Portfolio Assessment's Impact on Writing Ability of English Foreign Language (Efl) Learners

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Abstract: This study deals with two objectives: to investigate portfolio assessment's impact on EFL learners' writing ability as well as to figure out portfolio assessment's effects on the students' writing ability in terms of focus, elaboration, organization, conventions, and vocabulary. The subjects taken are 4F as the experimental class and 4G as the control class. To derive all data, students should make out some writings during treatment period. Then, they picked their three best writings for final evaluation/post-test. Then, from all data recorded, it was concluded that portfolio assessment provided positive impacts on students' writing ability. It was clearly seen from student's writing ability of the experimental class that was better than before. The pre-test mean score of the experimental group was 67.19 and the post-test mean score was 80.65. This implied the enhancement score for the experimental class after getting treatment was 13.46 points. On the contrary, the result of students' writing score of control class did not increase significantly. The pre-test mean score of control class was 68.13 and the post-test score was 73.42. Then, as the students' writing ability of experimental group increased, their writing ability in terms of focus, elaboration, organization, conventions, and vocabulary also improved significantly. However, unlike the experimental group, the control group students' writing ability in terms focus, elaboration, organization, conventions, and vocabulary did not increase. Even, there were two aspects came to degradation. To add, there was significant difference of students' writing ability between experimental and control class. I got that the t-test value for students' writing score was 5.268. It means that $t_0 > t_{table}$. As a result, the positive impact offered by portfolio assessment on students' writing ability cannot be doubted anymore. Considering the findings, some suggestions are offered here. First, the lecturer should implement portfolio in teaching writing. Second, the students should have more practice in writing and do not easily surrender to achieve good result through writing process.

Keywords: portfolio, assessment, writing skill

I. Introduction

English as first foreign language that is taught in Indonesia also needs paying more attention since learning foreign language in classrooms is much more difficult than learning English as a second language. Besides the choice of teaching methods, the choice of assessments should also be considered and taken into account as another element that gives direct impact to the success of English learning. Based on Reid (2002), among four skills above, recently, writing is receiving great interest and a significant role in second and foreign language education once it is used as a support skill in language learning.

However, currently in writing instruction, teachers tend to apply a product-oriented technique. In this technique, writing is regarded as a skill that can be accomplished only in a limited period of time. In product-oriented atmosphere, a student's 'developing phase' is not taken into account as another element that should be given appreciation. There is no chance for students to make self-reflection towards their own works and see their own progress. The standardized written test given at the end of the school term is seen as particularly antithesis to the process approach to writing (Moya & O'Malley, 1994). Hence, we need another type of assessment that places writing as a process approach.

Curriculum of 2013 has been released and started to be implemented in all educational practices in Indonesia, there should be a paradigm shift of the use of assessment kinds. This curriculum recommends the use of authentic assessment that is also known as performance-based assessment since it requires students to perform proficiency by doing something, as well as alternative assessment because it is 'another type' of traditional assessment. The focus of authentic assessment is not on how much students master knowledge like traditional assessment looks like. However, it focuses on the realization of students' knowledge into skills that are meaningful in their real-life world. This is in line with what has been presented by Mueller (2012: 1), authentic assessment is "a form of assessment in which students are asked to perform real-world tasks that demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills."

There are eight kinds of authentic assessment as offered by O'Malley and Pierce (1996: 12). Among those eight kinds, portfolio is considered as good assessment to measure students' writing skill. Hedge (2000) states that portfolio assessment is seen as a more comprehensive portrait of students' writing ability than one essay composed under restricted circumstances. According to Hamp-Lyons & Condon (2000, p.61), portfolios

are considered to be useful especially for non-native English students because they "provide a broader measure of what students can do, and because they replace the timed writing context, which has long been claimed to be particularly discriminatory against non-native writers". Portfolio assessment is an ongoing process. It does not evaluate progress and performance of the learners through an impromptu paper and pencil test or enable instructors evaluating their student's performances within a very short and limited period of time. By such an emphasis on writing process, students learn how to develop their writing.

