



Extended Writing Project: An Experimental Study On How to Encourage Students to Work Collaboratively

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine the stages of implementing exploratory science for early childhood through the making of simple ice cream. The method used is literature review. The results of this study indicate that exploratory science for early childhood through the making of simple ice cream is one form of application of the concept of exploratory science. Through the stages of preparation, implementation, and closure, children are given the opportunity to explore natural phenomena related to changes in material state, cooling, and mixing of ingredients through the making of ice cream. In this process, they not only learn directly about basic scientific concepts such as physical changes and mixing of materials, but also train gross and fine motor skills and experience the results of their experiments. The overall activity enriches children's learning experiences and helps them understand the physical world in an interactive and enjoyable way.

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INTRODUCTION

Although it was developed later than others –reading, speaking, and listening; writing holds a very important role in education field especially in learning languages. People have to be able to write an application letter when they are going to apply a job, or students have to make an essay for a scholarship to study abroad. Then, writing is considered as one of the main basics to keep both the education and the language existence. Later on writing is not only about arranging a word with the other words and making no sense. Nunan (1999) indicated that writing is a form of speaking and it should be as easy and simple as speaking. Written language serves a similar function as spoken language; both of them are intended to deliver a message, information, and to entertain. However, the context for using written language is very different from those in which spoken language is used. Written language is used to communicate with people who are far away and removed in time and space. Therefore, it requires deep insight and inspiration to produce an appropriate and understandable for the readers.

For university students, writing is one of determinants of academic success. Many university departments, both graduate and undergraduate, put an essay writing in their coursework and contribute to final assessment. They required the students to compose well-organized and competently coherent written forms. Thus, it is essential to provide the students appropriate writing techniques and help them to write better. Besides, teachers should also consider factors that influence the writing process; external factors come from the environment such as teachers, language input, and classroom setting, while internal factors refer to learners' attitudes, motivation, and perception on the activities (Murtiningsih, 2016). Consequently, it's promoted a lot of scholars, educators, and researchers to explore some attempts on those issues in the recent decade, such as portfolio assessment (process approach), types of feedback (peer and teacher feedback) and classroom setting (collaborative approaches). Those approaches have been underpinned by researches that show their effectiveness on teaching and learning.

One of appropriate prompts for teachers in improving students' writing ability in the context mentioned previously is by setting the classroom in a condition where students are able to work together in all stages of writing process: planning, drafting, revising, and publishing (Storch, 2005). In addition, all students are responsible to their own individual writing although working collaboratively with peers (Anggraini et al, 2015). In other words, teachers give an individual writing task to the students and ask them to discuss with friends start from the initial to the last stage in the writing process.

Grounding from that fact, this study was intended to investigate the effect of Essay Writing Project (EWP) on the students' writing skill. Later, the result also observed the collaborative interaction occurred while performing the EWP. Specifically, the finding of this research contributed to the writing pedagogy and as the consideration for teachers to model their teaching which encourage students to collaborate actively in the writing process.

Process Approach in Writing

Nunan (1999) addressed two approaches in nature of writing, those are product and process approach. Product approach emphasizes on correct grammar and content of the students' final product while process approach provides the pupils more times to compose their work in several steps such as the process while writing, drafting and redrafting. Sometimes a teacher needs a product approach to be implemented in his/her class if the learning objective is to guide them how to make a good draft than to introduce them the effective steps to make a draft, and he/she needs a process approach to allow the students to be free with their creativity and provide them much time to compose, to discuss with teacher or friends, to evaluate, and to redraft their draft.

A process approach, in some research reports, was able to encourage the students to write better without a time restriction (Walker & Riu, 2008; Diliduzgun, 2013; Wirawati, 2013; Bayat, 2014; Dokchandra, 2018; Alabere & Shapii, 2019). Further, Walker and Riu (2008) stated that it was not about the effect of time restriction on their performance, further it dealt with the coherence in the writing which means that they needed longer time to compose a good draft. The common mistake happen is that teacher asks students to make a draft and give them not enough time, whereas the writing process needs appropriate time and situation. Consequently, they cannot think clearly and lose their concentration because of the time limitation.

