



An Excursion as a Great Medium of Writing Process to Teach Writing

Rusdiana Junaid¹ Rustan Santaria²

[1rusdianajunaid@uncp.ac.id](mailto:rusdianajunaid@uncp.ac.id), [2rustan_santaria@iainpalopo.ac.id](mailto:rustan_santaria@iainpalopo.ac.id)

¹ Universitas Cokroaminoto Palopo ² IAIN Palopo

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Abstract

Generally, most English language learners believed that writing is the most difficult language skill to perform. In addition, some English teachers/lecturers experience difficulties to encourage and motivate their students to write. There are a number of reasons why sometimes many language learners find it difficult to perform writing skills. One of the reasons is that they are sometimes asked to write about the topics they have little knowledge of. Another reason is if they are not interested in the topics they are asked to write about. This paper aims at describing one way in which English teachers can help their students get as much out of activity as possible despite their writing experiences, that is through an excursion. An excursion is a great way of encouraging and motivating the students to practice their writing skills. Data were obtained through observation of the field trip and written tasks performed by 32 of the fourth semester students of English Education Study Program, in academic year 2016/2017 at Cokroaminoto University, Palopo. Data obtained were analyzed qualitatively. The result of the research reveals that an excursion is an appropriate way for tackling the written tasks which are sometimes daunting for English language learners to perform. Such activity facilitates the students to write enthusiastically since the students know the subject matter they are writing about. In addition, through several activities in an excursion, the students can improve their vocabulary command, increase their grammatical knowledge, develop their English language skills in general and build up their self-confidence, particularly in performing writing tasks.

Keywords: excursion: writing process: teaching writing

Introduction

For most English language learners, of the four macro skills of the language, it is the writing skill which they believe is the most difficult to perform compare to the other three skills: listening, speaking, and reading. There are a number of reasons why performing writing skill is difficult for them. One of them is that they are sometimes asked to write about the topics they have little knowledge of. Another reason is if they are not interested in the topics they are asked to write about. Furthermore, lack of vocabulary, low language level, and low self-confidence may also be a major hindrance to students' successful writing.

The above views are supported by and closely relevant with what (Harmer, 2009) states that "if the students are not interested in the topics we are asking them to write or speak about, they are unlikely to invest their language production with the same amount of efforts as they would if they were excited by the subject matter". He further says that "if the students are completely unfamiliar with the genre we are asking them to write, for example, they may find it difficult to engage with the task we have given them".

However, there are a number of ways in which English teachers or lecturers can help their students get as much out of such activities as possible in order for their students to achieve success in learning English. One of them is through an excursion. An excursion [based on the writers' teaching experiences] is a great way of encouraging students to practice their writing skill. She found an excursion as an appropriate way for tackling the written tasks which is most of the times frightening and daunting for foreign language learners to perform. Such activity facilitates the students to write excitedly and successfully since they know the subject matter they writing about. In addition, through activities in the excursion, the students can improve their vocabulary, increase their English proficiency level, and build up their self-confidence bit by bit.

This paper aims at describing one way in which English teachers or lecturers can help their students get as much out of activity as possible despite their writing experiences, that is an excursion. The main focus of the research is "how to encourage and motivate the students to write?" Therefore, the objective of the study is to illustrate how an excursion is used as a medium of writing process in which English teachers can encourage and motivate their students to write enthusiastically. The conclusions drawn are based on the field trip observation and the students self-report in forms of writing tasks It is found that every student produces a piece of good writing which is simple, direct, and clear. This confirms what Windschuttle and Elliot (2002) state that "good writing is simple, direct, and clear. It conveys precisely what the writers intended and it is easily understood by the readers.

Methods

Design

Descriptive qualitative research is applied in the present study. It is used to obtain information concerning the option of an excursion to be used as an unconstrained medium of writing process to teach writing. This design can yield rich data that lead to important recommendations in the writing practice. A large amount of data for detailed analysis is collected not only in the excursion activities but also in the preparation of the excursion and in the post excursion events.

Data Source

Data of the present study were obtained through observation of the field trip and written tasks performed by 32 of the fourth semester students of English Education Study Program in the academic year of 2016/2017 at Cokroaminoto University, Palopo. There were 5 lecturers who accompanied the 32 students when they did the field trip. These lecturers were responsible to do the observation on the students' behavior and activities during the field trip. They gave directions and reminders to the students whenever it was necessary.