This study investigates three main statements:

- 1. to what extent is the students' writing ability of the fourth semester which applied portfolio assessment?
- 2. Does portfolio assessment improve the student's writing ability in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics?
- 3. Is there significant difference of students' writing ability between the fourth semester students who were taught by applying portfolio assessment and those who were taught without portfolio assessment?

II. Review of Related Literature

1. Assessment

The term "assessment" is often regarded as the same as the term of "testing". However, they are quite different one another. Brown (2004: 4) gives some explanation about the difference between assessment and testing as the following

Testing is a method of measuring a person's ability, knowledge, or performance in a given domain. In contrast, assessment is an ongoing process that encompasses a much wider domain. Tests are prepared administratively occurring at identifiable times in a curriculum when learners muster all their faculties to offer peak performance, knowing that their responses are being measured and evaluated. On the other hand, assessments can occur anytime, and the students sometimes do not know that their performance is measured.

All in all, from the explanation above, it can be concluded that tests always serve any judgment for the students' performance whereas assessments do not always serve any judgment for the students' performance, since assessment is a process for the students to make any improvement and progress. For instance, when students try to answer the teacher's question or they ask questions to the teacher, in this case, assessment occurs. Furthermore, when students offer opinions, comments, try to pronounce new word correctly; and the teacher corrects the students' pronunciation or gives compliments to the students by saying 'good job', 'nice work', 'your English is really improving', here the teacher does what we call assessment because the teacher serves the students with facility of "skill forming situation".

To make the difference clearer, Brown (2004: 4) argues that tests are subset of assessment—all tests are assessment, but not all assessments are tests. In short, tests are one of assessment types. There are some types of assessments existing in educational practices, namely informal and formal assessments as well as formative and summative assessments.

2. Authentic Assessment

Authentic assessment, by some experts, is defined under some different terms. Some of which are alternative assessments, performance assessment, and direct assessment (Mueller, 2012: 5-6). Authentic assessment is sometimes called alternative assessment because it is "another" type of assessment which is commonly known traditional assessment.

Mueller (2012: 1) defines authentic assessment as a form of assessment in which students are asked to perform real-world tasks that demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills. Also, Wiggins (1993, p.229) in Mueller (2012, p.1) states:

[Authentic assessment is] ...engaging and worthy problems or questions of importance, in which students must use knowledge to fashion performances effectively and creatively. The tasks are either replicas of or analogous to the kinds of problems faced by adult citizens and consumers or professionals in the field.

He also adds "evaluation becomes authentic when we directly examine the noteworthy performances of students" (1993, p. 78). Meanwhile, Stiggins (1987, p. 34) in Mueller has also defined this form of assessment under the name of performance assessment in this way: "performance assessments call upon the examinee to demonstrate specific skills and competencies, that is, to apply the skills and knowledge they have mastered". Shohamy, (1995) and Norries et al., (1998) cited by Brown (2004: 254) argue that performance assessment is sometimes merely called performance-based assessment.

a. Types of Authentic Assessment

There are some types of authentic assessment. Some of which offered by Brown (2004: 256-270) are portfolios, journals, conferences and interviews, as well as observations. Furthermore, O'Malley and Pierce (1996, p. 12) offer eight basic types of authentic assessment in language learning; those are:

Table 2.1. Types of Authentic Assessment Offered by O'Malley and Pierce

Assessment	Description	Advantages		
Oral interviews	Teacher asks students question about	-Informal and relaxed content		
	personal background, activities, readings	-Conducted over successive days with each student.		
	and interests.	-Record observation on an interview guide		
Story or	Students retell main ideas or selected	-Students produce oral report		
text retelling	details of text experienced through	-Can be scored on content or language components		
	listening or reading	-Scored with rubric or rating scale		
		-Can determine reading comprehension, reading strategies, and		
		language development.		
Writing samples	Students generate narrative, expository,	-Students produce written document		
	persuasive, or reference paper.	-Can be scored on content or language components		
		-Scored with rubric or rating scale		
		-Can determine writing processes		
Projects or	rojects or Students complete project in content -Students make formal presentat			
exhibitions	area, working individually or in pairs	-Can observe oral and written products and thinking skills		
		-Scored with rubric or rating scale		
Experiments/	Students complete experiment or	-Students make oral presentation, written report, or both		
Demonstrations	demonstrate use of materials	-Can observe oral and written products and thinking skills		
		-Scored with rubric or rating scale		
Constructed-	Students respond in writing to open-	-Students produce written report		
Response Items	ended questions	-Usually scored on substantive information and thinking skills		
		-Scored with rubric and rating scale		
Teacher	Teacher observes student attention,	-Setting is classroom environment		
Observations	response to instructional materials, or	-Takes little time		
	interactions with other students.	-Record observations with anecdotal notes or rating scale		
Portfolios	Focused on collection of students work	-Integrate information from a number of sources		
	to show progress over time	-Gives overall picture of student performance and learning		
		-Strong student involvement and commitment		
		-Calls for student self-assessment		