Ur (1996) specified the process in writing into four stages; those are planning, drafting/ writing, revising, and publishing. The first stage is planning. This might be the hardest step in writing since it reflects how adequate the final draft is. Therefore, the students should define the topic very clearly and narrow it down to a specific discussion

that will be developed in the draft, brainstorm the ideas, arguments, and thoughts that are relevant to the topic, and organize them into an outline consists of subtopics that will be developed later into paragraph. The second stage is drafting or writing. There are two main important aspects that the students should consider when starting to write, those are the mechanical aspect such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation and the content aspect related to the text composition (introduction, body, and conclusion), coherence (the use of connecting words), and cohesion (choice of words). The third stage is revising/ editing. Revising is evaluating the whole draft both content and grammar and making sure that the intended ideas in the planning stage are conveyed very well to prevent any mistakes. Before moving on to the last stage, publishing stage, it's will be better if the students proofread their work with greater emphasis on correcting subtle errors to prevent minor mistakes. Then, they can submit it anytime when they feel confident about their revision.

Collaborative Writing

In term of collaborative interaction, process approach also encourages students to work together during the process. For instance, the students are confused to package information within a sentence, and what the grammatical forms to use, whether to use the active or the passive voice, which tense to use, or whether to use a subordinate clause. They will know the answer by making a conference with their teacher or friends and discuss it further.

There have been abundant research findings supported the effectiveness of this approach on the students' improvement in writing (e.g., Hodges, 2000; Grief, 2007; Andrews & Caster, 2008; Fung, 2010). Grief (2007) discovered that EFL learners in collaborative learning setting showed better improvement in structure. It also decreased their anxiety associated with completing tasks and raised their motivation, self-confidence, a sense of accountability, and cooperation in the social relationship. By observing how other learners' work, Fung (2010) believed that the learners were able learn something new to model their friends' strategies and writing styles.

On the other hand, the interaction in collaborative writing could sometime trigger conflict among students. It involves more than one author who share their argument to reach an agreement in deciding the writing components. Andrews & Caster (2008) suggested that teacher should consider appropriate group selection to overcome this issue. The more different the level among authors, the more complicated the conflict to face.

METHOD

Design

This study employed pre experimental design called one-group pretest-posttest design which selected subjects who were already organized in a class (intact class). In brief, this design involved three steps. First, the pupils were given a writing test with several topics. This pretest was to see their initial writing ability before treatment. Second, the researcher applied Essay Writing Project (EWP) as the teaching instruction during the experimentation. Finally, the pupils got the second writing test to find out how much progress they've accomplished after having EWP.

Participants

The total number of the participants were 20 students. They were the first year students of English Language Teaching program in Islamic University of Malang, Indonesia. They attended Writing II class for essay writing and have already passed Writing I for basic writing course in the first semester. The Writing II course was to prepare the students to write essays for academic purpose. During the study, the students were given a mini guide for the EWP (see Appendix 1) to write two descriptive essays

based on their selected topic in 8 meetings. They were also required to take two writing tests before (pretest) and after experiment procedures (posttest).

Research Instruments

This study collected data from two instruments. The first instrument was two descriptive essays obtained from the students' pretest and posttest. Before administering the tests, the researcher provided 5 topics (see appendix 3) and each student selected one topic for his/her essay as it was instructed in the writing prompt. These tests lasted approximately 30-45 minutes and hadn't words or number of paragraphs limitation. If necessary, the students were able to make an outline on the answer sheet to help them organize the ideas they intended to write.

Before statistical analysis, those two tests were scored by two raters (the researcher and the other teacher) based on several criteria in scoring rubric adapted from Heaton (1990) (see Appendix 2). Those features were fluency, grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and content with total mark for each feature was 5. The maximum total number of marks for all 5 sections was 25 (5 x 5) and the minimum was 5 (5 x 1). The final calculation was obtained by dividing the total mark by 25 and multiplying it by 100. For instance, $3(\text{fluency}) + 4(\text{grammar}) + 2(\text{vocabulary}) + 5(\text{content}) + 3(\text{spelling}) = (17/25) \times 100$.

