



Personal Experience-Based Direct Writing Activity And Elementary Students' Descriptive Writing: A Quasi-Experimental Study

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Abstract. The urgency of this study lies in the need for personal experience-based writing activities to improve elementary students' descriptive writing skills. This study compared the development of descriptive writing skills among students who received a personal experience-based Direct Writing Activity (DWA) and those who received Guided Writing. A quasi-experimental non-equivalent control-group pretest-posttest design was used. Thirty fifth-grade students from two intact classes were included in the analysis, with 15 students in each condition. The intervention group completed prewriting, drafting, draft exchange, revision, and sharing stages, whereas the comparison group received teacher guidance through models, keywords, and guiding questions. Writing performance was assessed using an analytic rubric covering content, organization, grammar, word and sentence choice, and writing mechanics. The intervention group's mean score increased from 61 to 80, with a normalized gain of 0.49, whereas the comparison group's mean increased from 55 to 67, with a normalized gain of 0.18. Posttest scores differed significantly between groups ($Z = -3.206$, $p = .001$, $r = .585$), and the normalized gains also differed significantly, Welch's $t(16.033) = 6.318$, $p < .001$. Teacher and student activities were rated very good in both groups. These findings provide preliminary evidence that students in the personal experience-based DWA class demonstrated greater growth in descriptive writing performance than those in the Guided Writing class. Interpretation is limited by the use of two classes from one school, a small sample, a short intervention, and the absence of interrater reliability evidence.

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Introduction

Writing is a central component of literacy development in elementary education. Through writing, children do more than arrange words and sentences: they learn to generate ideas, organize information, anticipate readers, select linguistic resources, and communicate meaning in a coherent form. Writing is also closely connected with reading because writing activities require learners to understand, transform, and represent information encountered in texts. The writing about reading and explicit writing instruction can strengthen reading comprehension (Nazmudindireja et al.,

2025). Writing should therefore be understood not as an isolated language skill, but as a means through which learners develop knowledge, reasoning, communication, and broader literacy. Early competence is particularly important because written tasks become increasingly frequent across school subjects as students progress through the grades. Learning activities can also be supported by appropriate learning resources and instructional media that are designed according to students' needs and learning objectives (Faturohmah et al., 2025).

Despite its importance, writing is cognitively demanding for elementary students. Producing an effective text requires the writer to generate and select ideas, define a communicative purpose, organize information, formulate sentences, retrieve appropriate vocabulary, and monitor spelling and punctuation. These processes compete for limited attentional resources. The previous studied writer(s)-within-community model locates writing within an interaction among writers' cognitive resources, purposes, available tools, and the social community in which texts are produced. Young writers who are still mastering handwriting, spelling, and sentence construction may devote substantial attention to transcription and mechanics, leaving fewer resources for idea development and organization. Instruction must consequently make the process visible and provide manageable support at each stage (Martalina et al., 2026).

The same complexity is evident in descriptive writing. A descriptive text requires students to select a person, place, object, situation, or experience and elaborate it with relevant details so that readers can construct a clear representation. Naming the object alone is insufficient. Writers must identify salient characteristics, choose sensory or contextual details, order the information, use precise vocabulary, and maintain links across sentences. Meta-analysis showed that composition quality is associated with multiple component skills, including vocabulary knowledge, text-generation fluency, spelling, grammar, and idea organization (Kent & Wanzek, 2016). Weakness in any component may therefore constrain the whole text, while improvements require attention to both meaning and linguistic accuracy.

Initial classroom observations in Grade 5 at SDIT Mutiara Hati Majalengka indicated comparable challenges. Students had difficulty deciding what information to include, expanding ideas into complete paragraphs, establishing relationships among sentences, selecting suitable words, and applying spelling and punctuation consistently. Their texts tended to be short and contained insufficient detail about the object or experience described. The difficulty was visible not only in final products but also at the beginning of the task, when students were asked to select a topic and start writing. Such patterns suggest that asking learners to write and subsequently scoring the product is unlikely to be sufficient. Instruction needs to support idea access, planning, drafting, reviewing, and editing as connected parts of one process.

