Project-Based Learning, Process Writing, and Instagram: an Attempt to Enhance the Students’ Writing Skill

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Abstract: This collaborative classroom action research was aimed to improve the students’ ability in writing hortatory exposition text. It involved 30 students of high school as the research subject. Writing test was the instrument used in this study to collect the data. The research findings indicate that the implementation of project-based learning combined with process writing and Instagram could improve the students’ writing achievement. The students can improve their average writing score which was higher than the minimum passing score. All of the students were able to increase their writing score by at least 10 points higher compared to which they gained in the initial test. In addition to that, 70% of the students could pass the minimum passing grade.

Key Words: project-based learning, process writing, Instagram, writing skill

INTRODUCTION

Writing in English is difficult for most Indonesian students as English is a foreign language in Indonesia, and it is less frequently used by students daily. Many Indonesian students cannot write in English well despite the fact they have learned it since their primary education. Classroom writing activity becomes the avoided learning activity for the majority of the students feel that writing is not interesting for them. This boring activity was expressed by the students of XI IPA 2 Bilingual at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Ponorogo. The data obtained from the preliminary study which involved an initial writing test, classroom observation, and questionnaire indicated that most students of XI IPA 2 Bilingual had problems in writing.

The result of the initial writing test which was held on Thursday, October 5th, 2017, indicated that the majority of the students in XI IPA 2 Bilingual did not gain a good writing achievement. The result showed that the students’ writing average score was only 66.33 which is perceived as low in the context of SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Ponorogo. In the initial writing test, when the students were asked to write a hortatory exposition text about pollution, of the 30 students who joined the initial writing test, only six students (20%) got the score above the minimum passing grade (78). Hence, it is obvious that most of the students (80%) gained a score below the minimum passing grade. The result also showed that there were four students (13, 33%) gained a very poor writing score. This relatively low writing score confirmed that writing in English is a problem for the students of XI IPA 2 Bilingual.
Meanwhile, the result of the questionnaire showed that 22 out of 30 students of XI IPA 2 Bilingual (73.33%) stated that writing was difficult for them. In addition to that, most of the students (60%) did not like writing. It turned out that the students were rarely engaged in a real writing activity since most of them (93.33%) said that individual homework is the most common writing activity they had so far. In finishing their writing homework, as the students did not get assistance from the teacher, they counted on Google translate a lot. It can be inferred that the students had never been engaged in an interesting writing activity.

The classroom observation result strengthens the information obtained from the initial test and questionnaire. The result of the classroom observation shows that the students of XI IPA 2 Bilingual were reluctant and had low motivation to be engaged in an English writing activity. Whenever the teacher asked them to write a composition in English, their verbal responses and their facial expression implied that they did not feel comfortable to have a writing activity. Also, during the writing process, he noticed that the students took some time to find ideas on what to write. Many of the students had difficulties in developing their ideas. They only produced several short sentences in the paragraph of their writing. They made many grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors as well. Furthermore, many of them had a limited vocabulary. No wonder if some of them depend a lot on Google translate in finishing their writing task.

The data retrieved from the result of the initial writing test, questionnaire, and classroom observation were a piece of concrete evidence that writing is a problem for the students. There were several reasons for explaining the students’ difficulties in writing. First, writing is a problem for the students because they were lack of grammar and vocabulary. This is because they had so minimum English exposure. The students are not used to reading English text and using English daily. Second, as writing activity is time-consuming, the students were rarely engaged in a writing activity. The writing activity the students had so far was in the form of individual homework where they did not get assistance from the teachers. The last is dealing with motivation. The students were not motivated in having a writing activity since the writing strategy applied was not engaging and there was no interesting media involved in the writing activity.

In an attempt to solve the writing problem experienced by the students of XI IPA 2 Bilingual at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Ponorogo, we recently carried out a classroom action research which involved project-based learning combined with process writing and Instagram. We argued that the implementation of this strategy would be beneficial for the students and could solve the students’ problems in writing. The reasons why we preferred using project-based learning combined with process writing and Instagram are elaborated as follows.