Pertaining to the students written tasks, they were generated from the 10 predetermined simple questions which the students used as an interview protocol to interview at least one native speaker of English. These simple questions were:

- 1) What is your name? Or May I know your name, please?
- 2) Where are you from?
- 3) What is your home country like?
- 4) How many times have you visited Indonesia and how did you first hear about Indonesia?
- 5) How is Indonesia different from your country?
- 6) Have you ever experience culture shock? What was that?
- 7) What do you like about Indonesia?
- 8) Can you tell me about public transport in your cities?
- 9) What recreational facilities are there in your hometown?
- 10) Explain the differences between men and women's roles in your country.

The 32 students submitted their writings which were based on their experiences and activities when preparing the field trip, during the field trip, and on their return home after the field trip. The lecturers' observation notes and the students' writings were the primary data sources of the present study.

Data Collection

Data collections were carried out for four months, started from April to June 2016. The data were collected in three broad stages. The first stage was preparation in which the researchers and the lecturers discussed the field trip preparation to include putting the students into groups, constructing the questions, the interview protocol, and other administrative things related to the field trip.

The second step was the field trip itself. All the activities during the excursion were observed and recorded by both the lecturers as supervisors and the students as the subjects of the study. They took notes and recorded the whole things they saw and experienced during the field trip started from their departure, the process of interviewing the native speakers of English, until they arrived home. The third step was the post excursion activities to include their trip on their return home and their self-report. The students self-reports were in written (three times) and oral form (once, they were invited to stand in front of the class to describe and share their experiences during the trip).

Before submitting their final version of their writing, the students were encouraged to follow the steps of writing process. Richards, and Renandya (2002) suggest that the writing process as a private activity may be broadly seen as comprising four main stages: planning, drafting, revising, and editing. The stages of the process of writing as suggested by Richard and Renandya can be seen in the following figure.

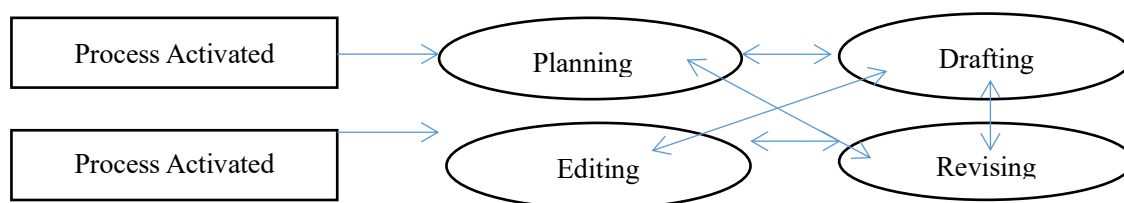


Figure of Writing Process

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed qualitatively by describing in a narrative description. All data gathered from the students and lecturers as well as the field notes were presented in a description form. Prior to the data description, the

researchers applied and adapted the six steps in analyzing qualitative data by (Lodico, Margueritte G; Spaulding, Dean T; Voegtle, 2010):

- 1) Preparing and organizing the data.
- 2) Reviewing and exploring the data.
- 3) Coding the data into categories.
- 4) Constructing thick description of writing components
- 5) Building themes
- 6) Reporting and interpreting the data

Data collected from the students written tasks as their self-report were corrected in terms of the grammatical mistakes and word choice. In this case, the students' grammatical mistakes and the inappropriate word choices were coded. Coding in data analysis is very important as stated by (Brown, J. Dean & Rodgers, 2014) that coding data is a crucial task in almost all forms of both social and physical research. By doing so, the students understood that they were doing mistakes in the coded area. They had to analyse the type of mistakes they did for the purpose of improving their writing tasks since they had to rewrite and submit them for the second correction. In this case, the researchers checked and rechecked the students work to make sure if they had corrected their mistakes properly. Since there were some students still did some mistakes, the researchers returned their papers again in order that the students could improve their writing skills. They were free to write their experiences before, whilst, and after the excursion.

Results and Discussion

Results

The findings of this research can be divided into two broad categories, namely *soft skills* and *hard skills*. In relation to the *softskills*, in general, the most obvious findings of this research are: 1) the students practiced their communication skills since they interacted with their lecturers, with their peers, and with Native Speakers of English (NSE). Students found some information on cultural issues during interviewing activities; 2). The students improved their time management skill since they have to follow the schedules that had been set before; 3) the students improved their problem solving skills since they experienced some problems, e.g. lost in the mall (Mall Pannakukang), sleep problems, food problems, and communication problems. However, they could manage to overcome every problem they encountered; 4) the students' leadership and collaboration skills improved since they were assigned to work in groups and therefore they did their activities in team working; 5) the students were trained to be honest and be responsible for their tasks as the committee of the program.