A substantial body of research indicates that systematic writing instruction can improve elementary students' compositions. The previous studied found positive effects for strategy instruction, process writing, creativity instruction, text-structure teaching, and transcription instruction (Graham et al., 2024). The similarly concluded that interventions for children are more effective when teaching is explicit, goal oriented, and accompanied by opportunities for purposeful practice (Baron & Arbel, 2022). A later meta-analysis showed that effects vary according to the focal instruction and learner characteristics; explicit assistance with planning, drafting, and reviewing generally produces stronger improvement than opportunities to write without sufficient strategic

support (Kim et al., 2021). Evidence-based instruction therefore combines meaningful writing with carefully structured guidance rather than treating the two as competing alternatives. Process writing is especially relevant to these needs. It conceptualizes writing as a recursive sequence that may include planning, drafting, receiving or providing feedback, revising, editing, and completing a text. A draft is not expected to be immediately perfect. Students can first construct meaning, then return to their text to clarify content, reorganize ideas, improve language, and correct mechanics. The meta-analysis found a positive effect of process writing on text quality, although effects differed across contexts and student groups (Graham & Sandmel, 2011).

This variability is important: merely naming the stages does not guarantee improvement. Students need clear purposes, models, prompts, feedback criteria, and sufficient time to use the stages productively. Feedback and revision are pivotal within this process. Useful feedback helps writers recognize the distance between a current draft and the intended characteristics of an effective text. Its value depends on the specificity of the information, learners' ability to interpret it, and an immediate opportunity to revise. The previous study found added value for structured peer-assisted writing when it was integrated with explicit writing instruction (Puranik et al., 2026; De Smedt et al., 2019). The previous study showed that peer revision could increase the quantity and quality of changes made to a current task, although transfer to a new task did not necessarily occur automatically (Allal, 2021). Draft exchange must therefore be scaffolded through criteria, examples of constructive comments, teacher monitoring, and explicit discussion of how comments may be converted into revisions.

Direct Writing Activity (DWA) is one strategy that organizes these elements into a sequence of prewriting, initial drafting, draft exchange, text improvement, and presentation of the final work. During prewriting, learners identify and organize ideas. During drafting, they convert ideas into an initial text without the expectation of immediate perfection. The draft is then shared for comments about content, organization, language, word choice, and mechanics. Learners evaluate the feedback, revise and edit their text, and finally share or submit a completed version. The previous study reported that DWA-based learning materials supported narrative writing in elementary education. However, evidence concerning descriptive-writing outcomes, especially when personal experience is systematically integrated as the source of ideas, remains limited (Habibi et al., 2020).

The present study incorporated personal experience into DWA as the main resource for idea development. This decision responds to a common difficulty that arises before sentence construction: students often do not know what to say. Writing about a familiar experience may give them access to personally stored knowledge about people, places, objects, atmosphere, sequences, emotions, and sensory details. These elements can subsequently be selected and reorganized for a descriptive purpose. Personal relevance does not automatically produce a well-structured text, but it can reduce the initial distance between the learner and the topic and give planning activities concrete material on which to operate.

Personal memories still need instructional mediation. A recalled event can remain fragmented, overly general, or chronologically narrated rather than descriptively elaborated. Guiding questions, idea maps, simple outlines, and discussion help students identify details that serve the writing purpose. From a cognitive perspective, topic knowledge supplies information that can be selected and organized during composing. Easier access to relevant information may free resources for linking ideas, constructing

sentences, and monitoring the emerging text. In this study, personal experience is therefore treated as a cognitive resource embedded within a structured writing process, not as an isolated topic-selection technique.