3. Portfolio Assessment in EFL Writing Context

Referring to term 'portfolio', Mueller offers definition "portfolio is a collection of a student's work specifically selected to tell a particular story about the student" (2014: 1). Also, Genesee and Upshur (1996: 99) cited by Brown (2004: 256) defines portfolio as "a purposeful collection of students' work that demonstrates ... their efforts, progress, and achievements in given areas". Arter and Spandel (1992, 36) defines a student portfolio as a purposeful collection of student work that tells the story of the student's efforts, progress, or achievement in (a) given area(s). In the context of writing instruction and assessment, a portfolio can be defined as "a collection of texts the writer has produced over a defined period of time" (Hamp-Lyons, 1991, p. 262) and the collection may consist of "selected but not necessarily polished or finished pieces" (Privette, 1993, p. 60). Hedge (2000) states that portfolio assessment is seen as a more comprehensive portrait of students' writing ability than one essay composed under restricted circumstances.

According to Hamp-Lyons & Condon (2000, p.61), portfolios are considered to be useful especially for non-native English students because they "provide a broader measure of what students can do, and because they replace the timed writing context, which has long been claimed to be particularly discriminatory against non-native writers". The classroom portfolio is intended to enhance teaching and learning in a learning centered framework (Hirvela & Sweetland, 2005). A well-developed student portfolio emphasizes what the students can do to participate in an ongoing modified instruction in which assessment takes place all the time (Valencia, 1990). They appear to show the greatest promise in enhancing different dimensions of learning and promoting student autonomy (Chen, 2006) and they stimulate student ownership of their work (Genesee & Upshur, 1996; Tierney, Carter & Desai, 1991).In education however, the portfolio provides descriptions of students writing and reading experiences (Wolf, 1989). It has been observed that portfolio assessment is a useful system, which benefits the writing instructors, the students, and the whole writing program as it reveals to us the processes of writing and how it is evaluated (Wolf, 1989).

a. The Characteristics of Portfolio

O'Malley and Pierce offer characteristics of portfolio like the above explanation, Yancey (1992) set four principles and features to emphasize the fundamentally developmental character of a valid portfolio system. Those are:

- 1) A portfolio is a collection of work, but it is a collection that is a subset of a larger archive. Theoretically, the archive is the whole of a student's work, but more practically and more frequently, it is a subset of writing completed in a class, a program, and a school.
- 2) The process by which the subset is created is one of selection, which is the second principle of portfolios. How entries are selected varies according to the rhetorical situation contextualizing the portfolio.
- 3) A third principle is reflection, the process by which a student explains his or her learning.

4) A fourth principle is communication, in the sense that the writing portfolio, like any portfolio, will communicate something about the writer, about what he or she values, about the context in which the writer has worked, and so on.

4. Writing Skill

Siahaan presents the definition of writing skill as following:

The written productive language skill is called writing. It is skill of a writer to communicate information to a reader or group of readers. Her or his skill is also realized by his/her ability to apply the rules of language to transfer the information in his/her mind to the readers effectively. The ability includes all the correct grammatical aspects of the language, the types of information transferred, and the rhetoric conducted in a communicative event (2008:2).

a. Types of Writing Performance

Brown (2004: 220) gives four types of writing performance which each of them reflects the uniqueness of the skill area. Those four types are:

- 1) Imitative
 - In Brown's opinions, imitative writing performance means producing written language in which the learner must attain skills in the fundamental, basic tasks of writing letters, words, punctuation, and very brief sentences. At this stage, the primary focus is the form.
- 2) Intensive (controlled)
 - In intensive writing, the concern is primarily on producing appropriate vocabulary within a context, collocations and idioms, as well as correct grammatical features.
- 3) Responsive
 - Responsive writing requires students to have had deep understanding and skills in the fundamentals of sentence-level grammar, since in this phase, students have been required to perform at a limited discourse level, connecting sentences into a paragraph and creating a logically connected sequence of two or three paragraphs. Thus, these connected paragraphs will achieve the objectives of the written text. As the name "responsive" implies, tasks in this writing type respond to pedagogical directives, list of criteria, outlines, and other guidelines like some characteristics that every text type has.
- 4) Extensive

He reveals some explanations about extensive writing like the following "extensive writing assists the writers to focus on achieving a purpose, organizing and developing ideas logically, using details to support or illustrate ideas, demonstrating syntactic and lexical variety, and in many cases, engaging in the process of multiple drafts to achieve a final product. Considering the characteristics above, some examples of extensive writing are a term paper, a major research project report, or thesis."

III. Methodology of The Research

This research applied quasi experimental research design which used pre-test and post-test. The subject of this study were 62 EFL learners. They were fourth semester students of English department of PGRI University of Semarang. Then writing test was used as the instrument of this study. Then all students were scored by the scoring rubric based on the aspects of writing such as grammar, content, vocabulary, organization, and mechanic. Descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations were used in order to check the underlying assumptions of the statistical procedures applied in the study. For the purpose of testing the hypotheses, inferential statistical procedures were applied. To test the first and second null hypotheses, the independent samples <u>t-test.</u>

IV. Findings And Discussion

A. Findings

1. The students' writing ability of the fourth semester which applied portfolio assessment

After the students from experimental class made out some writings during the treatment period, they had to choose their three best writings for final evaluation or post-test. Then, those three students' writings were scored to know the students' writing ability as the impact of the use of portfolio assessment.

According to the pre-test, this experimental group mean score was 67.19 where 20.19 as the average of content aspect, 13.52 as the average of organization aspect, 13.45 as the average of vocabulary aspect, 16.65 as the average of grammar aspect, and 3.39 as the average of mechanics aspect. Meanwhile the result of post test (three best writing) shows the different result/score. The mean score was 80.65 where 24.58 as the average of content aspect, 15.87 as the average of organization aspect, 16.1 as the average of vocabulary aspect, 20.23 as the average of grammar aspect, and 3.87 as the average of mechanics aspect.

2. The improvement of the student's writing ability in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics as the effect of portfolio assessment

System for scoring the students' writing ability in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics was done by employing analytic scoring. Here, the writer scored the students' writings by dividing the scores into five aspects: content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, mechanics. The writer, first, calculated the mean score of each aspect by adding up all the individual scores of each aspect and dividing by the sum total students in the class.

a. The students who were taught by using portfolio assessment

The Percentage of Each Aspects of Writing in Pre-test Score of Experimental Group

Aspect	Mean Score	Percentage of Each Aspect	Maximum Score
Content	20.19	67.3%	30
Organization	13.52	67.6%	20
Vocabulary	13.45	67.25%	20
Grammar	16.65	66.6%	25
Mechanics	3.39	67.8%	5

For the computation result of post-test mean score of the experimental class in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, mechanics is clearly described below:

Table 4.6. The Percentage of Each Aspect of Writing in Post-test Score of Experimental Group

Aspect	Mean Score	Percentage of Each Aspect	Maximum Score
Content	24.58	81.93%	30
Organization	15.87	79.35%	20
Vocabulary	16.1	80.5%	20
Grammar	20.23	80.92%	25
Mechanics	3.87	77.4%	5

From the table above, it is clearly informed that the experimental students' writing ability in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics has increased after treatment was given. For the content aspect, the improvement score was 4.39, for the organization 2.35. The vocabulary improvement was 2.65, the grammar was 3.58, and the mechanics was 0.48.

