

Literary Journalism Training to Enhance the Imaginative Thinking of Students at SMKN 2 Garut

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ABSTRACT

The background of this community service activity is a response to the use of technology and social media that affects Indonesian students, causing them to focus more on technology usage. This phenomenon has diminished their interest in honing writing skills and imaginative thinking, as observed at SMKN 2 Garut. The objective of this initiative is to expand knowledge of literary journalism, enhance the writing and imaginative skills of students at SMKN 2 Garut, and prepare them for academic and professional environments. The training method employs a combination of Participatory Action Research (PAR), Target Situation Analysis (TSA), and Project-based Learning (PBL), involving the introduction of literary journalism concepts and the practice of writing literary works. The results show a significant improvement in students' understanding and skills in expressing ideas imaginatively through literary journalism writing. This training also positively contributes to developing students' writing skills and imaginative thinking as part of their education. The activity successfully increased students' knowledge of literary journalism and enhanced their imagination, resulting in good literary works by leveraging students' thinking and creativity

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INTRODUCTION

The advancement of time encourages society to use technology and move away from reliance on conventional tools (Ibda & Sofanudin, 2021). In this era of information digitization, vocational high school students face increasingly complex challenges in understanding and appreciating literature. Creative and critical thinking are cognitive skills often learned and developed to optimize thinking ability (Zultrianti et al., 2023). Today's teenagers are growing up in the midst of a technological revolution, where digital technology has transformed the ways of interacting, learning, and working (Haerani et al., 2023). Excessive dependence on technology to complete academic tasks, compared to using critical thinking and mental effort, can impair memory retention, cognitive function, and critical thinking ability (Dwivedi et al., 2023). According to the *Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)* survey in 2019, Indonesia ranked 62nd out of 70 countries in literacy. The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) recorded that 48.2% of Indonesian children aged 7-17 accessed the internet in 2019. Of that number, 75.8% used it for social media. Literacy and writing skills are increasingly important to develop to form a critical, creative, and informative generation. Therefore, innovative approaches to teaching journalism and literature in educational environments are necessary (Arrahman et al., 2023).

Journalism is essentially the activity of journalists in researching newspapers or news, which are then edited and published to convey information clearly to the public (Qomaruddin, 2022). In line with this opinion, journalism is closely related to writing activities. All forms of writing activities, whether for mass media, diaries, books, or speech scripts, fall within the scope of journalism (Gama & Kusumawati, 2020).

In journalism, there is a term called literary journalism, referring to the integration of "journalism" and "literature." The term "journalistic" itself comes from the Dutch "journalistiek" or in English "journalism," both derived from the Latin "diurnal," meaning daily. Meanwhile, "journal" in English means a record of daily events. In the context of communication science, the term journalism refers to the method of conveying information through periodic mass media (Syaifuddin, 2014).

Literary journalism is a new development in journalism activities used in many industries because it emerges as an attractive option that not only conveys factual information but also combines storytelling elements with a fiction writing style to attract readers' interest (Nurwahid, 2023). This method offers a more enjoyable approach and allows students to develop their creativity and imagination while maintaining the integrity of information and experiencing the workflow of a literary journalist.

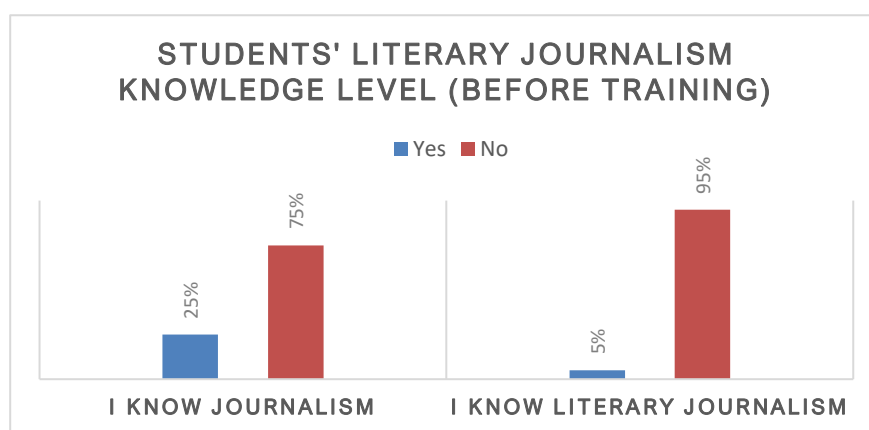
Imagination is the mental ability to envision or create images in the mind based on reality or personal experience (Laksmi, 2020). In line with this view, Andreas Rosén defines imagination (also known as fantasy) as the process of creating mental images of something known not to be present to the senses (Rasmussen, 2024). Therefore, creating literary journalism works requires strong imagination and considerable time due to the numerous words and moments that need to be written and depicted in describing each event. Thus, the imaginative process is essential in remembering and describing what is seen, heard, and felt in detail (Effendy et al., 2023). Imagination differs from fantasy. Fantasy is a form of imagination that exceeds the structure of everyday reality and is a prime example of imaginative consciousness (Saragih et al., 2021).