Personal relevance may also influence how students value the task. Learners are not only complying with a teacher's instruction; they are communicating something connected with their lives. The previous studied showed in a systematic review that writing values, self-beliefs, and goals are associated with engagement and writing outcomes (Camacho et al., 2021). The previous studied report conceptualized writing self-efficacy in terms of ideation, conventions, and self-regulation (Bruning et al., 2013). The present study did not directly assess motivation, self-efficacy, or task value. Consequently, greater engagement through personal experience remains a theoretically plausible explanation rather than an empirically tested mediator of the observed outcome.

Guided Writing was selected as an active comparison condition. It supports young writers through model texts, keywords, guiding questions, teacher modeling, and assistance during composition. Such scaffolding is educationally appropriate because elementary students still need help understanding text expectations and controlling written language. Nevertheless, highly directive guidance may offer fewer opportunities to select an idea source, evaluate a draft from a reader's perspective, or independently decide how to revise. The comparison is therefore not between active instruction and no instruction. Both conditions provide support, but they differ in how ideas are sourced, how guidance is distributed, and how extensively students participate in developing and revising the text.

This distinction matters because the amount of observable activity does not necessarily represent the quality of the cognitive and self-regulatory processes being supported. Strategy instruction that helps writers set goals, plan, monitor, evaluate, and revise has improved writing among diverse learners (Harris et al., 2015). Two classrooms can therefore appear equally active while students engage in different decisions about content and revision. The DWA condition was expected to provide greater space for selecting personally meaningful information, converting it into a draft, responding to another reader, and making decisions about improvements. The observation data were used to document implementation, whereas writing tests were used to evaluate performance.

Previous studies support process approaches, explicit strategy instruction, peer-assisted writing, and teacher-guided composition. Several gaps nevertheless remain. First, international evidence commonly addresses broad writing strategy instruction or narrative, argumentative, and informational genres, while personal experience-based DWA with descriptive performance as the outcome has received limited attention. Second, DWA studies have often emphasized instructional-material development or overall score changes rather than explaining personal experience as a resource for idea generation. Third, little is known about whether the combined sequence of accessing experience, drafting, exchanging drafts, and revising is associated with greater growth than an active Guided Writing condition in an Indonesian elementary-school context.

The contribution of this study lies not simply in asking students to write about personal experience, but in integrating that experience systematically across the DWA stages. The proposed instructional logic is that personal experience supplies accessible content; prewriting supports the selection and organization of that content; drafting

turns it into an initial text; feedback provides an external basis for evaluation; and revision improves the text in response to identified needs. The study examines the outcome of this combined sequence through a quasi-experimental comparison of two intact classes. It does not isolate the causal contribution of each component, and the proposed mechanisms are interpreted cautiously.

This study aimed to compare improvement in descriptive writing performance between students who received personal experience-based DWA and those who received Guided Writing. It also described teacher and student activities during the implementation of both conditions as evidence about instructional enactment. The principal question was whether the DWA class would demonstrate greater score growth than the comparison class. Because the study involved only two intact classes from one school and a limited number of participants, the findings are framed as preliminary and context dependent rather than as a definitive causal estimate that can be generalized to all elementary students.

Method

Design and Participants

This quantitative study employed a quasi-experimental non-equivalent control-group pretest–posttest design. The design was selected because the research was conducted in existing classes and individual students could not be randomly assigned. Two intact classes served as the intervention and comparison groups. Both completed a pretest, received different instructional conditions across four meetings, and completed a posttest after instruction. The intervention sequence can be represented as O1–X1–O2 and the comparison sequence as O3–X2–O4, where O denotes measurement and X denotes the instructional condition.

The study was conducted in May 2026 at SDIT Mutiara Hati, Majalengka Regency, West Java, Indonesia. Participants were fifth-grade students enrolled in the 2025/2026 academic year. The initial population consisted of 32 students in two classes of 16. The two classes were assigned to conditions by lottery. Class VA became the intervention group and received personal experience-based DWA; Class VB became the comparison group and received Guided Writing. Because randomization occurred at the class rather than individual level, the study remained a classroom-based quasi-experiment.

