

The Effectiveness of Self-Questioning as a Pre-Writing Strategy to Enhance Writing Performance

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Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of using self-questioning as a pre-writing strategy to enhance students' writing performance in narrative texts. Thirty eleventh-grade students from UPT SMAN 10 Jeneponto participated in the study, which employed a pre-experimental design featuring a one-group pre-test and post-test. Students were instructed to generate self-questioning before writing, aiming to help them organize their ideas and develop coherent narratives. The pre-test mean score was 50.00, whereas the post-test mean score was 82.10, suggesting that writing performance scores had significantly improved. A paired sample t-test statistical analysis showed a significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the technique had a significant effect. The most notable improvement occurred in grammar, followed by content, vocabulary, organization, and mechanics. The results indicate that self-questioning assists students in thinking critically, planning their writing more effectively, and creating better-structured texts. It also enhances their awareness of sentence structure, vocabulary use, and writing conventions. This strategy proves especially beneficial for EFL learners who often struggle with idea development and coherence. Overall, self-questioning is an effective and practical strategy for supporting students' writing in academic contexts.

Keywords: Pre-writing; Self-questioning; Writing

INTRODUCTION

One of the best tools available to students for showcasing their logical and expressive English abilities is writing. According to Hamid et al., (2021) writing is a highly individual process that can be defined as the communication that emerges from our ideas. Then Bora (2023) explained that through writing, students can express their thoughts and ideas and improve their critical thinking and creativity. Students can benefit in their learning process and in expressing their thoughts effectively. Bulqiyah et al., (2021) stated writing is a useful abilities that involves cognitive functions including establishing objectives, idea organization, problem-solving, and critical thinking. Writing also an essential skill required for successful academic studies and efficient communication. Despite its importance, many students struggle with the writing process. According to the findings of the pre-observation, grade XI students at UPT SMAN 10 Jeneponto had trouble producing narrative texts. This is supported by Siddiqu (2020) many students struggle with writing, particularly when it comes to structuring their ideas, generating with creativity, and keeping ideas coherent. However Muliana, Muhsin & Intan (2024) explained academic writing students face various challenges including structuring ideas effectively and combining complex ideas in an understandable way, limited vocabulary and grammatical errors. Many students have feelings of worry about the outcomes of their writing in the writing course because they struggle with a variety of writing-related issues, including organizing ideas, identifying arguments, summarizing, and grammar (Bulqiyah et al., 2021).

Prewriting, drafting, editing, revising, and publishing are the steps in the writing process. According to Bommanaboina et al. (2021), the effectiveness of pre-writing previous knowledge strategies directly affects students' writing performance during the actual and post-stages of writing. Then, according to Mohammed et al. (2023), prewriting techniques are useful tools that will assist students in their writing since they facilitate idea generation, work organization, and prevention of writing difficulties. Some popular prewriting activities are brainstorming, clustering/ mind mapping, outlining/ listing, journaling/ questioning and free writing (Dhanya & Alamelu, 2020). Self-questioning is a crucial technique for improving text comprehension. According to Joseph & Ross (2017) self-questioning strategies leverage skills such as sentence-paragraph connections, understanding textual parts and structure, recalling prior knowledge, and identifying the components of story comprehension. Then Aldossari & Aldajani (2021) one important awareness-raising tactic is the self-questioning strategy. By using this method, a student will, as previously said, formulate a series of questions for themselves before to, during, and after a lesson. These questions not only promote comprehension but also assist students in considering key components, like their core idea, work title, and previous work experiences. Several researchers have conducted research related to the Self-Questioning strategy. First, Thomas (2019) based on the results of the study, the use of self-questioning strategies is effective in showing an increase in students' thinking towards the genre being studied and allows students to improve their writing skills to a better quality. Second, Billman & Morgan (2019) the results of the study were that each participant showed at least some generalization of their reading comprehension skills and self-reflection to more difficult sections of textbook reading. The positive results of this intervention can be attributed to the instruction of strategies that required them to actively respond to the text. Then, Ardiyanti (2020) the results showed that the use of self-questioning techniques could improve the reading comprehension of ninth grade students on narrative text at SMPN 3 Bukitkemuning. Furthermore, Azmi & Usman (2021) the research findings showed that the self-questioning technique successfully improved students' comprehension of the text. Last, Hamad & Baniabdelrahman (2023) based on the result of their research, shown that using self-questioning as a teaching method enhanced the experimental group's comprehension across all three levels. The similarities in previous research and current research are that all researchers use self-questioning strategy. Then the difference is apart from the class level, such as some researchers conducted research in junior high schools and elementary schools, each previous researcher also used different research methods and instruments (Classroom Action research, Quasi-Experimental design). However, in the current study, the researcher wants to use a Pre-experimental design as the research design. Furthermore, research on self-questioning strategy in writing skills is still very limited, and in the results of previous studies, researchers have focused this strategy on reading skills, but the current study focuses on writing skills, especially in narrative text especially in content, organization, grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary.

