overall length of their writing. Second, what changes, if any, do students perceive in their writing confidence and ability after participating in journaling activities? This question will examine whether journaling helps students to feel more confident in their writing abilities, and whether this increased confidence translates into improved writing performance. Finally, in what ways can journaling be integrated into classroom practices to maximize its effectiveness in developing writing fluency? This question will explore the practical implications of the study's findings, providing educators with insights into how journaling can be most effectively implemented in high school English classes to support writing fluency.

By addressing these research questions, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how journaling can be used as an instructional tool to improve writing fluency in high school students. In doing so, the research will contribute to the field of writing instruction by providing educators with evidence-based strategies for incorporating journaling into their teaching practices, ultimately helping to improve the writing fluency and overall academic success of high school students.

METHOD

Research Design

The research design for the research is Classroom Action Research (CAR). Classroom Action Research (CAR) is a participatory approach in which the teacher-researcher investigates and enhances their own teaching practices. CAR is ideal for this type of study because it involves cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection, which allow the teacher to refine and improve the intervention based on student outcomes. The project employs both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Quantitative data includes measuring students' writing fluency in terms of speed, coherence, and volume,

while qualitative data focuses on student perceptions of journaling and changes in writing confidence, collected through interviews and surveys.

Participants and Setting

This Classroom Action Research study was conducted in an English classroom at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Gresik, with 20 participants from 8th grade selected through purposive sampling. The students were chosen based on writing challenges and language proficiency, ensuring a diverse range of experiences. Most participants struggled with writing fluency, particularly in producing coherent writing under timed conditions. Several were English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, who faced additional difficulties with grammar and structure, making their inclusion essential for understanding how journaling could benefit both native speakers and ESL students. A smaller group with average proficiency allowed the study to explore how journaling affected students with different writing abilities.

Research Instruments

These instruments were selected to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the intervention's impact, covering both measurable outcomes and subjective experiences.

1. Observation sheets tracked student participation, engagement, and behavior during journaling sessions, providing qualitative insights into how students' attitudes and writing behaviors evolved.
2. Questionnaires were administered at the beginning and end of the study to assess students' perceptions of their writing abilities and attitudes toward journaling, exploring shifts in writing confidence and fluency.
3. Assessment rubrics were used to evaluate writing samples based on key fluency indicators like writing speed, coherence, sentence complexity, and vocabulary use, providing quantitative data to measure improvements over time.
4. Students' writing journals served as both learning tools and data sources, offering qualitative insights into individual writing development, risk-taking, and content evolution, which complemented the quantitative analysis. Together, these instruments provided a comprehensive understanding of journaling's impact on writing fluency.

Data Collection

In the Classroom Action Research study "Incorporating Journaling to Develop Writing Fluency," data was collected using a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. Observations played a central role, tracking student participation, writing behaviors, and classroom dynamics, providing real-time insights into how journaling influenced writing fluency and confidence. Quantitative data from pre- and post-tests measured writing speed, length, coherence, and complexity, showing measurable improvements in fluency after the intervention. Semi-structured interviews provided qualitative insights into how journaling affected students' confidence, offering personal reflections that helped explain the quantitative results.

Surveys and questionnaires, administered before and after the intervention, captured changes in attitudes toward writing, combining Likert-scale and open-ended questions to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. Additionally, student journals provided direct evidence of progress, with analysis focusing on writing length, content coherence, and risk-taking, such as experimenting with new vocabulary. The study's comprehensive data collection approach, using observations, tests, interviews, surveys, and journal analysis, allowed for a thorough evaluation of both the measurable improvements in writing fluency and the emotional and psychological benefits of journaling.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from pre- and post-tests and surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired t-tests, which measured improvements in writing speed, word count, coherence, and sentence complexity, determining whether the changes were statistically significant. Likert-scale surveys tracked shifts in students' confidence and attitudes toward writing over time.