Another important instrument was students' mini guide (see appendix 1). It was a mini book encompasses five parts: planning, drafting, editing, publishing, and my opinion and designed in a systematic layout to make students understand the process and to record their mistakes, errors, progress, feedbacks, and their responses to EWP. "Planning" on the mini guide referred to students' preparation dealing with the topic determination. This part provided students a mind map and a list to write their subtopic and supporting ideas they intended to discuss. In the full blank page "Drafting", students began to compose their draft derived from their "Planning" page. On the bottom is peer feedback space to write friends' comments and feedback related to the errors they found in the draft. Similarly, "Editing" was also a blank page, but the feedback list in this part was provided for teacher. The next was "Publishing" to write the final draft after revising. The last was "My Opinion" space which comprised 5 open-ended questions to ask students' perception on the EWP.

Research Procedure

The research procedures lasted 5 weeks in 10 meetings. Prior to that, in the first meeting the teacher presented some steps to make a good descriptive essay including the content, organization, grammar use, vocabulary, etc. in the following meeting, the pretest was administered to see the students' initial writing ability before implementing EWP. In the EWP, the students were demanded to compose two descriptive essays; the first essay was in the third to fifth meeting and the second essay was in the sixth to eighth meeting. After that, the posttest was executed in the ninth meeting with the same procedure but different topic from the pretest. The last meeting was intended for the students to convey their perceptions on the EWP process. The questions for this were stated and the students wrote their answers in the mini guide.

Extended Writing Project (EWP) Procedure

The extended writing project was divided into four stages: planning, drafting/writing, revising, and publishing. The students were encouraged to work collaboratively in every stage by consulting their draft to their peers and lecture especially in revising stage. In this stage, every student received peer feedback as well as teacher feedback before publishing the final product. The detail description of the students' activities in the EWP is represented in the Table 1 below.

Table 1. The EWP classroom protocol

Writing Stage	EWP Classroom Protocol
<i>Planning</i>	- Before starting the experiment, the teacher explained about the procedure of Essay Writing Project (EWP) and how to use the mini guide in the whole process. - The teacher provided 10 topics (see appendix 3) and asked the students to choose a topic that merit his/her preference. Two students with the same topic sit together to discuss what they're going to write for their project. - Although working in pair, each student should formulate different subtopic from his/her pair. For instance: Topic: Dream House Student A: I wanted to have a house as in fairy tale movie Student B: My dream house is a country side house which is surrounded by nature.
<i>Drafting/ Writing</i>	After students put their idea in an essay, they shared their work and asked for their friends' comments and feedback.
<i>Editing/ Revising</i>	- The students edited/ revised their draft based on some corrections received from friends. Then, they put the draft in the teacher's locker to get further feedback. - In the following meeting, the teacher discussed some major/ minor errors she found in the students' work and provided the appropriate correction. Sometimes teacher feedback was carried out in student-teacher conference where student met teacher individually.
<i>Publishing</i>	- The students submitted the final draft and planned for the second draft. - The students wrote their perception on the EWP in the mini guide.

Data Analysis

This study employed paired sample *t*-test with $p = 0.05$ to investigate if there was a significance different between the students' writing ability before and after EWP implementation. In other words, the difference didn't occur by chance. This paired samples *t*-test was used since the researcher wished to match the subject on some qualities that were important to the purpose of this research. In such cases the groups were no longer independent (Ary, 1979). From this computation, the null hypothesis was accepted is the *t*-ratio is below or equal to the *p* value and rejected if the *t*-ratio is greater than the *p* value.

FINDINGS

The results of paired sample *t*-test describe two findings. The first is the effect of EWP on the students' writing skill and the second is that on the students' sub-dimensions writing skill such as fluency, grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and content.

Table 2. The Effect of EWP on the Students' writing skill

Grouping	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig.(2-tailed)	Std. Error Difference
Pretest	20	62,3	7.3831	19	6,9524	,000	1,1651
Posttest	20	70,4	6.7705				

As seen in Table 2, the mean score in pretest is 7,3831 and in posttest is 70,4 with 8,1 mean difference. It indicates that the result of paired sample *t*-test are significant ($t(19)=6,9524$, $p < 0.05$) in all writing skill. Specifically, the result of paired sample *t*-test on every writing components is illustrated in Table 2 below.