One student in each group did not complete the posttest. Because the analysis required paired pretest and posttest scores, these two students were excluded. The final analysis included 30 complete cases, 15 in each group. No values were imputed for the missing posttests.

Table 1. *Participant Flow*

Stage	Intervention	Comparison	Total
Students enrolled	16	16	32
Did not complete posttest	1	1	2
Complete cases analyzed	15	15	30

Intervention and Comparison Conditions

Both groups received four Indonesian-language writing lessons. The main difference was the strategy used to organize composing. The intervention class used personal experience-based DWA, whereas the comparison class used Guided Writing. Both followed the curricular content and instructional objectives established by the school.

In the DWA condition, instruction comprised five recurring stages. During prewriting, students selected an experience close to their lives and identified information that could become writing material. The teacher used prompts to elicit people, places, objects, situations, events, and sensory details. During drafting, learners expanded their plan into an initial text, prioritizing content development and coherence. During draft exchange, peers, small groups, or the teacher commented on clarity, organization, language, diction, and mechanics. During improvement, students evaluated the comments and revised or edited their draft. During sharing, they completed and read or presented the final text. In the Guided Writing condition, the teacher activated prior knowledge, clarified the lesson purpose, provided examples, keywords, guiding questions, and directions for developing sentences and paragraphs. Students composed with this assistance and completed basic editing before receiving reinforcement from the teacher. Guided Writing was thus an active comparison rather than a no-treatment condition.

The sequence included a descriptive-writing pretest, four instructional meetings, and a descriptive-writing posttest. Lesson topics addressed writing as communication, an advice pantun, conjunction use, and a simple persuasive text. These varied materials were used to practice general writing processes and supporting components, including idea development, sentence construction, linking words, drafting, feedback, and revision. Because not every lesson taught the descriptive genre, the intervention is described as process-oriented writing instruction evaluated through descriptive performance; it should not be interpreted as four exclusive descriptive-writing lessons.

Table 2. Study Sequence

Stage	Activity
Pretest	Descriptive-writing performance task before instruction
Meeting 1	Writing as a means of communicating information
Meeting 2	Writing an advice pantun
Meeting 3	Constructing sentences with conjunctions
Meeting 4	Writing a simple persuasive text
Posttest	Descriptive-writing performance task after instruction

Measures and Data Collection

Writing performance was measured with a constructed-response task requiring each student to produce a descriptive text from the specified prompt. An analytic rubric adapted from the previous studied assessed content or ideas, organization, grammar, word and sentence choice, and spelling and punctuation. Each component was scored from 1 to 4. The minimum raw score was 5 and the maximum was 20; scores were converted to a 0–100 scale by dividing the obtained score by 20 and multiplying by 100.

The content component addressed clarity of the described object, relevance to the topic, completeness of development, and connection with personal experience as specified in the task. Organization addressed text completeness and orderly presentation. Grammar concerned the frequency and comprehensibility consequences of errors. Word and sentence choice concerned diction and sentence effectiveness, while spelling and punctuation represented mechanics. The instrument underwent qualitative expert judgment for content, construct, and language. The available documentation did not include a quantitative validation coefficient or interrater reliability estimate; neither is therefore reported. This limitation matters because raters and tasks can contribute to writing-score variation (Kim et al., 2017; Uzun et al., 2019). Implementation was observed during all four meetings to describe teacher and student activity. Teacher

observation covered lesson opening, core activities, and closure; the homeroom teacher in each class served as observer. Student indicators reflected the stages of the respective strategy. Scores were converted to percentages by dividing the obtained score by the maximum and multiplying by 100. Categories were very poor (0–19%), poor (20–39%), adequate (40–59%), good (60–79%), and very good (80–100%). Observation data documented implementation descriptively and were not treated as an inferential measure of effectiveness.