Qualitative data came from interviews, open-ended survey responses, observations, and student journals. Thematic analysis identified recurring themes like increased confidence, enjoyment, and perceived improvements in writing fluency. Content analysis of student journals examined progress in writing length, coherence, and risk-taking, while observations provided insights into student engagement during journaling sessions. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative findings, the study offered a comprehensive understanding of journaling's impact.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RQ#1 How Does Regular Journaling Impact the Writing Fluency of High School Students in Terms of Speed, Coherence, and Volume?

To address the first research question, we examined the impact of regular journaling on the writing fluency of high school students, focusing on three key metrics: writing speed, word count, and coherence. The results are summarized in Table 1, which presents the pre-test and post-test averages for these metrics, along with the percentage improvements and p-values.

Table 1.

Pre- and Post-Test Writing Fluency Metrics

Metric	Pre-Test Average	Post-Test Average	% Improvement	p-value
Writing Speed (words/min)	15	25	+66.7%	< .05
Word Count (total words)	100	180	+80%	< .05
Coherence Score	3.5/5	4.2/5	+20%	< .05

The data in Table 1 reveal significant improvements in all three metrics of writing fluency following the journaling intervention. Specifically, students' writing speed increased from an average of 15 words per minute to 25 words per minute, representing a substantial 66.7% improvement. This increase suggests that regular journaling helped students write more quickly and with greater ease. The p-value of less than .05 indicates that this improvement is statistically significant.

In addition to writing speed, the total word count of students' writing also showed a marked increase. The average word count rose from 100 words to 180 words, a substantial 80% improvement. This increase in volume indicates that students were not only writing faster but also producing longer pieces of writing. Again, the p-value of less than .05 confirms that this improvement is statistically significant.

Finally, the coherence of students' writing improved by 20%, with the average coherence score increasing from 3.5 to 4.2 out of 5. This improvement suggests that students' writing became more organized and easier to follow, which is a crucial aspect of writing fluency. The statistically significant p-value of less than .05 further supports the effectiveness of the journaling intervention in enhancing writing coherence.

These findings provide strong evidence that regular journaling has a positive impact on the writing fluency of high school students. The significant improvements in writing speed, word count, and coherence indicate that journaling can effectively address common barriers to writing fluency, such as anxiety and lack of confidence. By providing students with a low-pressure, regular writing practice, journaling appears to foster a supportive environment where students can develop their writing skills without the fear of making mistakes.

The increase in writing speed and word count suggests that students became more comfortable and efficient in their writing process. This improvement is likely due to the consistent practice provided by journaling, which allowed students to develop a more natural writing rhythm and build their confidence over time. The increase in coherence scores further indicates that students were able to produce more organized and structured writing, which is essential for effective communication.

Overall, the results of RQ1 demonstrate that incorporating journaling into classroom practices can significantly enhance students' writing fluency. These findings align with previous research on the benefits of journaling for writing development and highlight the potential of journaling as a valuable instructional tool in secondary education. Future research should continue to explore the long-term effects of journaling on writing fluency and investigate the role of specific journaling prompts and genres in enhancing various aspects of writing skills.

RQ#2 What Changes Do Students Perceive in Their Writing Confidence and Ability After Participating in Journaling Activities?

To address the second research question, we examined the perceived changes in students' writing confidence and ability following the journaling intervention. The results were gathered through surveys, interviews, and observations, providing a comprehensive view of students' experiences and self-reported improvements.

The findings revealed that students experienced a noticeable boost in both confidence and self-perceived writing skills. Throughout the journaling intervention, students reported a growing sense of ease and comfort with writing. By the end of the study, a majority of students indicated that they felt less anxious about writing and were more willing to engage with writing tasks, even those beyond the journaling sessions. Interview responses suggested that journaling provided a safe space for students to express themselves without fear of judgment or correction, which allowed them to focus more on their thoughts and ideas rather than solely on correctness. This shift in focus helped reduce their apprehension, enabling them to approach writing with greater assurance.