METHOD

This study used a pre-test and post-test design, included a single class, and was classified as pre-experimental. According to Sugiyono (2017) said that pre-experimental design is a design that only includes one group or class that is given a pre and post test. Then, Wahyuningrum, Putri & Jamaluddin (2021) explained experimental research can be interpreted as a research method used to find the effect of treatment on others in controlled conditions. The results of the experiment which are dependent variables are not results that are influenced by the independent variables. This happens because there is no control variable. This design involves a pre-test (O1), the treatment given (X) and a post-test (O2). Students in SMAN 10 Jeneponto's eleventh grade during the 2024–2025 academic year made up the study's population. The total population

in this study was two hundred and ten students consisting of seven classes, each class consisting of 30 students. The sampling method used was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling refers to the deliberate selection of samples based on certain characteristics. These characteristics were that students have difficulty writing narrative texts. From among the eleventh grade, the researcher chose class XI.6, which had thirty students. The researcher employed a pre-test and a post-test as test types. Before the treatment started, the pre-test was given to the students to ascertain their starting level of skill in writing narrative texts. Students' writing performance was evaluated by a post-test given following the Self-Questioning as a Pre-Writing Strategy treatment. Test results for this study were automatically processed and assessed at a significance level of 0.05. SPSS version 24 was used to analyze the data once it was gathered. The following are some of the components included in the data analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The findings of this study are directly related to the research questions, which aim to examine the improvement of students' narrative writing skills. The study began with an introductory meeting with the school administration. Discussions and observations with English teachers were then conducted in order to give a summary of the study's findings. Six sessions were included in the data gathering process. An experimental study design was used to assess how effectively the self-questioning method worked as a prewriting tool to improve students' writing skills in narrative texts. After analyzing the gathered data using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, the results are shown as follows:

Statistic Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistical analysis was used to analyze the pre-test and post-test results of research participants that employed self-questioning as a pre-writing strategy on narrative texts that focused on vocabulary, grammar, mechanics, organization, and content among class 11.6 students at SMAN 10 Jeneponto. The following table displays the pre-test and post-test writing performance scores for every pair of students.

Table 1. Students' Writing Performance in All Aspects

	Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-Test all aspect	30	23	39	62	50.00	7.344
Post-Test all aspect	30	26	69	95	82.10	6.609
Valid N (listwise)	30					

Appropriate sample size of 30 students was found by the SPSS analysis of the pre-treatment (pre-test) data. Prior to using the self-questioning technique as a prewriting technique, the average score for all elements of the narrative text was 50.00%, as seen in Table 1. The pupils' average score rose to 82.10% after the intervention (post-test). Thus, it can be said that students' performance in writing narrative texts improved by 32.10% as a result of using the self-questioning technique as a prewriting technique.

Table 2. Pre-test Frequency Distribution

Category	Interval Classification	Frequency	Relative Frequency
Excellent	86-100	-	0%
Good	71-85	-	0%
Fair	56-70	8	26,7%
Very poor	41-55	22	73,3%
Total		30	100%

The pre-test frequency distribution table, which is based on the range formula, reveals that 22 students (73.3%) fall into the Very Poor score range of 41–55. This suggests that most students showed very low proficiency in writing narrative texts across all evaluated aspects. Furthermore, 8 students (26.6%) received a Fair grade, falling between 56 and 70, indicating a moderate degree of proficiency in producing narrative texts across all components.

Table 3. Post-test Frequency Distribution

Category	Interval Classification	Frequency	Relative Frequency
Excellent	86-100	8	26,7%
Good	71-85	20	66,7%
Fair	56-70	2	6,6%
Very poor	41-55	-	0%
Total		30	100%

The post-test frequency distribution table was obtained, the interval value of 56-70 (6.6%) 2 students in writing narrative text have the ability with fair classification in all aspects of narrative text. Then for the interval value of 71-85 (66.6%) 20 students overall aspects of writing narrative text are in good ability. Finally, for the interval value of 86-100 (26.7%) 8 students are in the excellent classification.

Students Writing Performance in Content

The following table shows the writing performance results for the students in the two-stage pre-test and post-test.

