

The impact of journaling on writing skills in seventh-grade EFL students at a private school in Latacunga, Ecuador

El impacto de la escritura de diario en las habilidades de escritura de estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera de séptimo grado en una escuela privada de Latacunga, Ecuador

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Abstract

Journaling is a writing technique widely used to develop critical thinking and writing fluency. Through journaling students express their thoughts, reflections, opinions, and experiences without fear of making mistakes. This technique is believed to be useful for the development of writing skills in EFL learners. Consequently, this study aims to examine the effect of the reflective journaling on the writing skills of A1 level EFL learners in a school in Latacunga. A mixed-methods design was carried out with a control and an experimental group including a pre and posttest, and a questionnaire to assess the influence of journaling on learners' writing fluency and their insights. The experimental group received journaling prompts three times a week for six weeks while the control group engaged in regular classroom writing activities. The findings demonstrate a statistically significant growth in the number of words produced by the experimental group compared to the words produced by the control group. Qualitative results also revealed that students noticed improvements in their confidence, vocabulary use, and organization of ideas. These findings suggest that the application of journaling had a positive effect on the development of writing fluency.

Keywords: Journaling; writing fluency; writing skills; mixed-methods design; EFL learners.

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Resumen

La escritura de diario es una técnica de escritura ampliamente utilizada para desarrollar el pensamiento crítico y la fluidez escrita. A través de la escritura de diario, los estudiantes expresan sus pensamientos, reflexiones, opiniones y experiencias sin temor a cometer errores. Se cree que esta técnica es útil para el desarrollo de las habilidades de escritura en estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera. En consecuencia, este estudio tiene como objetivo examinar el efecto del diario reflexivo en las habilidades de escritura de estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera de nivel A1 en una escuela de Latacunga. Se llevó a cabo un diseño de métodos mixtos con un grupo control y un grupo experimental, que incluyó un pretest y un posttest, y un cuestionario para evaluar la influencia del diario en la fluidez escrita de los estudiantes y sus percepciones. El grupo experimental recibió consignas de escritura de diario tres veces por semana durante seis semanas, mientras que el grupo control realizó actividades regulares de escritura en el aula. Los hallazgos demuestran un crecimiento estadísticamente significativo en el número de palabras producidas por el grupo experimental en comparación con las palabras producidas por el grupo control. Los resultados cualitativos también revelaron que los estudiantes percibieron mejoras en su confianza, uso de vocabulario y organización de ideas. Estos hallazgos sugieren que la aplicación del diario tuvo un efecto positivo en el desarrollo de la fluidez escrita.

Palabras clave: Escritura de diario; fluidez escrita; habilidades de escritura; diseño de métodos mixtos; estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera.

Introduction

When learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), one of the most important skills is writing, as it allows learners to communicate their knowledge, ideas, and opinions while organizing their thoughts effectively. Currently, many students experience anxiety in writing activities due to the panic of making mistakes, the limited vocabulary acquired acts as a barrier to communicating through written texts (Kara, 2013). Therefore, interest in developing effective methods to help learners improve their writing skills has been growing (Chen, 2022; Cheng & Zhang, 2022; Han, 2023; Taufiqulloh et al., 2025). Although writing involves different components, writing fluency is being studied with particular attention, as it enables learners to produce texts naturally in the target language.

Writing fluency is the ability to communicate ideas through written texts easily. In EFL contexts, developing fluency in writing is fundamental because it allows learners to express their ideas effectively. Thus, authors such as Pusey and Butler (2024) emphasize the importance of developing writing fluency for writing processes and written output in academic contexts. Several studies have highlighted how writing fluency contributes to the development of other writing components, including complexity and accuracy (Rahimi, 2024; Ajabshir & Ebadi, 2023). Theoretical frameworks including Krashen's Affective filter, Input Hypothesis, and Swain's Output Hypothesis also emphasize the significance of receiving meaningful exposure, affective factors, and opportunities to develop learners' writing (Krashen, 1982, 1985; Swain, 2005). Consequently, educators and researchers seek different strategies and classroom activities to encourage learners to write frequently and promote confidence when producing in English in an environment free of anxiety (Wu & Halim, 2024; Taufiqulloh et al., 2025).