Based on the explanations, the background of this community service activity conducted by the authors is the rapid development of technology and social media, leading to a decline in students' interest in writing, which impacts their imaginative and creative thinking abilities. Additionally, the dynamic academic and professional world demands high readiness from individuals who want to enter it, especially as journalists or literary journalists.

The focus of the problem based on the author's findings during the pre-test of the community service activity at SMKN 2 Garut is that students do not show sufficient interest in writing and have limitations in imaginative thinking, despite the school providing journalism subjects. Moreover, there are barriers and a

lack of knowledge about journalism and writing interest among students. This is a significant issue because writing and imaginative thinking skills are crucial in the academic and professional world, particularly in journalism. Therefore, the author designed a community service program in literary journalism, offering an easier and more enjoyable approach to writing and creating journalistic works with a literary touch.

Communication, whether through words or writing, relies on language as the core that flows like a lifeline (Ferdinan et al., 2023). In social life, communication is the main key. If communication is disrupted, life as we experience it will also be disrupted. Hence, it will be difficult to have an orderly and well-functioning social life (Nurhadi et al., 2017). Therefore, writing is an active-productive language skill involving the process of providing information through writing. Writing is an important skill that everyone, including students, should possess. Additionally, writing can help students develop creativity, enhance their imaginative ability to express ideas and train themselves to think logically (Yulistiani & Indihadi, 2020).



GRAPH 1. Pre-Test Results

Writing is an essential element of language skills that must be mastered by every individual using a language. However, achieving writing proficiency is not instantaneous, as it results from focused practice on specific language skills (Yuliyanda, 2017).

An autobiography is a unique writing that reveals the story or journey of the writer using a captivating literary style, allowing readers to be carried into the atmosphere created. Feature writing highlights facts that are believed to influence emotions, entertain, and evoke sympathy and empathy. Moreover, a feature must have a human-interest element or touch on the human side (Fitria et al., 2020).

One way to improve skills is through education and training (Septian & Swarnawati, 2022). High school students have a high absorption capacity for stories and narratives. Combining facts and a fiction writing style in literary journalism can serve as a bridge to increase their interest in media literacy and form a deeper understanding. Additionally, this approach can strengthen their creative writing and critical analysis skills. Current educational aspects emphasizing skills in learning and innovation include creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, communication and collaboration, information literacy, media literacy, technology literacy, and life and career skills, which encompass adaptability and flexibility (Auliya Vilda Ghasya & Kartono, 2020).

Students' imaginative ability is part of right-brain activity that contributes to their intelligence. By imagining, students can generate creative ideas (Saragih et al., 2021). Thus, students' use of imagination is needed in writing their literary works because it gives a fresh impression to their stories and helps high school students present a richer nuance in their autobiographical literary works. In writing autobiographies, imagination can help them convey life experiences in a more engaging and captivating way for readers.

Without imagination, autobiographies can feel ordinary and flat. Imagination allows students to depict small details more vividly, making readers feel like they are experiencing the journey themselves. Additionally, imagination can help student express feelings, inner conflicts, and personal reflections in a more artistic manner.

The community service activity conducted by the author is quite relevant to several previous community service results titled "Strengthening Reading, Writing, and Digital Literacy through Literary Journalism and Storytelling Training." This community service was conducted with high school students to strengthen the literacy culture that was disrupted in the education sector due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The training tried to combine both aspects of literary journalism and storytelling. The results showed an increase in critical thinking and literacy skills, as seen from the writing uploaded on students' Twitter accounts (Mubarok, 2022).

The second community service activity, titled "Journalism Training for the Editors of Serambi Al-Muayyad School Magazine," was conducted at this school because many students were still unable to develop their writing skills effectively. Therefore, guidance in writing for the school magazine was deemed important to ensure its continued existence and to improve its quality. The results of the community service showed that the school magazine had been created quite well in terms of originality, language use, and content (Rosita, 2021).