Data Analysis

Analyses were conducted in IBM SPSS Statistics version 26 with alpha set at .05. Pretest and posttest scores were summarized using n, minimum, maximum, and mean. Improvement was calculated as normalized gain, $g = (\text{posttest} - \text{pretest}) / (100 - \text{pretest})$. Gains were classified as high ($g \geq .70$), moderate ($.30 \leq g < .70$), or low ($g < .30$). Shapiro–Wilk tests assessed distributional assumptions and Levene’s test assessed homogeneity of variance. Pretest means were compared using an independent-samples t test. Posttest scores were compared with a Mann–Whitney test because one group departed from normality. Normalized gains were compared using Welch’s independent-samples t test because variances were unequal. SPSS output displayed as .000 is reported as $p < .001$. Effect size for the Mann–Whitney comparison was calculated as $r = |Z|/\sqrt{N}$.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted under institutional research authorization issued by Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung through Research Permit No. B.2689/Un.05/III.2/II.0.25/04/2026, dated April 30, 2026. Permission to conduct the study at the research site was subsequently granted by SDIT Mutiara Hati Majalengka through Letter No. 400.3.5.I/016/Disdik-SDS, dated May 30, 2026. The research activities were coordinated with the school authorities and conducted in accordance with the school’s applicable procedures. The data were used solely for research and academic reporting purposes. Students’ identities were protected throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting. Participants were represented by anonymous codes, and the findings were reported only in aggregate form. These letters constituted institutional and site-level permission to conduct the research and should not be interpreted as approval from a formal research ethics committee.

Results and Discussion

Results

Table 3. *Descriptive Statistics for Writing Performance*

Measure	Intervention	Comparison
Students	15	15
Pretest minimum	40	40
Pretest maximum	85	80
Pretest mean	61	55
Posttest minimum	65	55
Posttest maximum	95	85
Posttest mean	80	67
Raw change	19	12
N-gain minimum	.25	.11
N-gain maximum	.83	.25
Mean N-gain	.49	.18
N-gain category	Moderate	Low

Before instruction, the intervention group had a mean score of 61 and the comparison group a mean of 55. After four meetings, the means increased to 80 and 67, respectively. The raw changes were 19 and 12 points; thus, both groups improved descriptively, but the intervention group improved seven points more. Its mean normalized gain was .49, classified as moderate, compared with .18, classified as low, in the comparison group. The descriptive difference in normalized gain was 31.

Instructional Implementation

Table 4. Teacher and Student Activity Percentages

Component	M1	M2	M3	M4	Mean
Teacher—intervention	90.62	87.50	90.62	100.00	92.19
Students—intervention	95.27	90.75	93.33	95.27	93.66
Teacher—comparison	93.33	86.66	90.00	100.00	92.50
Students—comparison	90.59	89.29	93.59	93.59	91.77

All activity percentages were in the very-good category. Mean teacher activity was nearly identical across conditions, while student activity was descriptively 1.89 percentage points higher in the intervention group. No inferential test was conducted because there were only four meetings and the observations were intended to describe implementation. The displayed means were recalculated directly from the four meeting percentages.

Baseline Assessment

Table 5. Pretest Analyses

Test	Statistic	df	p	Decision
Shapiro-Wilk, intervention	.969	15	.841	No evidence of nonnormality
Shapiro-Wilk, comparison	.977	15	.947	No evidence of nonnormality
Levene	.351	1; 28	.558	No evidence of unequal variances
Independent t test	.449	28	.657	Not significant

There was insufficient statistical evidence of a pretest difference, $t(28) = .449$, $p = .657$. The standardized mean difference derived from the t statistic was approximately $d = .16$, indicating a small baseline difference. However, a nonsignificant result does not establish that the groups were identical, particularly with only 15 students per group.

Posttest Comparison

Table 6. Posttest analyses

Test/measure	Intervention	Comparison/result
Shapiro-Wilk	$W = .877$; $p = .042$	$W = .971$; $p = .866$
Mann-Whitney	$Z = -3.206$	$p = .001$
Effect size	$r = .585$	Large

Because the intervention posttest scores departed from normality, a Mann-Whitney test was used. The distributions or ranks differed significantly, $Z = -3.206$, $p = .001$. The calculated effect size was $r = .585$, conventionally interpreted as large. The direction favored the intervention group, whose mean was 80 compared with 67 in the comparison group. The original output available for this article did not provide U or mean ranks; these values were not reconstructed.