Findings pertaining to the problem of the *hard skills* are sentence structure and

grammatical mistakes as well as vocabulary or word choice. Mistakes related to sentence structure and grammar are: subject-verb agreements, inappropriate use of tenses, singular and plural. The following three paragraphs are examples of the student's writing from group 3 which contain many grammatical mistakes

First Draft

"As when I went to Makassar I encountered many obstacles where one friend who come from Lamasi late, because she prepare a lot of food so that it is slow to come here. When she arrived, we want to go to the bigger campus bus but prohibited because they have to be simultaneously ride for other students group for a field trip. i really began to also disappointed because I think that we will go to Makassar with the bigger bus but in fact, the bus that we use is the small bus. There are 30 students who will go to Makassar but the bus riding only 27 pesseger. my friend forced me to have to accepted the situation. In the middle of our trip exactly part Sidrap we stopped to rest and we also had dinner with friends who bring a lunch and dinner. I don't but my friends share food. We have fun that night at a roadside Sidrap and some friends have rest until we arrived in Makassar."

"When I going port roterdam I think it not far from BTN where we life in home by friends and in the street i feel not good because I forget to take in the my medicine and I feel very sick in my head after in port roterdam. I see very much artifacts the history about how to Makassar in the moment ago. how to the human to engage in farming I can know if I see all in the museum galigo where I can take picture with all friend thera. after that I and friends divided into 5 group to interviev the native speaker on the museum but just 3 group to do interview with the native speaker. I hope to can speaking and I cannot do conversation with the native speaker."

"With Native Speakers (foreigners) at this moment, I feel so happy because they are very differen from us. My group (group 3) interview foreigners from jerman. They respect us. One of them is Genie. i forgot his friend name. They are body tall and big. I like their body. i try to understand the language english utterances they use. I try to understand with body language and they make me understand. This is it's first time to come to Indonesia. They lov Indonesia culture. They love Indonesia because the food good. They like sambal seafood. When he said the first time, i could not understand. But when he said chili, then I understand. They respect us and we respected them. This trip is very good. My friends and I happy and enjoy this trip."

When the first drafts of the writings were submitted, the researchers gave marks and comments without giving correction. By doing so, the students were assigned to analyze the sentences and to find the mistakes. After that, they had to

rewrite by editing the passages and then resubmit them. Here are the second drafts as a sample of the students' writing.

Second Draft

"When I went to Makassar I encountered many obstacles. One friend who came from Lamasi late, because she prepare a lot of food. When she arrived, we want to go to the bigger campus bus but we were prohibited because it has been booked by other students group for a field trip. I really began to also disappointed because I think that we will go to Makassar with the bigger bus but in fact, the bus that we would use is the small bus. There are 30 students who would go to Makassar but the bus can carry only 27 pesseger. My friend forced me to have to accepted the situation. In the middle of our trip exactly part Sidrap we stopped to rest and we also had dinner with friends who bring a lunch and dinner. I don't bring food but my friends share food. We have fun that night at a roadside Sidrap and some friends have rest until we arrived in Makassar."

"When I went to Port Rotterdam, I thought it was not far from BTN where we life at our friend's house. On the way, I felt not good because I forget to take my medicine and I felt very sick after I arrived at Port Rotterdam. I saw very much artifacts that show the history of Makassar few moments ago. I also know how human engaged in farming. I knew and I saw those in Lagaligo museum where I took picture with all friends there. After that my friends and I were divided into 5 groups. We to interview native speakers on the museum. Unfortunately, only 3 groups found native speakers to be interviewed. The other two groups found foreigners but not native speakers of English including my group. I hoped I could speak English but I could not do conversation with the native speakers."

"With Native Speakers (foreigners) at this moment, I felt so happy because they were very different from us. My group (group 3) interviewed foreigners from German. They respect us. One of them is Genie. I forgot his friend name. They are tall and big. I like their body. I tried to understand the English language utterances they used. I tried to understand with body language and they made me understand. This was it's first time to come to Indonesia. They love Indonesia culture. They loved Indonesia because the food good. They like sambal seafood. When he said for the first time, i could not understand. But when he said chili, then I understood. They respected us and we respected them. This trip is very good. My friends and I are happy enjoyed this trip."