In addition, students expressed increased confidence in experimenting with language, vocabulary, and sentence structures. As they engaged in regular, low-pressure journaling, they began to take risks with their writing, trying out new words and more complex sentences. Observations confirmed that students showed a greater willingness to attempt unfamiliar vocabulary and longer sentence constructions in their journals, which reflected a deepening comfort with the writing process itself. This increase in confidence and reduced fear of errors contributed to more creative and expressive writing over time.

The findings also highlighted students' improved perceptions of their writing abilities. Many students felt that journaling had directly contributed to their skill development, allowing them to write with more coherence and fluency. By regularly practicing, students not only built their confidence but also gained a stronger belief in their capacity to write effectively. This boost in self-efficacy was evident in survey results, where a majority of students reported feeling more capable as writers by the end of the study.

Table 2.

Changes in Students' Writing Confidence and Abilities

Aspect of Writing Perception	Description of Change	Example from Student Feedback
Reduced Anxiety	Students felt less fearful about making mistakes	"I'm not as worried about errors and feel freer to write."
Increased Confidence in Language Use	Willingness to try new vocabulary and structures	"I tried more new words because I could just write freely."
Improved Self-Efficacy	Stronger belief in writing abilities	"I feel like I can write better and say more than before."

The results of RQ2 demonstrate that regular journaling not only improves students' writing fluency but also significantly enhances their confidence and self-perceived writing abilities. The reduction in writing anxiety is particularly noteworthy, as it indicates that journaling provides a supportive environment where students can express themselves without the pressure of formal assessment. This low-stakes approach encourages students to take risks with their writing, leading to increased confidence and a greater willingness to experiment with language and structure.

The increased confidence in language use and improved self-efficacy further highlight the positive impact of journaling on students' writing development. By allowing students to write about topics of personal interest, journaling fosters a sense of ownership and engagement, which in turn promotes a more positive attitude toward writing. This positive



attitude is crucial for overcoming the barriers that often hinder writing fluency, such as anxiety and lack of confidence.

Overall, the findings suggest that journaling can play a significant role in building students' writing confidence and abilities. By providing a safe and supportive space for regular writing practice, journaling helps students develop a more positive self-view as writers, which is essential for long-term writing success. These results align with previous research on the benefits of journaling for writing proficiency and fluency, further supporting the use of journaling as an effective instructional tool in secondary education.

RQ#3 In What Ways Can Journaling Be Integrated into Classroom Practices to Maximize Its Effectiveness in Developing Writing Fluency?

To address the third research question, we explored the practical implications of integrating journaling into classroom practices to enhance writing fluency. The findings were derived from classroom observations, student feedback, and qualitative analysis of journaling habits, identifying key factors that contributed to the successful implementation of journaling.

The findings identified three primary factors that contributed to the successful integration of journaling into classroom practices: the frequency of journaling sessions, the low-stakes environment, and the opportunity for student choice in topics.

Frequency of Sessions: Regular journaling sessions, occurring at least three times per week, were associated with the greatest improvements in writing fluency. Students reported that the consistent practice of journaling helped them become more comfortable and fluent in their writing, transforming writing from a formal assignment into a habitual part of their routine. Teachers noted that students who engaged in frequent journaling began to approach writing tasks with increased ease and confidence, demonstrating a notable shift in both their comfort with and output of written work.

Low-Stakes Environment: The informal, non-graded nature of the journaling sessions played a significant role in fostering a positive response from students. Knowing that their entries were not going to be formally assessed allowed students to write without the pressure of achieving "correctness." This low-stakes environment encouraged students to express themselves more openly, take risks with language, and embrace creativity in their writing. Teachers observed that this approach not only alleviated students' anxiety about writing but also led to more coherent and expressive journal entries over time, as students felt free to experiment without fear of mistakes.