Despite the well-known importance of developing writing skills, EFL learners still struggle to produce texts confidently. It may happen because of the institutional strategies implemented in classrooms to improve writing skills. Those strategies mainly focus on practicing grammar and accuracy rather than allowing students to express their own thoughts or give their point of view in response to a current situation happening around the world (Jafari & Ansari, 2012; Yulianawati et al., 2022). According to Harmer (2004) having regular writing practice sessions help learners to improve their fluency, text organization skills, and coherence. For this reason, journaling has been acting as a technique to improve writing skills in EFL contexts. As stated by Yancey (2009), reflective writing activities such as journaling help students to enhance not merely writing fluency, but also metacognitive awareness and critical thinking, so they can reach confidence when producing written texts in a foreign language. Journaling allows students to write about familiar topics, personal interests, and daily activities in an anxiety-free environment where the main goal is for students to express ideas rather than looking for grammatical precision. However, despite the positive effects journaling has shown, limited research has specially examined the impact of journaling on students' writing fluency, particularly in middle school settings.

The intention of this study was to determine the impact of guided journaling on writing fluency of 7th grade EFL students at a private school in Latacunga, Ecuador. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design with an experimental and control group featuring pre and post-test and perceptions interviews were applied. For this purpose, the following research questions were established:

- How does guided journaling affect EFL students' writing fluency?
- How do students perceive the contribution of guided journaling to their vocabulary use in writing?
- What are EFL school students' perceptions toward journaling as a writing activity?

Theoretical Framework

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory by Stephen Krashen (1982) includes five hypotheses: the Acquisition-Learning hypothesis, the Monitor hypothesis, the Natural Order hypothesis, the Input hypothesis, and the Affective Filter hypothesis, with the last two guiding this study. In Krashen's view, language acquisition happens when learners are continuously exposed to understandable input just above their actual English level ($i+1$) (Krashen, 1985). Based on this argument, acquisition results through the significant interaction in the target language in natural contexts.

Furthermore, the Affective Filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1982) states that the affective factors specifically self-confidence, anxiety and motivation that play an important role when acquiring a language. For instance, when learners are exposed to a high level of anxiety, the affective filter rises and prevents the internalization of the input successfully. Meanwhile the opposite is also true, a

low affective filter promotes acquisition. Oxford (1996) states that the affective side of learning has a significant impact on learner's ability to acquire a foreign language. In addition, authors such as Terrel (1983) and Asher (1977) have supported the SLA theory. Terrel, who co-authored Krashen's Natural Approach, and Asher, who developed the TPR method, share the idea that second language acquisition takes place when there are understandable input and a reduction in the affective filter.

Nevertheless, Swain (2005) proposed the Output Hypothesis which establishes that when students start producing in the target language, it allows them to detect gaps in knowledge and also adjust the grammatical accuracy. Even though this study is not primarily based on the previous hypothesis, journaling, as a form of written output, provides input in a low-anxiety environment while also requiring students to actively produce written paragraphs to develop fluency.

Krashen's theories served as a suitable lens for the study because EFL learners often tend to experience apprehension when writing texts in a foreign language which negatively affects their learning process. By providing consistent input through journaling may help reduce emotional barriers as using language in meaningful context. Consequently, journaling is consistent with SLA principles and acts as pedagogical approach to boost writing fluency.

Literature Review

Effects of Journaling on Writing Fluency

Several recent studies have found positive effects of using journalling to strengthen students' writing skills. Amalia et al. (2024), developed a quasi-experimental study with high school students and found a considerable difference between the experimental group that used reflective journaling and the control group that did not apply the strategy in their lessons. The result showed that implementing reflective written activities contributed to the development of writing skills in learners. Similarly, Maneepakhathorn (2023), examined the use of reflective dialogue journal writing with 34 postgraduate EFL students for 13 weeks. The results revealed that students were capable to produce a lot of words in written texts and share their ideas easily. These findings are relevant because they also analyze writing fluency through quantitative variables. Furthermore, a quasi-experimental study was performed by Zhang and Chieh (2025) with 105 Chinese students who were divided into three categories: control group, group with reflective journals, and group with portfolio plus reflective journals. The findings indicated that the experimental groups improved in terms of written development, the use of writing strategies, and motivation compared to the control group. Additionally, Abrouq (2024) found that journaling as a strategy helped students strengthen their thinking skills. Hence, these findings suggest that journaling is an effective strategy that boosts learners' writing skills in EFL contexts.