The purpose of the training is to provide and expand knowledge related to literary journalism, as well as to create literary works by utilizing the imaginative power and sensory perception within oneself. Additionally, this activity offers comprehensive benefits to the students of SMKN 2 Garut. The students not only improve their writing skills and imaginative thinking but also prepare themselves for entering the dynamic academic and professional world. They also gain experience in how a literary journalist works in creating and processing their writings. This literary journalism training activity also proves that writing in a literary journalism style can enhance students' imaginative power.

The literary journalism community service at SMKN 2 Garut was conducted due to the lack of interest in and writing skills among students, despite journalism lessons being part of the school curriculum. This indicates the need for a more engaging and effective approach to increase students' interest in writing. Additionally, students face challenges in imaginative thinking, as reflected in their difficulties in visualizing certain environments or situations. This activity is expected to serve as an alternative journalism learning method that is more enjoyable and easier for students to understand, thereby improving their writing skills and imagination, and better preparing them for the professional world.

METHOD

The community service program was conducted using the *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) method. This approach actively involves students in the learning process, aiming to enhance their imaginative thinking, which can stimulate creativity and imagination. Additionally, the author used *Target Situation Analysis* (TSA) to identify their skill needs, contextualize learning, ensure relevance to real-life situations, develop appropriate materials, and provide targeted feedback. This ensures that the imaginative skills developed by the students are relevant and applicable in academic and professional settings. The learning method used is *Project-Based Learning* (PBL), which encourages students to solve problems creatively, develop imaginative abilities, and gain relevant hands-on experience. This approach makes learning more dynamic, engaging, and effective in developing students' imaginative skills.

The activities were carried out on December 14, 2023, and included lectures, discussions, and assignments for the students. On December 15, 2023, the training continued with writing practice and feedback sessions, followed by evaluation and closure on December 20, 2023, along with event documentation. The training embraced the concept of *service learning*, allowing students to understand and experience how a literary journalist works and how to write well and engagingly. This preparation aims to equip students for the academic and professional challenges in journalism, making a real contribution to literary journalism.

Nineteen students, both male and female, participated in this activity. The community service activities were carried out by students from the Communication Science study program, majoring in Journalism. The implementation stages of the activities were as follows:

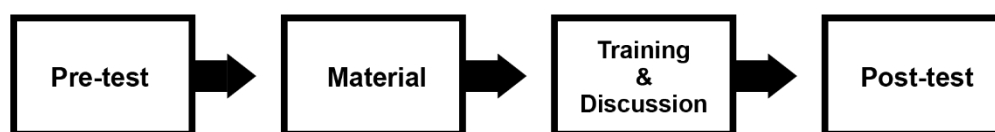


CHART 2. Stages of Community Service Activities

Pre-test

In the initial stage, a pre-test and observations were conducted with the vocational high school students to assess their imaginative thinking. Discussions were also held with the program department to ensure that the program results would be beneficial for the students. The results of the pre-test and observations served as the basis and reference for the training to be provided, helping students gain a better understanding of literary journalism. The literary journalism training program set various targets based on Target Situation Analysis (TSA). The program aimed to achieve several measurable outcomes:

- Improve students' literary writing skills.
- Rekindle students' enthusiasm for writing.
- Develop the ability to write engaging and fact-based content.
- Enhance imaginative thinking and creativity in writing by integrating four elements of literary journalism (scene construction, dialogue, noting details, and third-person perspective).
- Produce a literary journalism-style written work.

Material

At this stage, the instructor provided students with a curriculum on literary journalism based on the previous pre-test results. At the end of the session, an assignment was given to write an autobiography.

No	Material	Speaker
1	Definition of Literary Journalism	Ayies Devin Seftian
2	History of Literary Journalism	Ayies Devin Seftian
3	Characteristics of Literary Journalism	Ayies Devin Seftian
4	4 Tools of Literary Journalism	Ayies Devin Seftian
5	Types of Introductions	Ayies Devin Seftian

Training and Discussion

On the first day, the training utilized methods of presentation, exercises, and discussions, which were very useful and systematic enough to make the teaching pattern structured and to expand students' knowledge related to literary journalism. The author used this method because it is relevant for teaching vocational high school students and enhances their knowledge and memory retention.

On the second day, the author employed a learning system to measure the effectiveness of students in developing and enhancing their imaginative thinking by using PBL (Project-Based Learning). The goal was to have students work on and develop tasks with their thoughts. The assignment given to the students was to write an autobiography incorporating literary journalism style to boost their imaginative thinking.