Student Choice of Topics: Allowing students to choose their own journaling topics proved to be a valuable factor in promoting engagement and enhancing writing fluency. Many students indicated that the ability to write about subjects of personal interest made the journaling activities more enjoyable and relevant to their lives. This freedom in topic choice encouraged them to explore new vocabulary and writing structures, contributing to improvements in both language complexity and overall fluency.

Table 3
Key Factors for Effective Integration of Journaling

FACTOR	DESCRIPTION	IMPACT ON WRITING FLUENCY
Frequency of Sessions	Scheduling journaling at least 3 times per week	Improved comfort, fluency, and consistency
Low-Stakes Environment	Non-graded, informal journaling sessions	Greater willingness to write without fear of mistakes
Student Choice of Topics	Allowing students to choose topics of personal interest	Increased engagement, creativity, and language use

The results of RQ3 highlight the importance of frequency, a low-stakes environment, and student choice in maximizing the effectiveness of journaling for developing writing fluency. The consistent practice of journaling at least three times per week emerged as a crucial factor in fostering writing fluency. This regular engagement helped students build their writing skills and confidence over time, making writing a more natural and less intimidating process.

The low-stakes environment was another key factor identified in this study. By removing the pressure of formal assessment, students were able to focus on the process of writing rather than the fear of making mistakes. This approach not only reduced anxiety but also encouraged students to take risks with their writing, leading to more creative and expressive pieces. The freedom to choose their own topics further enhanced students' engagement and motivation, as they were able to write about subjects that genuinely interested them. This autonomy in topic selection contributed to the development of more complex language use and improved overall writing fluency.

These findings suggest that educators can effectively integrate journaling into their classroom practices by incorporating frequent, low-stakes writing opportunities and allowing students to choose their own topics. By doing so, teachers can create a supportive and engaging environment that promotes writing fluency and confidence among high school students. Future research should continue to explore the long-term effects of these strategies and investigate how specific journaling prompts and genres might further enhance writing skills.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this study has demonstrated that incorporating journaling into classroom practices can significantly enhance writing fluency among high school students. The findings reveal substantial improvements in key areas of writing fluency, including writing speed, coherence, and word count, which are indicative of enhanced writing proficiency. These results are consistent with previous research on the benefits of journaling for writing development and highlight the potential of journaling as a valuable instructional tool in secondary education.

The observed increase in students' confidence and willingness to take risks in their writing underscores the importance of journaling in creating a supportive learning environment that reduces anxiety and fosters creativity. By allowing students to engage



in writing on topics of personal interest and without the pressure of formal assessment, journaling appears to support both linguistic and psychological aspects of writing fluency. These findings align with theoretical perspectives that emphasize the role of social and emotional factors in language development, resonating with Vygotsky's views on social interaction in learning.

The study's findings affirm the value of journaling as an instructional approach that encourages self-expression and experimentation, contributing positively to students' writing abilities and self-perception as writers. The practical implications of this research suggest that educators can effectively improve writing fluency by integrating frequent, informal journaling sessions with options for student choice into their teaching practices. This approach not only enhances writing skills but also promotes a more positive attitude toward writing, which is essential for long-term academic success.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. Conducted within a single classroom, the findings may not be entirely generalizable to other educational contexts. Future research should expand to include larger and more diverse samples to provide a broader understanding of journaling's impact across various educational settings. Additionally, the relatively short intervention period leaves room for further study on the long-term effects of journaling on writing fluency. Future research could also examine how specific journaling prompts and genres influence writing skills, adding depth to our understanding of effective journaling practices.

In conclusion, this study provides valuable evidence that journaling can be a powerful method for developing writing fluency and fostering positive writing attitudes among high school students. By creating a supportive and engaging environment for regular writing practice, journaling helps students overcome common barriers to writing fluency, such as anxiety and lack of confidence. These findings contribute to the growing body of literature on writing instruction and offer practical insights for educators seeking to enhance writing proficiency in diverse classroom settings.

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