Table 4. Students Writing Performance in Content

	Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test Content	30	5	13	18	16.23	1.794
Post-test Content	30	11	17	28	23.27	3.151
Valid N (listwise)	30					

The SPSS analysis of the pre-treatment (pre-test) data confirmed a valid sample size of 30 students. As presented in Table 4, the average score in the content aspect of narrative writing prior to the implementation of the self-questioning as a prewriting strategy was 16.23%. Following the treatment (post-test), this score increased to 23.27%. Therefore, It can be concluded that students' performance in the content area of writing narrative texts improved by 7.04% when the self-questioning was used as a prewriting strategy.

Students Writing Performance in Organization

The following table displays the findings of the pre-test and post-test writing performance of the students in terms of organization.

Table 5. Students Writing Performance in Organization

	Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test Organization	30	8	7	15	10.40	2.608
Post-test Organization	30	6	13	19	16.40	1.812
Valid N (listwise)	30					

Before using the self-questioning method as a prewriting technique, the average score for the organization component of narrative writing was 10.40%, as seen in Table 5. Following the administration of the treatment, the post-test score increased to 16.40%. This suggests that students' organizing abilities in composing narrative texts improved by 6% as a result of using the self-questioning strategy.

Students Writing Performance in Grammar

The results of students' writing performance in grammar in the pre-test and post-test are presented in the following table.

Table 6. Students Writing Performance in Grammar

	Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test Grammar	30	8	7	15	10.83	2.479
Post-Test Grammar	30	6	18	24	21.23	1.612
Valid N (listwise)	30					

Table 6 shows that before the self-questioning strategy was used as a prewriting technique, the average score in the grammar section of narrative writing was 10.83%. After a session of treatment, the post-test score rose to 21.23%. This suggests that using self-questioning as a prewriting strategy improved students' grammatical correctness when writing narrative texts, as seen by the noteworthy improvement of 10.40%.

Students Writing Performance in Mechanics

The following table illustrates the mechanics writing performance results regarding the pre-test and post-test.

Table 7. Students Writing Performance in Mechanics

	Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-Test Mechanics	30	1	2	3	2.40	.498

Post-Test Mechanics	30	2	3	5	4.07	.691
Valid N (listwise)	30					

Before using the self-questioning pre-writing strategy on the mechanics pre-test, the students' score was 2.40%, as shown in Table 7. Following the treatment, the students' post-test score increased to 4.07%. Therefore, it can be said that the self-questioning pre-writing approach improved mechanics to 1.67% after it was applied.

Students Writing Performance in Vocabulary

The following table represents the vocabulary writing performance scores from the pre-test and post-test for the students.

Table 8. Students Writing Performance in Vocabulary

	Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-Test Vocab	30	10	7	17	10.13	2.255
Post-Test Vocab	30	5	14	19	17.13	1.279
Valid N (listwise)	30					

Before using the self-questioning pre-writing strategy, the student's score on the mechanics pre-test was 10.13%, as shown in Table 8. Following the treatment, the student's score on the post-test increased to 17.13%. Therefore, it can be said that vocabulary in narrative texts grew to 7.00% following the use of the self-questioning pre-writing strategy.

Statistic Inferential Analysis

Normality Test

The purpose of the normality test was to ascertain if the data gathered throughout the study's learning process had a normal distribution. The t-test statistical analysis requires regularly distributed data, therefore evaluating normality is crucial. Normality was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test using SPSS version 24. If the significance value (sig) is more than 0.05, the data is considered to have normally distributed; if it is less than 0.05, the data are considered to be non-normally distributed, according to the normality decision rule. The following are the results of the normalcy test:

Table 9. Normality Test

	Tests of Normality					
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-Test	.130	30	.200*	.932	30	.055
Post-Test	.091	30	.200*	.980	30	.813

Results of the normality test using SPSS version 24 showed that all data had significant values (Sig) greater than 0.05 in the Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests. Consequently, it can be claimed that the study's data are frequently distributed.

Paired Sample T-test

Table 10. Paired Sample T-test

Pre_Test- Post_Test	Mean	Std. Deviation	Paired Differences		t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
			Lower	Upper			
	-32.100	.658	-33.446	-30.754	-48.783	29	.000

The significant value (Sig) of the t-test is 0.00, less than the 0.05 threshold, as indicated by the results. The null hypothesis (H0) is thus rejected, while the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted. This result showed a substantial difference in the mean scores that were obtained before and after the test. For instance, using self-questioning as a prewriting technique might help students write better narrative texts.