The second drafts still contain few mistakes in terms of the inappropriate use of tenses, word choice, and punctuation; therefore the same procedures of the first draft were applied. The students had to rewrite and edit their self-report as a

medium of teaching writing for the purpose of improving their writing skills and the product of their writing itself. Here are the third drafts of their writing which they shared with their friends by telling them orally in front of the class.

Third Draft

“When I went to Makassar I encountered many obstacles. One friend who came from Lamasi was late because she prepared a lot of food. When she arrived, we wanted to get into the bigger campus bus but we were prohibited because it had been booked by other students group for a field trip. I began to also be disappointed because I thought that we could go to Makassar by the bigger bus but in fact, the bus which we would use was the small one. There were 30 students who wanted to go but the bus could carry only 27 passengers. My friend forced me to accept the situation. In the middle of our trip, exactly in Sidrap, we stopped to have a rest and also had lunch. I did not bring food for lunch and dinner but my friends shared their food with me. We had fun that night and some friends had a rest until we arrived in Makassar.”

“When I went to Port Rotterdam, I thought it was not far from BTN where we stayed at our friend’s house. On the way, I felt not good because I forgot to take my medicine and I felt very sick after I arrived at Port Rotterdam. I saw many artifacts that show the history of Makassar few decades ago. I also knew how human engaged in farming. I knew and I saw those in Lagaligo museum where I took picture with all friends there. After that my friends and I were divided into 5 groups. We had to interview native speakers on the museum. Unfortunately, only 3 groups found native speakers to be interviewed. The other two groups found foreigners but not native speakers of English including my group. I hoped I could speak English but I could not do conversation with the native speakers.”

“With Native Speakers (foreigners) at this moment, I felt so happy because they were very different from us. My group (group 3) interviewed foreigners from German. They respected us. One of them is Genie. I forgot his friend’s name. They are tall and big. I like their body. I tried to understand the English language utterances they used. I tried to understand by their body language and they made me understand. This was their first time to come to Indonesia. They love Indonesian culture. They loved Indonesia because the food was good. They like seafood sambal. When he said for the first time, I could not understand. But when he said chili, then I understood. They respected us and we respected them. This trip was good. My friends and I were happy and enjoyed this trip.”

Discussion

The researcher argues that a change of learning atmosphere [in this case, outing/ excursion/ one day trip] is very helpful in sorting out the aforementioned problems in the background since activities in an excursion facilitate or give opportunities for the students to speak, discuss, and finally can write about the subject matter they experience. Thus, writing activities which are usually considered as frightening and daunting tasks to do may become exiting and enjoyable activities to perform.

The majority, if not all, of EFL/ESL learners agreed that the skills involved in writing are highly complex. Thus, the students have to pay attention and should possess the skills of planning and organizing as well as skill of spelling, punctuation, word choice, and so on. The difficulty becomes even more pronounced if the language proficiency of the students is weak.

In spite of its difficulties, the practice of writing skills can be done both inside and outside of classrooms by applying a number of different approaches. Teachers/lecturers can choose and decide whether they want their students to focus more on the process of writing or on the product of that writing itself. Apart from this, one important thing to note is the principal role of the teachers/lecturers in writing tasks as a motivator.

In the case of this study, the researchers focused on both the process and the product of writing based on the believed that like the other three macro language skills, writing requires frequent practice. Therefore, in the present study, the researchers created the right conditions for generating ideas of the subject for the writing process and activities by taking the students out of the classrooms. In this case, the students were encouraged to write their experiences and activities during the field trip. The students were involved in the four steps of writing process, namely: prewriting, writing, revising, and editing. After they have edited their writing, they had to present it orally in front of the class.

One aspect that the researchers analyzed in this study is grammar since grammar is one of the important components of writing. Students are expected to produce a piece of a good writing by using proper sentence construction, appropriate use of tenses, and punctuation. In addition, they are projected to utilize components of accurate writing such as word choice and spelling.

Based on the students' writing samples presented in the findings, it can be noticed that the students could communicate their ideas well because they are assigned to write activities they experienced despite the many grammatical mistakes and lexical problems they made. In addition, what they wrote were interested for them because some of them visited Makassar for the first time. They met foreigners who were different in many aspects from them, to include physical and cultural aspects.