Post-test

In this stage, students were instructed to complete a post-test questionnaire containing various related questions. This questionnaire was distributed after the training concluded to measure participants' understanding of literary journalism, the level of their imaginative thinking, the development of their literary writing before and after the training, and to evaluate the overall success of the literary journalism training program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the pre-test and observations of the students at SMKN 2 Garut, as well as discussions with the department program conducted by the author, the author has gathered all the necessary information to create a literary journalism training program.

The author's dedication involved a literary journalism training program aimed at enhancing the imaginative thinking of the students at SMKN 2 Garut, conducted over three days. The first day was on December 14th, the second on December 15th, and the closing session, including evaluation, feedback, and documentation, took place on December 20th, 2023. This training activity received a positive response from the school and enthusiastic participation from the students.

Pre-test

Before the implementation, the author conducted a pre-test on the basic knowledge of literary journalism among the students at SMKN 2 Garut. Based on the pre-test results, many students were unfamiliar with literary journalism, although some were aware of journalism in general. However, when asked further about their understanding of journalism and literary journalism, many were hesitant to define what journalism, literary journalism, and literature were. Additionally, the imaginative level of the students was measured by testing their ability to imagine or visualize an object they remembered and then describe it using literary words or sentences. The results showed that many students struggled to describe the objects they imagined with their imagination and literary expressions. The results indicated that many students lacked knowledge and imaginative capacity. Following this, the author analyzed the materials that needed to be prepared and presented to the students to enhance their knowledge and imaginative thinking skills.

Material

In the presentation on literary journalism, the author explained the material to the students, covering the definition of literary journalism, its history, characteristics, the four tools of literary journalism, and various types of intros. The purpose of delivering this material was to provide students with an understanding of literary journalism for writing literary works. Before delving deeper into literary journalism, the students needed to be equipped with knowledge about its fundamentals. Moving on to the next part of the material, the students were given an understanding of the characteristics of literary journalism so they could distinguish it from other types of journalism and avoid confusion. Furthermore, the author explained the four essential tools of literary journalism that significantly influence the writing of a literary work: scene construction, dialogue, third-person point of view, and noting details.

First is scene construction. In literary works, scene construction is essential to ensure that all scenes are interconnected and the storyline is clearly structured from one scene to the next. Additionally, scene construction helps create the atmosphere and setting of the story. Descriptions of the environment, mood, and visual elements within scenes provide strong imagery for the reader, enhancing the authenticity and narrative appeal.

Second is dialogue, an important tool in literary journalism with several essential functions. Dialogue can be used to develop characters within the story, giving them a voice and revealing their personalities and traits through conversation. Additionally, dialogue between characters can convey important information in an engaging way for the reader. It also plays a role in creating tension within the story, increasing its intensity, and making the reader more involved. Moreover, dialogue can enhance the atmosphere of literary journalism. By using language and conversations that reflect everyday speech, dialogue can create a more realistic and immersive experience, allowing readers to connect more deeply with the story. Thus, students can better understand and create dialogue that vividly depicts and develops characters, traits, and behaviors, making the written story more engaging for readers.



FIGURE 1. Presentation of Literary Journalism material

Third, the third-person point of view plays an important role in literary journalism writing. This perspective provides structure and depth to the story, helping to determine the main focus. With proper scene construction, the theme, message, or idea the author wants to convey can be highlighted clearly. Effective use of scenes allows literary journalism writers to present rich, deep, and captivating stories for readers. Understanding the third-person point of view also enables students to describe scenes more broadly, presenting a more complete context and providing a deeper understanding to readers.

Fourth, explaining the importance of noting details is crucial in literary journalism writing. Recording details is an important step to ensure the accuracy of the information and story. By noting details, students can create strong and deep narratives. Details such as character descriptions, settings, dialogue, and emotional nuances can enrich the story and make readers feel more engaged. It is also important to record sources of information used, such as interviews, books, or articles, to provide clear and supporting references. Additionally, noting changes in the narrative or character development helps maintain the consistency and logic of the story.

In the next part of the material, after explaining the various types of intros used in literary works, the author discusses the function of intros to the students. The intro in literary journalism writing is a way to capture the reader's attention and provide a brief overview of the content. The essence of an intro is to create initial interest so that readers are encouraged to continue reading the entire piece. Furthermore, the intro material presented by the author aims to help students convey the main opinion or story in the intro effectively.