Table 11. T-table

T-Test	T-Table $\alpha = 0.05$	Clarification
-48.777	2.045	T-Test \geq T-Table

The determined t-value (t-test) of 48.777 is higher than the crucial t-value (t-table) of 2.045, according to the preceding table. According to the decision-making criterion, this result indicates a significant difference in the average scores between the pre-test and post-test. Therefore, it can be said that the narrative writing skills of the eleventh-grade students at UPT SMAN 10 Jenepono have significantly improved.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the use of self-questioning as a pre-writing strategy significantly enhances students' performance in writing narrative texts. The improvement is evident not only in the final writing scores but more importantly, in the transformation of students' cognitive engagement with the writing process. Before the implementation of this strategy, students tended to struggle with organizing ideas, developing story structure, and applying grammar rules. These challenges are consistent with those identified by Siddiqu (2020) and Nenotek et al. (2022), who highlight that many EFL learners face difficulties in coherence, vocabulary selection, and structuring their thoughts in writing. The low pre-test performance reflected students' lack of confidence and clarity in approaching narrative writing tasks. Following the implementation of the self-questioning strategy, students demonstrated marked improvements across all five assessed writing components: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. This change suggests that the strategy facilitated not just technical improvements but also a deeper cognitive shift. Students became more proactive and independent in planning their texts. Rather than writing spontaneously without a framework, they began to construct narratives with clear orientation, complication, and resolution by first asking themselves critical WH-questions. This reflective habit helped them gain clarity on what to write and how to write the text. From a theoretical perspective, these results align with metacognitive learning theories that promote self-regulation and student autonomy. Alutaybi (2020) emphasizes the role of self-questioning in helping learners become more reflective by allowing them to plan, monitor, and evaluate their tasks effectively. In the context of writing, this strategy enables students to take charge of their own learning by stimulating inquiry, scaffolding thought processes, and encouraging critical engagement before writing begins. Afzali (2021) further supports this by stating that 5W+1H questions enable students to consider

essential narrative elements such as characters, settings, conflicts, and resolutions. When used intentionally, these questions provide a logical structure that helps students avoid aimless or repetitive writing.

One of the most notable findings in this study is the significant improvement in the grammar aspect, which indicates increased grammatical awareness and a better understanding of sentence structure. This aligns with Marzuki's (2019) findings that self-questioning pushes students to re-read and revise their sentences more carefully. Improvements in content and organization also suggest that self-questioning encourages students to mentally map their narratives before committing them to paper, resulting in more coherent and purposeful storytelling. Vocabulary also saw meaningful enhancement, which can be attributed to students' increased focus on selecting precise, relevant words after thinking deeply about the narrative's context and goals. Practically, self-questioning is a flexible and accessible strategy that can be easily implemented in various classroom settings. It does not require expensive materials or technology but instead depends on teacher facilitation and student willingness to engage. Teachers can integrate this strategy through guided modeling, worksheets with WH-prompts, or prewriting checklists. It is particularly useful in large classrooms where individual feedback may be limited, as it empowers students to evaluate their own writing. Moreover, self-questioning contributes to students' affective development by reducing writing anxiety and increasing confidence, as students feel more equipped to tackle the task at hand.

Nonetheless, while the overall impact is positive, the mechanics component showed the least improvement. This suggests that although self-questioning fosters content and organizational skills, it may not directly target surface-level conventions like punctuation and capitalization. Therefore, additional support such as focused feedback or mini-lessons on mechanics might be needed to complement this strategy. In conclusion, self-questioning as a pre-writing strategy proves to be both theoretically grounded and practically beneficial in enhancing students' narrative writing performance. It supports the development of critical thinking, planning, and self-monitoring skills that are essential for competent writing. Despite certain limitations, its effectiveness across various aspects of writing highlights its value in EFL classrooms. Future writing instruction should incorporate self-questioning not just as a prewriting technique but as a mindset that promotes independence, structure, and clarity in students' academic writing journey.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study suggest that self-questioning is an effective prewriting strategy for improving students' narrative writing performance. Through a structured questioning approach, this strategy helps students better plan, organize, and express their ideas, resulting in more coherent and well-developed narrative texts. Self-questioning encourages reflective thinking, allowing students to engage more deeply with the writing process by clarifying story elements such as character, plot, and resolution before drafting. This strategy not only improves essential components of writing, such as content, grammar, vocabulary, organization, and mechanics, but also builds students' confidence and autonomy as writers. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), where students often struggle with structure, idea development, and linguistic accuracy, self-questioning provides a simple yet powerful tool to guide learners through the complexities of writing. The results of this study reinforce the importance of incorporating metacognitive strategies such as self-questioning into writing instruction. This has significant implications for teaching practice and curriculum development, particularly in classrooms where students struggle with generating and organizing ideas. Thus, self-questioning should be considered not only as a pre-writing technique but also as a reflective habit that cultivates independent and critical writers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All praise be to Allah SWT, because of His blessings and grace, the author can complete this paper, and thanks to the supervisor who has provided guidance, so that this paper can be completed properly. Hopefully this paper can be useful for all of us and can provide a positive contribution to the world of education.

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