It is clear that the first draft of the writing contains many grammatical mistakes. For example: *“As when I went to Makassar I encountered many obstacles where one friend*

who come from Lamasi late, because she prepare a lot of food so that it is slow to come here.” After getting comments from the lecturer, the student revised or edited her writing. The second draft looks better: “When I went to Makassar I encountered many obstacles. One friend who came from Lamasi late, because she prepare a lot of food.” The sentence was splitting into two sentences, some words are not used (*‘as’* at the beginning of the sentence and *‘so that it is slow to come here’*). However, there was still inappropriate use of tenses as well as subject verb agreement. It was written “...*’she prepare’*, it should be *‘...she prepared...’* In the third draft, the sentence improved: “*When I went to Makassar I encountered many obstacles. One friend who came from Lamasi was late because she prepared a lot of food.*”

Similar things in the second paragraph, there are many grammatical and mechanics of academic rules are not employed, for example, inappropriate use of tenses (when I going ...), capitalization (port rotterdam, i). “*When I going port rotterdam I think it not far from BTN where we life in home by friends and in the street i feel not good because I forget to take in the my medicine and I feel very sick in my head after in port rotterdam.*” However, in the second draft, the sentences are better. Here they are: “*When I went to Port Rotterdam, I thought it was not far from BTN where we life at our friend’s house. On the way, I felt not good because I forgot to take my medicine and I felt very sick after I arrived at Port Rotterdam.*” In the third draft, the sentences are much better: “*When I went to Port Rotterdam, I thought it was not far from BTN where we stayed at our friend’s house. On the way, I felt not good because I forgot to take my medicine and I felt very sick after I arrived at Port Rotterdam.*” The word *life* is replaced by *stayed* which is more appropriate.

In conclusion, the students were struggle with the use of proper grammar and mechanics even though they could write what they experienced during the excursion. In other words, the students still find it difficult to produce a piece of a good writing in terms of using appropriate sentence structure, proper tenses usage, and right mechanics. Taveau and Aguilar’s findings are the same. They say “most participants demonstrated difficulty with mechanics and grammar” (2015). To overcome this problem, we need to motivate our students to always practice writing by applying plan, draft, and edit or revise even though this of course time consuming. Relevant to this, (Harmer, 2009) suggests that we need to encourage students to plan, draft, *re-plan*, draft, edit, *re-edit*, etc. before producing the final version of the writing. Similarly, (Gebhard, 2000) proposes to have students work through a process of prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing to accomplish the writing activities.

Since activities in the excursion are flexible and enjoyable and they can be used directly as instructional materials for writing tasks. Writing skills of the students can be developed by involving them actively in various activities in the excursion. Moreover, students’ vocabulary mastery and self-confidence can be improved since they learn new

vocabulary and have plenty of time to practice writing since they are assigned to write everything they experienced.

Based on the aforementioned discussion, students writing skills may be enhanced by asking them to write what they have experienced. Students can benefit from practice at expressing their own feelings and experiences in written forms. In writing practice, students are encouraged to develop their own ideas and offer their own critical analysis.

Conclusion

An excursion can be used as a dynamic and lively program which can be used as a medium of writing process to teach writing. Students are encouraged to take notes not only during the excursion activities but also since the preparation and at the post activities. Every student should follow the steps of the writing process, namely: planning, drafting, writing, and editing or revising before presenting orally in front of the class and submitting the final version of their writings to be assessed. The students rewrote their experiences three times and it is found and clear that their writing skills improved step by step.

Activities in the excursion are used to motivate and encourage English language Education students to produce good writings. In addition, through an excursion, the students can improve their vocabulary repertoire and their self-confidence because they are assigned to interview native speakers of English or at least foreigners who can speak English. The students are enthusiastic to talk and discuss about cultural issues such as food, transportation, and culture shock.

Activities in the excursion promote not only *hard skills* (knowledge and skills) of the students but also their *soft skills* (affective and intra personal as well as interpersonal skills) which are essential to possess, such as communication skill, time management, problem solving, leadership, team working, collaboration, creativity, responsibility, honesty, and so on. Small groups and working together can help students communicate meaningful ideas to each other. Working together in twos, threes or larger groups can facilitate more frequent and insightful communications.

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Documentation



GROUP PHOTO OF THE STUDENTS AND THE LECTURERS



GROUP 3