To sum up, the improvement of the experimental students' writing ability in terms of those five aspects (content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics) is in line with their significant enhancement in writing ability as explained in the previous findings.

b. The students who were taught without implementing portfolio assessment For the simpler one, pay attention to the following table:

Table 4.8. The Percentage of Each Aspect of Writing in Pre-test Score of Control Group

Aspect	Mean Score	Percentage of Each Aspect	Maximum Score
Content	20.45	68.17%	30
Organization	13.84	69.2%	20
Vocabulary	13.87	69.35%	20
Grammar	16.39	65.56%	25
Mechanics	3.58	71.6%	5

For the computation result of post-test mean score of the control class in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, mechanics, it is clearly described below:

Table 4.9. The Percentage of Each Aspect of Writing in Post-test Score of Control Group

Aspect	Mean Score	Percentage of Each Aspect	Maximum Score
Content	22.52	75.07%	30
Organization	13.81	69.05%	20
Vocabulary	16.55	82.75%	20
Grammar	16.26	65.04%	25
Mechanics	4.29	85.8%	5

From the table, it is clear that the control students' writing ability in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics did not increase significantly. Further, it was found that there were two aspects decreasing: organization and grammar. The content element just improved 2.07. The vocabulary improvement was only 2.68, and the mechanics aspect enhancement was only 0.71. Moreover, the aspect of organization decreased 0.03 and the aspect of grammar decreased 0.13. All in all, as the students' writing ability of the control group did not increase significantly, their writing ability in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics also did not achieve good result.

c. The significant difference of students' writing ability between the fourth semester students who were taught by applying portfolio assessment and those who were taught without portfolio assessment.

To investigate whether there was significant difference between the students' writing ability of both experimental and control classes, the writers made comparison between the post-test mean scores of the two classes. The comparison was carried out by applying t-test. The following table presents the t-test result in details:

No.	Experimen-	Experimen-tal Group		Control Group		x_2	x_1^2	x_2^2
	Pre- test	Post- test	Pre- test	Post- test		_	_	_
1	66	85	64	74	19	10	361	100
2	62	74	66	78	12	12	144	144
3	50	65	64	72	15	8	225	64
4	85	93	69	77	8	8	64	64
5	65	82	86	86	17	0	289	0
6	64	82	50	53	18	3	324	9
7	76	89	56	64	13	8	169	64
8	79	89	85	73	10	-12	100	144
9	63	80	54	66	17	12	289	144
10	66	85	85	92	19	7	361	49
11	69	64	81	81	-5	0	25	0
12	60	76	60	60	16	0	256	0
13	61	77	56	67	16	11	256	121
14	65	82	62	76	17	14	289	196
15	65	85	76	73	20	-3	400	9
16	76	87	65	74	11	9	121	81
17	56	76	64	75	20	11	400	121
18	54	71	66	76	17	10	289	100
19	85	91	60	68	6	8	36	64
20	81	90	70	74	9	4	81	16
21	64	64	76	84	0	8	0	64
22	56	74	85	81	18	-4	324	16
23	64	75	65	73	11	8	121	64
24	72	86	79	79	14	0	196	0
25	60	80	52	54	20	2	400	4
26	54	72	77	75	18	-2	324	4
27	85	92	72	86	7	14	49	196
28	65	83	85	89	18	4	324	16
29	77	89	63	73	12	10	144	100
30	52	67	54	49	15	-5	225	25
31	86	95	65	74	9	9	81	81
Sum	2083	2500	2112	2276	417	164	6667	2060
Mean	67.19	80.65	68.13	73.42	13.45	5.29		

B. Discussion

In this stage, the writer compared the result of pre-test and post-test in each class, as well as the significant difference between experimental and control class.

1. Students' writing ability

Writing skills are divided into micro- and macro-skills (Brown, 2004: 220). In this study, the writer attempted to enhance students' micro and macro-skills of writing by employing portfolio assessment. In this case, the students had to make out some writings during treatment period. After that, they pointed out their three best writings for final evaluation or post-test. As the result of the experimental class, the writer found that the mean score of pre-test improved significantly; it was from 67.19 to 80.65. Consequently, the mean score of experimental class after getting the treatment had increased 13.46 points. By this increasing score, it means student's writing ability in experimental class enhanced after getting treatment. In other words, portfolio assessment has positive impact on students' writing ability.