Training and Discussion

During the implementation process, the author assigned the students to write an autobiography of 500-1000 words, typed using *Microsoft Word*, after delivering the material on literary journalism. The students

were free to choose their own themes for their stories. All these stories would be compiled into a single book containing various tales about unforgettable experiences, love, joy, hobbies, motivation, travel, and notable figures.

The approach involved discussions with the students and direct inquiries about any obstacles or difficulties they encountered with the assignment. In the initial process, the author's role was to guide the students in selecting appropriate titles that accurately depicted the stories they intended to tell. Many students were able to understand and choose suitable titles for their stories.



FIGURE 2. Literary Journalism Training Session

The next training session after title creation focused on writing the *intro*. The author assisted the students in crafting their *intros* as the opening of their stories, helping them choose the right intro to make it easier for them to convey their narratives and freely explore their stories with appropriate and beautiful diction. After writing their *intros*, the students were asked to write an autobiography about the story they had decided on the first day. The students were free to explore and develop their writing and imagination in depicting every situation, atmosphere, and environment they remembered. After writing their autobiographies and receiving positive feedback from the author, the students revised their autobiographies by selecting more appropriate dictionaries and words to describe their stories, blending in the style of literary journalism.

Since it was already time to go home, the students continued their writing and revisions at home. The author regularly checked in and reminded each student who had not yet finished their story and revisions to complete them. The *Project-based Learning* (PBL) method, along with direct and online support, proved to be quite effective in enhancing the students' understanding, creativity, and imagination in writing their autobiographies.

During the last two days before the evaluation and closing, all the submitted stories received feedback to address any shortcomings. The students' writings met the literary criteria, and they demonstrated a good understanding and implementation of the material. They successfully incorporated their life stories, characters, and journeys into well-crafted literary autobiographies. Post-test After conducting the training, the author administered a post-test to measure the student's understanding of literary journalism writing and literary works. The post-test results showed a significant improvement in the student's understanding after engaging with the material, discussing with the author, and completing the assignments. Based on the post-test, which was given through Google Forms, more than 15 students demonstrated a clear understanding of how to choose an appropriate title to depict their story, how to select a good, precise, and engaging intro, and how to describe events, atmosphere, dialogue, expressions, environment, and time very well using their thoughts and imagination. Additionally, their choice of diction was very accurate in depicting the background and mood within their stories.



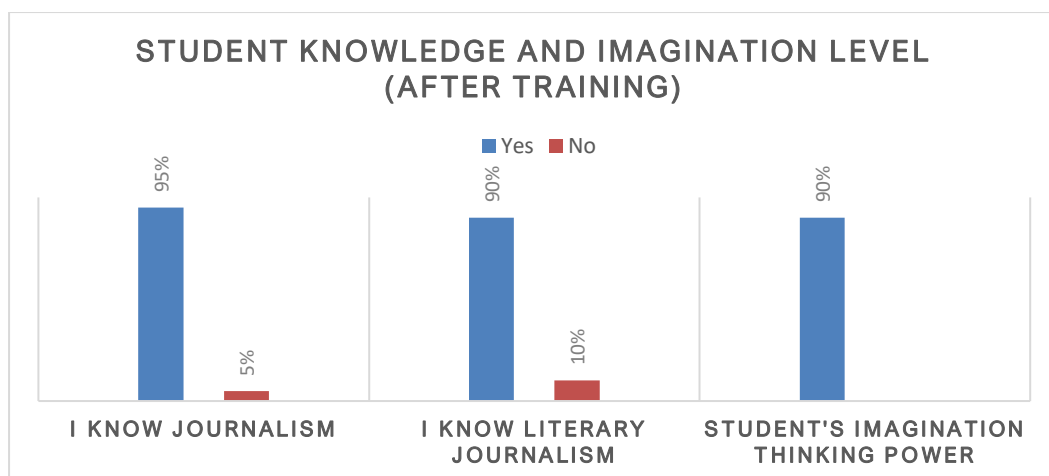
FIGURE 3. Results of the Literary Journalism Training Book

After collecting all the students' works, the author began compiling each story using Microsoft Word, formatted on A5-sized paper, to be printed into a book titled "Goresan Pikiran & Hati," showcasing the students' works from SMKN 2 Garut.