Normalized-Gain Comparison

Table 7. Normalized-Gain Analyses

Test	Statistic	df	p	Decision
Shapiro-Wilk, intervention	.933	15	.303	No evidence of nonnormality
Shapiro-Wilk, comparison	.922	15	.206	No evidence of nonnormality

Test	Statistic	df	p	Decision
Levene	15.806	1; 28	< .001	Unequal variances
Welch t test	6.318	16.033	< .001	Significant

Welch's test indicated that normalized gain was statistically higher in the intervention group than in the comparison group, $t(16.033) = 6.318$, $p < .001$. Within the two classes studied, students receiving personal experience-based DWA therefore demonstrated greater score growth than students receiving Guided Writing.

Discussion

This study compared the development of descriptive writing performance in two intact fifth-grade classes receiving different forms of supported writing instruction. Three principal findings emerged. First, the analysis did not detect a statistically significant difference in baseline scores, although the intervention mean was descriptively higher. Second, posttest scores in the DWA class were significantly higher, with a large rank-based effect size. Third, normalized gain was significantly greater in the DWA class. Teacher and student activity was rated very good in both conditions, indicating that the comparison class also received actively implemented instruction.

The high level of student activity also indicates that active student involvement is an important aspect of instructional implementation. This finding is in line with the previous studied, who used observation and performance-based activities to examine student engagement in fifth-grade elementary education (Khotimah et al., 2025). Their findings support the importance of involving students actively in learning activities rather than relying solely on teacher-directed instruction. The intervention-group increase from 61 to 80 is consistent with the view of writing as a staged, recursive process. Elementary writers must coordinate idea generation, organization, sentence formulation, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation. When all demands are imposed simultaneously, attention is divided between constructing meaning and controlling language. DWA separated the work into planning, drafting, feedback, revision, and completion, enabling learners to address different demands at different moments. This interpretation aligns with the positive effects of process and strategy instruction identified by the previous studied (Graham & Sandmel, 2011; Kim et al., 2021).

Personal experience may have supported the prewriting stage by supplying accessible information. Instead of beginning with an unfamiliar or abstract topic, learners could recall people, places, objects, atmosphere, actions, and sensory details. The teacher's prompts and planning activities then helped convert memories into selectable material. The likely advantage is not familiarity alone but the interaction between familiar content and an explicit composing procedure. Experience supplied possible ideas; the DWA stages supplied a route for selecting, ordering, expressing, evaluating, and improving those ideas.

The proposed mechanism can be represented as movement from personal experience to idea access, from ideas to a draft, from feedback to evaluation, and from evaluation to revision and a stronger text. This is a theoretical interpretation rather than a tested mediation model. The study did not independently measure idea-generation fluency, cognitive load, task value, self-efficacy, or the quality of individual revisions. It is therefore impossible to determine whether idea access, peer response, revision, or another feature made the largest contribution. A factorial or process-tracing study would be required to isolate those components. Draft exchange may have broadened students' awareness of readers. Reading a peer's work and receiving comments can

reveal that a detail clear to the writer is not necessarily clear to someone else. Structured peer-assisted writing has produced added value when combined with explicit instruction (De Smedt et al., 2018). The another studied also reported that peer revision could increase the number and quality of revisions within an ongoing task (Allal, 2021). These findings support the instructional plausibility of draft exchange, but also emphasize structure. General praise or correction without explanation offers limited direction, whereas criteria concerning clarity, missing detail, organization, language, and mechanics can prompt more useful action (De smedt et al., 2020).