Impact of Journaling on Vocabulary

Vocabulary is a key component of writing in English because it requires the use of a variety of words to express ideas. Studies have found that journaling activities not only improve the written production, but also specific components including vocabulary, organization of ideas, and the use of the language. For instance, Mogesse et al. (2025), analyzed the consequence of dialogue journal writing in first-year university EFL students. The results showed notable improvements in the experimental group considering aspects such as content, organization, vocabulary, and use of language. In Ecuador, a mixed-method study conducted by Macías and Dack (2023), with 25 high school EFL students found a positive impact in writing skills after the implementation of reflexive journals. In fact, participants stated that the strategy contributed to the development of fluency, vocabulary, and grammar. Students also perceived progress in their use of vocabulary related to daily routines, connectors, adjectives, and adverbs, providing further support for writing fluency development when learners are encouraged to practice frequently which help them to communicate effectively in a target language (Hyland, 2003).

Student Perceptions Toward Journaling

As writing in a foreign language is often related to anxiety, insecurity, and fear of making mistakes, students' perceptions about journaling activities are essential if teachers pretend to develop writing skills. Maneepakhathorn (2023), found that students consider journaling as a means of communication without being excessively worried about immediate corrections. According to Mogesse et al. (2025), found that journal writing reduced written anxiety and improved students' attitude toward writing in university EFL learners. Furthermore, a recent study states that journaling strategy gives learners the opportunity to create an anxiety-free atmosphere for continuous reflection so they can organize their ideas and improve the writing skills (Wijaya, 2025).

Methods

Study Design

This research used an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. As Creswell (2011), states, it consists of collecting quantitative data first, and then qualitative data to explain the quantitative results. Qualitative data on students' writing fluency were collected through a writing pre and posttest, while the qualitative data on students' perceptions of the journaling were collected by applying an open-ended questionnaire.

Participants

The study employed convenience sampling given that participants are most easily accessible to the researcher (Simkus, 2022). Initially, the study involved 36 seventh-grade students of a priva-

te school in Latacunga, Ecuador. Nevertheless, four students who required personalized assistance during the assessments were not included in the quantitative analysis since their administration conditions differed from the standardized procedure. Therefore, the final sample consisted of 32 students: 17 belong to the control group and 15 to the experimental group. The participants had a mean age of 11 years old and had a similar English proficiency level. They attended English classes for 3 days a week, and each class lasted 45 minutes. The experimental group received journaling prompts three times per week for one month and a half. Students' participation was voluntary with parental permission.

Instruments

Two instruments were applied in this research: a writing pre-test and post-test, and a student perceptions questionnaire. The first assessment required students to write short paragraphs about topics they were familiar with within a limited period of time. Aspects related to writing fluency included number of T-units and words produced were measured. A T-unit is the number of independent sentences produced by a student in a written text (Hunt, 1965).

The second instrument was a student perception questionnaire. It included a group of four open-ended questions to allow students sharing their opinions about the implementation of journaling activities and their usefulness for acquiring more vocabulary and improving writing skills. These two instruments helped the researcher to examine both the measurable improvements in writing fluency and the students' perspectives of the journaling strategy.

Procedure

This study was conducted in two phases over a period of a month and a half (six weeks).

Phase 1

In this part of the study, both the experimental and control groups underwent a pretest to evaluate the initial level of the students' writing fluency prior to the experimentation stage. For this evaluation, all participants were asked to write about their daily routine within a determined time. The journaling strategy was then introduced during classes with the experimental group while the control group participated in regular activities following the textbook content. During each journaling session, students were requested to write a paragraph in English based on an instruction related to topics that were covered along the school year. The journaling strategy was performed three times a week for six weeks according to the students' school schedule. After completing the journal sessions, students received feedback focused on vocabulary use, and organization of ideas to support their writing process. After implementation, both groups took a post-test with the same level of difficulty as the pretest to analyze any changes in students' fluency after applying the journaling technique.

Students' results from the pre and posttest were analyzed by counting the overall number of words produced. That number of words for each group (control and experimental) was calculated and over by the number of students in each group to obtain the mean number of words produced per group. Additionally, the T-units number was calculated by counting the independent sentences produced by each student; subsequently, the total number of T-units for each group was divided by the number of students in each group. These means were compared to examine changes in participants' writing fluency prior and later the implementation of journaling.

Phase 2

In the second phase of the study, an open-ended survey was given to the 15 participants in the experimental group to collect participants' opinions about the implementation of journaling activities during classes. This helped to discern the impact on their writing development based on their opinions and challenges regarding the use of journaling in the classroom. The questionnaire was carried out in Spanish so they could express their feelings and ideas freely.