Table 3. The Effect of EWP on the Students' sub-dimensions writing skill

Writing Components		Mean	T	SD
Fluency	Pretest	2,9	2,4096	0,5385
	Posttest	3,2		0,4
Grammar	Pretest	2,95	4,0451	0,5895
	Posttest	3,4		0,5831
Vocabulary	Pretest	2,9	3,4138	0,5385
	Posttest	3,35		0,477
Spelling	Pretest	4,25	0	0,5362
	Posttest	4,25		0,433
Content	Pretest	2,5	4,3838	0,6708
	Posttest	3,2		0,6782

By comparing the *t*-test result to the critical value ($t(19)=2,096$) indicates that there will be a significant difference between means of pretest and posttest if *t*-test result is greater than the critical value. From Table 3, we concludes that there is significant difference in four writing aspects since the *t*-test result in fluency (2,4096), grammar (4,0451), vocabulary (3,4138), and content (4,3838) are greater than 2,096. Conversely, there is no significant difference in students' spelling since the *t*-test result (0) was lower than 2,096.

DISCUSSION

The data analysis result indicated that the null hypothesis was rejected meant that there was a significant difference between the students' pretest and posttest results. In short, the Essay Writing Project (EWP) positively affected the students' writing skill. The students' improvement was reflected in several aspects such as grammar, essay development, and coherency. In addition, peers and teacher provided different type of feedbacks on the students' composition. The students' perception on the collaborative writing was also viewed to explore their preference on the classroom setting which required them to work with their friends in most of the writing stages.

The Students' Difficulties and Writing Improvement

Although the result indicated that EWP finally favored the students for writing skill improvement, the analysis on the students' essays revealed various difficulties encountered by the learners such as grammar, coherence, vocabulary, prepositions, and punctuation. Therefore, it is appropriate to discuss those problems and how EWP has led to the students' better performance. Table 2 below shows several problems learners' faced during the project and how EWP might help to encounter them.

Table 4. The Students' problems and EWP treatment

Language Aspects	Leaners' Problems	EWP Treatment
Vocabulary	Most of learners tended to use same words several times due to lack of vocabulary items.	EWP provided learners time to finish their final draft. They had much opportunities to deal with the
Punctuation	The wrong use of commas and full	draft starting from the planning to

	stop frequently occurred in the draft. Some the learners also misused the capital letter in name of person and place.	publishing stage. Besides, this project also encouraged them to work collaboratively with friends and had a conference with teacher.
<i>Grammar</i>	In this part, the students were often confused whether to use present tense and past tense in the sentence. In addition, students mostly preferred using passive sentences rather than active sentences. It might happened since they tried to translate their L1 into English most of the time.	Those were their chance to consult their draft and obtain useful feedbacks on their errors and mistakes.
<i>Coherent</i>	Students sometimes include ideas that was not relevant to the main topic.	Mind map and outline in “Planning” stage in the mini guide assisted them to plan their essay carefully, avoid those using irrelevant ideas, and connect each part of the essays using proper wording.
<i>Preposition</i>	Students sometimes didn’t use appropriate preposition words and failed to link different paragraph. Consequently, the ideas sound irrelevant	

The posttest analysis discovered an outstanding outcome of the students’ improvement. The most evident of this was that by giving more time to reflect on the topic, the ideas presented by the students in their posttest were more sophisticated and much better expressed than in their pretest. In this pretest, the students’ drafts were rather messy. Their sentences and paragraph were incoherence and disorganized. Besides, they tended to use simple sentences and inappropriate conjunctions.

Furthermore, the analysis overviewed the students’ progress on how the ideas had been put together, on how each of the sections had been developed, and on how successfully individual students had used tutorial and the feedback. Most of their draft was coherence and well organized. They have already used compound complex sentence and some variance of preposition. The content was more understandable and the sentences were connected enough.

Peer and Teacher Feedback on the Students’ Draft

There was a different kind of feedback presented by peers and teacher. Peers tended to correct only on the surface, they only focused on the grammar, spelling, and punctuation and ignored the error in content while teacher mostly corrected deeper on the text organization, the text flow, and the word choices. Similarly, Reugg (2018) found that teacher feedback was more related meaning-level issues and content and it improved more in grammar scores than the peer feedback group. Comparing to the students’ draft without receiving any feedback, Paulus (1999) discovered that peer and teacher feedback were more often meaning meaning-level changes than those made on their own.