Revision may also have allowed students to separate content development from language correction. During the first draft, they could prioritize meaning and continuity; after feedback, they could revisit structure, grammar, diction, spelling, and punctuation. This distribution of attention is particularly relevant to young writers whose transcription and language control are not fully automatic. However, the study did not preserve or code peer comments, first drafts, revised drafts, or types of changes. The contribution of feedback and revision should therefore be treated as a plausible mechanism rather than a demonstrated cause. The comparison group also improved, from 55 to 67. This finding should not be minimized. Guided Writing provided models, keywords, prompts, questions, and teacher support, all of which can help elementary learners begin and complete a task. The result does not show that Guided Writing was ineffective. It shows that, in these two classes and across this short sequence, the DWA group demonstrated greater growth. The difference may reflect additional opportunities to choose idea sources, exchange drafts, and make revision decisions, but learner autonomy and self-regulation were not directly measured.

The posttest comparison produced $Z = -3.206$, $p = .001$, and $r = .585$, while the gain comparison produced Welch's $t(16.033) = 6.318$, $p < .001$. The convergence of these analyses strengthens the descriptive conclusion that the DWA class developed more strongly. The findings are compatible with the previous studied, who supported DWA for elementary narrative writing, yet this is not a direct replication (Habibi et al., 2020). Their work focused on narrative-oriented materials, whereas the present study assessed descriptive performance after lessons with varied writing content. The common implication concerns the value of an organized writing process rather than proof of a genre-specific effect.

The intervention pretest mean was six points above the comparison mean even though the independent t test was nonsignificant. With 15 students per group, statistical power to identify small baseline differences was limited. A nonsignificant result should not be interpreted as proof of equivalence. Ideally, individual-level data would be analyzed using an approach that adjusted posttest performance for baseline scores, such as analysis of covariance, while accounting for the clustered class structure. Such reanalysis was not possible with the available summary data. The reported posttest and normalized-gain analyses were retained, and their interpretation remains deliberately cautious. The observation data add implementation context. Teacher activity differed by only .31 percentage points between conditions, and both means exceeded 92%. Student activity also exceeded 91% in both groups. Thus, the result is unlikely to be explained simply by one group receiving an active lesson and the other receiving an inactive lesson. At the same time, uniformly high ratings suggest a possible ceiling effect. A brief checklist may capture whether planned actions occurred but not the cognitive quality of participation, feedback specificity, or depth of revision. Observation percentages are therefore evidence of enactment, not a mediator or independent confirmation of

effectiveness.

The findings suggest several practical applications. Teachers should consider replacing one-step “write and submit” tasks with time for planning, drafting, feedback, revision, and completion. Personal experience can serve as an accessible starting point through prompts about who was involved, where it occurred, what objects were present, what the writer noticed, and which sensory details would help a reader. Simple idea maps can prevent memories from remaining unstructured. The final goal should still be communicative clarity: experience supplies content, while the genre purpose determines which details are selected and how they are organized.

Peer feedback requires explicit preparation. Elementary students can use a short guide asking whether the object is clear, which detail is missing, whether the order makes sense, which sentence is difficult to understand, and where spelling or punctuation needs attention. Teachers should model respectful, specific comments and show how a writer may accept, modify, or reject a suggestion after considering its usefulness. Such guidance turns draft exchange into a learning event rather than a ritual exchange of papers. It also protects students from interpreting every peer correction as necessarily accurate. Guided Writing remains appropriate for learners who require intensive scaffolding. The present findings do not justify removing teacher guidance. A more useful implication is to balance support with opportunities for decision-making. Teachers may provide strong modeling and prompts early, integrate structured DWA cycles as students become familiar with the process, and gradually reduce prompts as learners plan and revise more independently. Future comparative research could examine this gradual-release combination rather than treating the two strategies as mutually exclusive alternatives.