Pilot testing

The pilot test was a student perception questionnaire and thus required validation in terms of clarity and interpretation. Therefore, the test was conducted among a group of three students outside the participant group but with similar characteristics to the target community. Furthermore, two English teachers from the same educational institution where the researcher worked, with 15 and 13 years of experience respectively, reviewed the instruments and provided feedback.

Feedback from pilot test

One of the three students indicated that certain questions in the questionnaire could be interpreted in different ways, especially the first questions that aimed to perceive the usefulness of journaling activities. Additionally, students mentioned that some questions seemed repetitive, as expressions such as journaling, writing improvement and vocabulary were in most of the questionnaire bank. For this reason, the questions were rephrased and the repetitive terms adapted so students could express their opinions in a classroom context.

Regarding the writing pre and posttest, the English coordinator of Cotopaxi Educational Center (CEC) school suggested that the prompt (write about your daily routine) and instructions should be clearer and emphasize that students should focus on writing as much as they can within the allotted time, rather than focusing on grammatical rules.

After analyzing the feedback from the teachers and students, the questions were rephrased to prevent them from being misinterpreted, and minor adjustments were made to reduce redundancy, and ambiguous expressions were replaced with clearer wording (see Table 1).

Table 1. Feedback after pilot testing

Instrument	Original wording	Revised wording
Writing pre and post-test routine	Write about your daily	Write as much as you can about your daily routine within the time provided. Focus on expressing your ideas and do not worry about grammar rules or spelling.
Student perception questionnaire	Do you think journaling helped you write fluently?	Do you think journaling helped you write more easily?

Source: own elaboration

Results

Phase 1: Quantitative Results

Data was collected through a writing pre-test conducted among the control group (7A) and the experimental group (7B) in an EFL classroom. Students were asked to write a paragraph about their daily routine within 20 minutes. The results were analyzed by counting the number of words and T-units. This assessment aimed to appraise the initial level of the learners' writing fluency before the implementation of the journaling strategy. The control group consisted of 18 students, one of them had special educational needs and participated in the same writing activities; however, the student's writing samples were not included in the quantitative analysis of this study because the student required one to one assistance during the process. Thus, the final number of participants in the control group was 17. On the other hand, the experimental group initially included 17 students, but two students were excluded from the study due to special educational conditions including Down syndrome, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and intellectual disability. In the same way, they also completed the writing tasks with appropriate support, but their texts were excluded based on the same predefined methodological criterion. Therefore, the number of students in the experimental group was 15. In total, the study included 32 participants.

The data gathered from the pre-test was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics in Jamovi (See Table 2). Descriptive statistics were calculated for total word production and T-units (Talikan et al., 2024).

Table 2. Writing Pre-test Results

Group	N	Min	Max	Avg Words	Avg T-units
Control Group (7A)	17	64	208	133.00	28.8
Experimental Group (7B)	15	70	194	138.93	36.8

Source: own elaboration

After six weeks of intervention, the post-test prompt had the same level of difficulty but was structured differently. Students were asked to describe their favorite day of the week and what they usually do within 20 minutes. Table 3 presents the average of words and T-units produced by both groups after the implementation of the journaling activities (See Table 3).

Table 3. Writing Post-test Results

Group	N	Min	Max	Avg Words	Avg T-units
Control Group (7A)	17	80	236	151.41	14.47
Experimental Group (7B)	15	112	350	194.33	14.60

Source: own elaboration

To compare students' writing productivity before and after the implementation of journaling, the means of the number of words and T-units written by both the control and experimental group were analyzed. Table 4 shows that both groups increased their average word production from the pretest to the posttest. However, the progress was more notable in the experimental group. The average of T-unit production decreased in both groups (see Table 4).

Table 4. Pre-test and Post-test comparison

Group	Pre-test Avg words	Post-test Avg words	Pre-test Avg T-units	Post-test Avg T-units
Control Group (7A)	133.00	151.41	28.80	14.47
Experimental Group (7B)	138.93	194.33	36.80	14.60

Source: own elaboration

To determine whether the increase in word production was statistically significant in the control group, a Shapiro-Wilk test and paired sample t-test was carried out, obtaining the distribution of the scores in Jamovi (see Figure 1). The results indicated that the assumption of normality was met ($p=.171$) and the differences in the results were statistically significant ($p<.001$).

Figure 1. Paired-samples t-test for the pretest and posttest word production in the control group

Paired Samples t-Test

Paired Samples t-Test

			Statistic	df	p	Mean Difference	SE of the Difference	Effect Size	
Pre_Words	Post_Words	Student's t	-10.7	16.0	< .001	-18.4	1.73	Cohen's d	-2.58

Note. $H_a: \mu_{\text{Measure 1}} - \mu_{\text{Measure 2}} \neq 0$

Normality Test (Shapiro-Wilk)

		W	p
Pre_Words	- Post_Words	0.924	.171

Note. A low p -value suggests a violation of the normality assumption.