2. Students' writing ability in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics

Besides students' writing ability in general, through this research the writer also attempted to investigate portfolio assessment's impact on students' writing ability in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics. After the computation is done, the writer found that the five aspects mean scores of writing pre-test of the experimental class improved significantly after treatment was given. For the content aspect, it was from 20.19 to 24.58, so the enhancement score was 4.39 points. For the organization aspect, it was from 13.52 to 15.87. Consequently, the mean score of the organization aspect had increased 2.35

points. Further, the vocabulary had increased 2.65 points; it was from 13.45 to 16.1. For the grammar, it was from 16.65 to 20.23, so the enhancement score was 3.58 points. Finally, for the mechanics aspect, it was from 3.39 to 3.87. This means that the improvement was 0.48 points. By these increasing scores, it can be taken into account that the experimental student's writing ability in terms of content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics had enhanced after treatment. In other words, portfolio assessment positively influences students' five aspects of writing.

3. The significant difference of students' writing ability between the fourth semester students who were taught by applying portfolio assessment and those who were taught without portfolio assessment.

Brown (2004: 220) stated that micro-skills apply more appropriately to imitative and intensive types of writing and macro-skills are essential for the successful mastery of responsive and extensive writing. Microskills in writing include: producing writing at an efficient rate of speed to suit the purpose, produce an acceptable core of words and use appropriate word order patterns, using acceptable grammatical system (e.g., tense, agreement, and pluralisation), patterns, and rules also expressing a particular meaning in different grammatical forms. And the macro skill in writing include: appropriately accomplishing the communicative functions of written texts according to form and purpose, distinguishing between literal and implied meanings when writing, and correctly conveying culturally specific references in the context of the written text. From the result of students score of post-test, the writer got the mean score of experimental class was 80.65. Meanwhile, for the control class, the mean score of the post-test was 73.42. These post-tests were then compared to look into whether there was significant difference between experimental class and control class. The comparison was done by applying t-test formula. The difference between experimental and control class could be seen clearly that the t-test value for students' writing score is 5.268. It means that $t_0 > t_{table}$. Consequently, it indicated that there was significant difference of writing ability in fourth semester students who were taught applying portfolio assessment and those who were taught without portfolio assessment. Experimental student's writing ability is better than before. In other words, portfolio assessment offers positive impact on students' writing ability because it can enhance students' writing ability. By applying portfolio assessment, the writer enables the students to improve their micro and macro-skill of writing. The students could make out very good writings with well content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics.

V. Conclusion

According to the research findings which were presented in the previous chapter, the writer can conclude that portfolio assessment provides positive impact to the students' writing ability. Portfolio assessment can improve students' writing ability, since writing ability of the students who were taught using portfolio assessment increased significantly.

First, the fact that portfolio assessment gives positive impacts is clear while considering the result of students' post-test mean score of experimental class which is better than students' pre-test mean score. The mean score of the pre-test was 67.19 and the mean score of post-test was 80.65. It means that the enhancement score for experimental class after getting treatment is 13.46 points. As a result, it implies employing portfolio assessment can improve students' writing ability. However, the result of students' writing score of control class did not increase significantly. The pre-test mean score of control class was 68.13 and the post-test score was 73.42. Hence, the improvement score was just 5.29 points.

Second, besides students' writing ability, portfolio assessment can also enhances five important components of writing; those are content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics. This is evident while we are taking into account the experimental students' improvement scores. For the content aspect, the enhancement score was 4.39 points. For the organization aspect, the mean score had increased 2.35 points. Further, the vocabulary increased 2.65 points. For the grammar, the improvement score was 3.58 points. Finally, for the mechanics aspect, the mean score increased 0.48 points.

The last, the significant difference of students' writing ability between the fourth semester students of University of PGRI Semarang who were taught with portfolio assessment and those who were taught without portfolio assessment can be figured out from the result of t-test. The writer got that the students' post-test score of experimental class was 80.65 and for the control class was 73.42. The t-test value for students' writing score is 5.268. It means that $t_0 > t_{table}$. Consequently, portfolio assessment gives positive impact to the students' writing ability because it significantly enhances the students' writing ability.

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