Several limitations constrain inference. Only two intact classes from one school participated, with one class assigned to each condition. Any observed group effect is therefore inseparable from unmeasured class characteristics, including peer composition, classroom climate, or other contextual factors. Thirty complete cases provide imprecise estimates and limited generalizability. Two students, one from each group, did not complete the posttest. Complete-case analysis may be biased if their absence was associated with writing ability or response to instruction, even though attrition was numerically balanced. Measurement limitations are also important. The available documentation did not provide quantitative evidence of rubric validation or interrater reliability. Writing scores contain potential variation attributable to raters and tasks (Kim et al., 2017; Uzun et al., 2019). Without independent double scoring and an appropriate reliability coefficient, the consistency of scoring cannot be verified. In addition, the content rubric included a connection to personal experience. Because personal experience was emphasized in the intervention, greater alignment between the treatment and one scoring criterion cannot be excluded. A treatment-neutral rubric would reduce this potential source of favorability.

The four instructional meetings did not focus exclusively on descriptive text; they included a pantun, conjunctions, and simple persuasive writing. The most defensible conclusion is therefore that DWA stages implemented across a varied writing sequence were followed by better performance on a descriptive task. The data do not establish that four lessons of descriptive-genre instruction caused the difference. The short duration and absence of a delayed posttest also leave the durability and transfer of learning unknown. Immediate improvement may not persist or generalize to a new topic, genre, or audience.

Future studies should include multiple schools and several classes in each condition, determine sample size through a priori power analysis, and use designs or models that account for clustering. They should employ independent raters blinded to condition, report intraclass correlation or another suitable reliability estimate, and use a rubric whose criteria do not reproduce the intervention emphasis. Instructional content should be consistently aligned with the target genre when a genre-specific claim is intended. Immediate and delayed posttests with unfamiliar prompts would permit analysis of maintenance and transfer.

Process data would clarify how change occurs. Researchers could retain idea maps, first drafts, peer comments, revised drafts, and final texts, then code additions, deletions, reorganizations, linguistic corrections, and substantive revisions. Measures of writing self-efficacy, task value, motivation, and self-regulation could test explanations proposed in the present discussion. Classroom observations could distinguish behavioral participation from cognitive engagement and assess the specificity of feedback. These additions would move the evidence from a score comparison toward a defensible account of instructional mechanisms. Overall, the findings provide preliminary evidence that the personal experience-based DWA class demonstrated greater growth in descriptive writing performance than the Guided Writing class. The observed advantage may reflect the combined contribution of accessible personal knowledge, staged composition, draft exchange, and revision, but their relative contributions remain unknown. The study supports the feasibility of DWA as a classroom alternative while also identifying the design, measurement, and reporting improvements needed before stronger causal or generalizable claims can be made.

Conclusion

Students who received personal experience-based Direct Writing Activity demonstrated greater improvement in descriptive writing performance than those who received Guided Writing. The intervention mean increased from 61 to 80 with a normalized gain of .49, whereas the comparison mean increased from 55 to 67 with a normalized gain of .18. Posttest scores differed significantly with a large effect size ($Z = -3.206$, $p = .001$, $r = .585$), and normalized gains also differed, Welch's $t(16.033) = 6.318$, $p < .001$. The findings nevertheless remain preliminary. The study involved only 30 students in two classes from one school, used one class per condition, lasted four meetings, lacked a delayed posttest, and did not provide interrater reliability evidence. Moreover, the lessons were not exclusively descriptive and the rubric included personal experience as a content criterion, potentially favoring alignment with the intervention. Future studies should involve multiple schools and classes, use independent blinded raters, report interrater reliability, align instruction consistently with the outcome genre, employ treatment-neutral scoring criteria, and include delayed assessment. Analyses of idea maps, drafts, peer comments, and revisions are also needed to identify how personal experience and the DWA stages contribute to writing development. The study implies that personal experience-based writing activities can enhance elementary students' descriptive writing skills. However, the study is limited by its quasi-experimental design and specific participant characteristics, which may restrict generalizability. Future research should involve larger and more diverse samples, longer intervention periods, and comparisons across different instructional contexts to examine the consistency and sustainability of the approach in developing students' writing abilities.

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