In this section, the author will explain the results of the community service project, highlighting the success achieved. This discussion shows a significant improvement in students' writing skills after participating in the literary journalism training. Analysis from the pre-test and post-test indicates an enhancement in their ability to structure writing, use language, words, and diction, and convey ideas and stories more creatively. Surveys also reveal that students generally experienced an increase in confidence in expressing ideas creatively using their imagination and thoughts as a result of the literary journalism training.

Success is also evident from the student's initial understanding and comprehension of the material presented by the author. By the end of the training, many students were able to meet the criteria for writing autobiographies using the four tools of literary journalism: scene construction, dialogue, third-person point of view, and noting details. In scene construction, many students organized each scene in their stories neatly and coherently. In creating dialogue, the students were able to develop interactions between characters, giving them a voice and revealing their personalities and traits through conversation. This also enhanced the atmosphere in literary journalism writing, as the students used everyday language and speech patterns, making the dialogue more realistic and immersive.

Regarding the third-person point of view, the depiction of stories was well-executed, providing a comprehensive narrative. In terms of detailing, the students excelled in describing each aspect of the atmosphere, setting, place, time, characters, and traits in their stories.



GRAPH 2. Post-test results

The post-test results indicate that the students have shown significant improvement from initially lacking understanding of literary journalism and lacking imagination in depicting atmosphere, setting, time, place, and so forth, to now, after the training, demonstrating improved understanding and imaginative thinking in crafting and describing the stories they write, including every event, atmosphere, behavior, traits, characters, setting, and time.

Based on the results of the community service project, the discussion regarding literary journalism training to enhance imaginative thinking is relevant to the previous community service project "Strengthening Reading and Writing Literacy Through Literary Journalism and Storytelling Training." This community service was conducted for high school students with the aim of reinforcing literacy culture among students, who were not yet optimal in education due to the COVID-19 pandemic affecting Indonesia at that time. Additionally, the training aimed to bridge the gap in teaching and learning between teachers and students. The results of the community service project show an improvement in reasoning ability and critical thinking, as well as strengthened reading and writing literacy among students, as evidenced by the manuscripts uploaded by each student on their respective Twitter accounts (Mubarok, 2022).

The second community service activity is titled "Journalism Training for the Editorial Team of Serambi Al-Muayyad School Magazine." This journalism training was conducted at the school because many students were still unable to develop their writing effectively. Therefore, mentoring in magazine writing was deemed important to ensure the school magazine remains relevant and of higher quality. The results of the community service project indicate that the school magazine has been created quite well, as seen from the originality of the works, the language used, and the content of the columns (Rosita, 2021).

A synthesis of this previous community service activity with the author's own community service project reveals a difference in focus. The previous community service project focused more on enhancing reasoning ability, and critical thinking, and strengthening reading and writing literacy among students through literary journalism, by translating stories into feature articles uploaded to the social media platform Twitter. On the other hand, the author's project aimed to develop the imagination and creativity of the students by writing autobiographies in a literary style, utilizing the four tools of literary journalism (scene construction, detailing, dialogue, third-person point of view), which are enjoyable and easy, using a literary journalism style to increase writing interest and imaginative thinking among students. This training could also serve as a more accessible and enjoyable variation of journalism education. Furthermore, it could equip students with the knowledge needed for further journalism studies and the world of work as a literary journalist.

CONCLUSION

After conducting this literary journalism training activity, it was observed that the students had limited knowledge of literary journalism, and their imaginative abilities were lacking in depicting scenarios in their minds during the pre-test. However, after being provided with materials, engaging in discussions, and completing assignments, it was evident that the students had gained an understanding of literary journalism and were capable of writing literary works effectively. There was also an improvement in the imaginative thinking of the students after being tasked with writing autobiographies. Hence, it can be concluded that the literary journalism training conducted by the author at SMKN 2 Garut was successful.

The objectives of this training were achieved by imparting knowledge about literary journalism, enhancing their thinking abilities and imagination through writing literary works while considering the four tools of literary journalism, rekindling interest in writing, developing engaging fact-based writing, and producing literary works. Additionally, the students were able to experience the process of becoming a journalist working in literary journalism, as well as preparing themselves for academic and professional endeavors at SMKN 2 Garut.

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I extend my gratitude to the Bachelor's Degree Program in Communication Sciences at Garut University and SMKN 2 Garut for their collaboration in the Literary Journalism Training event aimed at enhancing the imaginative thinking of students at SMKN 2 Garut. May the knowledge imparted be highly beneficial to the students, and may it serve as a source of reward in the Hereafter for SMKN 2 Garut for their assistance in facilitating the implementation of the activity.

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