Descriptives

	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
Pre_Words	17	133	131	41.3	10.0
Post_Words	17	151	148	46.8	11.4

Source: own elaboration

On the contrary, the experimental group scores did not meet the assumption of normality according to the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test ($W=0.721$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test was performed, which showed the increase in scores after the posttest were statistically significant (See Figure 2).

Figure 2. Wilcoxon signed-rank test results for pretest and posttest word production in the experimental group

Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test

Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test

			Statistic	df	p	Mean Difference	SE of the Difference	Effect Size	
Pre_Words	Post_Words	Student's t	-4.31	14.0	< .001	-56.4	12.9	Cohen's d	-1.11
		Wilcoxon W	0.00	—	< .001	-37.7	12.9	Rank-biserial correlation	-1.00

Note. $H_a: \mu_{\text{Measure 1}} - \mu_{\text{Measure 2}} \neq 0$

Normality Test (Shapiro-Wilk)

		W	p
Pre_Words	- Post_Words	0.721	< .001

Note. A low p -value suggests a violation of the normality assumption.

Descriptives

	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
Pre_Words	15	139	142	38.2	9.85
Post_Words	15	194	165	79.6	20.58

Source: own elaboration

Table 5 shows the mean gain scores obtained by each group based on the variation between the pre-test and post-test average scores. The gain scores indicate a numerical increase in word production in the experimental group.

Table 5. Gain scores in words produced by each group

Group	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Gain
Control Group (7A)	133.00	151.41	+18.41
Experimental Group (7B)	138.93	194.33	+55.40

Source: own elaboration

To determine if the difference in gains between the control and experimental groups were statistically significant, and considering the groups consisted of different students, a Mann-Whitney U test was performed. The findings showed a statistically significant difference in gain scores among both groups (See Figure 3).

Figure 3. Mann-Whitney U test results for gain scores between groups

Independent Samples T-Test

Independent Samples T-Test						
		Statistic	df	p	Effect Size	
Gain_words	Mann-Whitney U	31.0	—	< .001	Rank-biserial correlation	−0.757

Note. $H_a \mu_{\text{Experimental}} \neq \mu_{\text{Control}}$

Source: own elaboration

Phase 2: Students’ perceptions toward journaling activities

Qualitative data from the experimental group was collected through a free-response survey in which students were interrogated how they felt after performing journaling activities. Their responses were examined using open coding to identify recurring ideas and concepts. Similar responses were grouped into four categories: confidence, vocabulary development, organization of ideas, and challenges when writing.

Most students in the experimental group reported feeling more confident writing paragraphs in English. They indicated the fact of being exposed to the strategy three times a week contributed to organizing their ideas and expressing themselves more easily in English. Student A stated, “The first two weeks of experimentation, I understood the prompts, but the ideas come to my mind in Spanish. Then, the last week I noticed that I was thinking and writing in English.”

Regarding whether journaling helped them write more easily, all participants in the experimental group responded positively. The main reasons cited included learning how to start writing

a paragraph, connecting ideas, and providing more details when describing their daily actions. Student B stated, “Journaling helped me connect my ideas.”

Students were also asked about the new words or expressions they had learned through journaling. They mentioned that they had learned and reinforced vocabulary related to daily routines, the use of connectors, punctuation marks, as well as adjectives and adverbs to express the frequency of the actions. According to student C, “I learned to use adjectives properly in my sentences.” The appropriate use of these resources helped them to produce more structured paragraphs with detailed sentences.

Lastly, when asked about the difficulties they experienced while completing the activities, the most frequently mentioned challenges were related to the lack of English vocabulary, time available for the activity, organizing their ideas, and the written task in a foreign language itself. For example, student D commented, “I wanted to write my opinion, but I did not know many words in English.”

Discussion

The primary goal of this research was to analyze students’ writing fluency and to explore how journaling activities may enhance their writing skills in an EFL classroom. The quantitative findings revealed that the experimental and the control group shown comparable levels of writing fluency at the onset of the study. Thus, the similarity in the production of words and T-units in both groups indicates that the control and the experimental group started from a comparable baseline from which to initiate the intervention.