The main reason why students preferred giving surface feedback on their friends’ draft was that some of them were actually having lack ability and insufficient knowledge in English. In this case, the students respected and responded more to their teacher feedback rather than peer feedback.

Students' Perceptions on the EWP

To obtain the students' perception on the EWP, the researcher asked three open-ended questions in the end of the meeting. They wrote the answers in "My Opinion" section in the mini guide and were told that it had nothing to do with their final assessment. Thus they were free to convey what they felt about the project.

The first question asked the students what they felt after having EWP in their class. Most of them were agree that EWP motivated them to put their best effort to compose a good essay. They were not afraid of making mistakes and more confident since EWP provided them much time to finish their draft and allow them to discuss it with teacher and friends. A group of students with different writing ability (heterogeneous pairs) also reflected the same behavior (Cady, 2011). Conversely, homogeneous pairs; a group of students with the same writing ability; couldn't improve their confident to write.

The second was about the advantages they obtained from the implementation of EWP. Regarding the benefit of the writing aspects, most of the students revealed that they could learn a lot of new things from working with friends. They were able to notice mistakes and errors they didn't realize before discussing together. From teacher, they learnt so much aspects dealing with the content in writing; how to organize ideas and put them in an understandable essay. Furthermore, Fung (2010) suggested to group students with those who have different background and ability. He asserted that working with pair from the same background may have the same level of thinking and perspective which does not motivate the students to write better.

The last question asked the students to mention things they liked and disliked about EWP. Specifically, the students liked to work with partner since they could share ideas and help each other. What they didn't like was EWP demanded them to write the draft many times, in the drafting, editing, and publishing stage. They considered that redundancy was exhausting. Consequently, they sometime didn't pay attention on the feedbacks but to finish the draft on time before the deadline.

CONCLUSIONS

The current study investigated the effect of EWP (Essay Writing Project) on students' writing ability. It employed process approach that encouraged the students to work collaboratively with the application of feedback from the teacher and the peers. The participants, 20 first year students of English Faculty in Islamic University of Malang, were admitted to have a descriptive essay test as the pretest prior to the EWP treatment and posttest after the treatment.

The implementation of EWP lasted 4 weeks in 7 meetings and the students were required to compose 3 descriptive essays during the treatment. The researcher provided a mini guide to assist the students complete the project in all writing stages: planning, drafting, editing, and publishing. In addition, they had to work with their friends starting from the first to the last stage and a conference with the teacher in the editing stage before publishing the final draft. It was found from the students' essays that feedbacks obtained from peers were mostly on the grammar while those from teacher were meaning based dealing with the text organization and contents.

The data was calculated using paired sample *t*-test with level of significance $p < 0.05$ comparing two means, students' pretest and posttest scores, from one group sample. The result confirmed that there was significant effect of EWP on the students' writing skill. Further, the analysis on writing components; fluency, grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and content; revealed that EWP positively improved students' writing in all aspects but spelling.

The last procedure of this study was asking the students' perception on the EWP by giving them three open-ended questions in the mini guide. The students believed that EWP was able to increase their confidence and motivation to write. By working with friends, they could learn their peers' strength, styles, and knowledge that encourage them to write better. The redundancy of writing draft in drafting, editing, and publishing stage, however, exhausted them all the time. It meant that they should write 3 drafts in one project and 9 drafts to complete all assignments before they were ready to publish their essay.

In conclusion, the research finding affirmed the statement that an impromptu timed essay was incoherent with a process approach to teaching. This suggested that EWP was one of a beneficial classroom teaching methods which focused on the process and collaboration and openly fostered learner independence. This was worthwhile both for the students and for the teachers. Teacher could understand his students well and their real ability through the teacher conference on their draft. Furthermore, the students were seemed to be more responsible giving suggestion on their colleagues' draft through the peer feedback.

The current study revealed some insightful findings in and for the development of English writing learning, however, there are also weaknesses that should be looked at for future study. The main problem was the research design which only employed one-group design. Hence, it only investigated one group of sample by computing their pretest and posttest scores. Then, the problem arose since the students improvement could be affected by other factors. Therefore, it suggested the future researchers to use two groups (experimental – control group) design to accomplish this study.

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