The first research question of the study aimed to examine how guided journaling affects EFL students’ writing fluency after an intervention period of six weeks. The findings demonstrated that the number of words increased in both groups, with a greater increase in the experimental group. Although the mean number of T-units decreased in both groups, the differences between them at the end of the study were minimal. These results suggest that the statistically significant difference is mainly related to the amount of written production rather than to the number of T-units. This suggests that students who were involved in journaling activities presented a greater gain in the production of words in comparison with those who continued in regular classroom activities. These findings indicate statistically significant improvements in writing fluency rather than in the number of sentences produced. The results are consistent with theories of second language acquisition, especially Krashen’s Input Hypothesis (1985), which emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input in language acquisition. The findings also support the notion that input alone is not enough for developing writing fluency; opportunities for meaningful language use and practice are also needed to develop writing fluency as suggested by recent research (Nation, 2022; Ellis, 2022). Therefore, the results are also supported by the Output Hypothesis (Swain, 2005), because it allowed learners to identify gaps in their knowledge and improve through practice. Similarly,

Hyland (2019) and Tsiriotakis et al. (2020), confirm that immersing learners in productive skills, in this case writing, promotes reflection and improvement in language accuracy.

The second research question aimed to comprehend how students perceive the influence of guided journaling on their vocabulary use in writing. While vocabulary development was not measured quantitatively, qualitative data collected from the perception survey showed that students learned and reinforced vocabulary associated with daily routines, connectors, adjectives, and adverbs during the journaling activities. These findings suggest that frequent practice may contribute to students' use of linguistic resources to produce more detailed texts. Nevertheless, students also identified their limited English vocabulary, difficulty organizing ideas, and the time available to complete the task as challenges when completing their journals. These findings align with Nation (2022), who states that the development of vocabulary requires multiple opportunities for exposure in different contexts to get consolidated.

The third research question focused on students' perceptions toward journaling as a writing activity. The qualitative data gathered showed that all participants expressed positive perceptions toward journaling activities, with most noting that the implementation of the strategy helped them organize their ideas better, write more easily, and become more confident when expressing thoughts in English. Although some participants identified challenges throughout the experimentation, they highlighted that participating in journaling activities contributed to reducing those challenges when producing written texts in a foreign language. The variability observed in both groups can be explained through the Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982). Writing in a foreign language may generate anxiety and lack of confidence. However, students reported feeling more confident after the experimentation, although some difficulties remained. From a pedagogical view, journaling may be considered an effective strategy to address these challenges. As mentioned in previous studies (Amalia et al., 2024; Maneepakhathorn, 2023; Abrouq, 2024), journaling gives students opportunities for continuous writing practice in a low-pressure environment to reduce the affective filter and encourage students to express their thoughts freely.

Several limitations have been identified in this study. First, the period of intervention was relatively short, which may not have been sufficient time to identify long-term effects of guided journaling in the development of writing skills. Second, the participants belonged to a single educational institution and were selected through convenience sampling. Therefore, the results cannot be widespread to all EFL teaching contexts. Third, this study focused mainly on indicators of writing fluency including number of word production and T-units, while other linguistics dimensions were not examined quantitatively. Hence, future research could examine the effects of journaling over longer intervention periods and with larger and diverse samples. Similarly, other aspects of writing such as grammatical accuracy, syntactic complexity, and range of vocabulary, could be evaluated to offer a wider understanding of the impact of journaling on the English Language learning process.

Conclusion

This study analyzed the contribution of journaling activities on the writing fluency of seventh-grade EFL learners in a private school of Latacunga, Ecuador. For this purpose, a mixed-methods design was implemented with a control group and an experimental group, using a pre-test, a post-test, and an open-ended questionnaire to analyze students' perceptions. The results revealed that guided journaling contributed to greater gains in students' writing fluency, particularly in terms of written production. Furthermore, the qualitative findings supported these results as students perceived improvements in their organization of ideas, use of vocabulary related to the given prompts, and their confidence when writing in a foreign language.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings encourage English teachers to include short journaling activities as part of their regular lessons by using familiar prompts and providing feedback focused on vocabulary and idea organization. Those activities give students with meaningful openings to practice writing in a low-pressure environment. Similarly, this strategy promotes students' active participation and writing fluency development through consistent practice.

Overall, guided journaling represents not only an additional classroom activity but a promising pedagogical strategy capable of promoting meaningful writing practice in EFL classrooms. When implemented in a systematic manner and with guided activities, it may contribute to the development of writing fluency, increase students' confidence, and foster learners' positive attitude toward writing in English.

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