Project-based learning is a challenging teaching technique which engages the students in a real task which is related to everyday life real problem (Goodman and Stivers, 2010). Implementing project-based learning benefits the students. Fathurohman (2015) states that the implementation of project-based learning promotes not only active student involvement but also enhance the student’s skill to act as a team with their friends in solving the problem. In conducting project-based learning, several steps need to be done. As stated by Harun (2006) and Kemdikbud (2017), project-based learning consists of six steps, they are ‘start with an essential question’, ‘design a plan for the project’, ‘create a schedule’, ‘project monitoring’, ‘assess the outcome’, and ‘evaluate the experience’. Many have investigated the effectiveness of project-based learning in enhancing the students’ writing ability such as; Thitivesa and Essien (2013), Wang, Ten, and Lin (2015), Sadeghi, Biniaz, and Soleimani (2016). Their research results have proven that the students’ writing skill could be enhanced by implementing project-based learning. More specifically, Thitivesa and Essien (2013) and Sadeghi, Biniaz, and Soleimani (2016) applied project-based learning at the university level.

Meanwhile, the present study focused on applying project-based learning in the high school context. In addition to that, unlike the study by Wang, Ten, and Lin (2015) which focused on writing a travel journal, the present study highlighted on writing hortatory exposition text about social, educational, environmental, and health issues in Ponorogo. The end product of the present study was also different from which of the previous studies. All of the previous study final products were in the form of printed or paper product. Meanwhile, the final product of the present study was in the form of an Instagram caption.

In this study, the researcher combined project-based learning with process writing. Scrivener (2011) defines process writing as an approach where students write with assistance, encouragement, and feedback for teachers throughout the writing process. Process writing makes it possible for the students to understand their writing process, provides enough time
for the students to write and rewrite, and helps the students to express what’s on their mind as they write, focuses on the revision, and encourages feedback from both teachers and peers (Brown & Lee, 2015). There are several steps of process writing as proposed by O’Malley and Pierce (1996), Gebhard (2000), Richard and Renandya (2002), Tompkins (2004), Harmer (2004), and Ur (2012). All of them proposed that process writing consists of planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. There have been quite some previous studies (e.g., Bayat, 2014; Alodwan & Ibni an 2014; Faraj, 2015; and Mehr, 2017) addressed the use of process writing. Their research findings indicated that the implementation of process writing improved the students’ writing ability. These previous studies explored process writing in a relatively similar way by focusing on tertiary education students, final product determined by the researcher, and general writing topic. Unlike the reviewed previous studies, the present study investigated the use of process writing in higher education level by involving real-life problems as writing and gave an opportunity to the students to determine the writing product. In addition to that, all of these previous studies were carried out abroad. Meanwhile, the present study was carried out in the Indonesian context, meaning that the result of this study was likely different which enriched the previous ones. The present study also explored publishing stage in a different way since the students published their final writing product on Instagram, which was not offered by any of those previous studies.

We believe that the combination of project-based learning and process writing benefited the students. By combining project-based learning and process writing, the students were able to learn writing with a more meaningful and contextual topic, in a more organized way. The students had the opportunity to plan, draft, revise, and edit their writing with exclusive assistance from the teacher. The combination of project-based learning and process writing also made the students feel more secure in the writing process as they collaborated with their peers and monitored by the researchers. It also promoted the feeling of ownership of the learning as students were given a chance to design their learning and set the learning schedule.

Besides project-based learning and process writing, Instagram was also involved in this study. We employed Instagram as the media for the students to publish their writing project product. In addition to that, Instagram was chosen as it is popular among generations nowadays, including the students of XI IPA 2 Bilingual at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Ponorogo. All of them (100%) have an Instagram account and access it heavily. There were several studies (e.g., Listani; 2016, and Zidny & Suharso; 2017) focused on the application of Instagram inside the classroom. Their research findings had proven that the use of Instagram in a writing activity gave a positive contribution to the students’ writing skill. Unlike the previous studies, the present study explored Instagram differently since it was integrated with project-based learning and process writing. None of which was offered by the previous studies.

Reflecting upon the background, this study investigated how the implementation of project-based learning combined with process writing and Instagram can enhance the students’ ability in writing hortatory exposition text.

**METHOD**

In implementing project-based learning combined with process writing, the researchers used CAR design as proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). One cycle consisted of four steps; they are planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The research involved 30 students of XI IPA 2 Bilingual at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia.

In the planning stage, we prepared the instruments needed (e.g., lesson plan and writing test) to finish the whole seven meetings treatment. In addition to that, we also prepared the criteria for success (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Criteria of Success</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>All of the students could improve their score at least 10 points better than the score which they gained in the initial test</td>
<td>Writing test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The students’ average score after the implementation of the strategy is equal to or more than 78</td>
<td>Writing test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>At least 50% of the students could pass the minimum passing grade (78)</td>
<td>Writing test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In implementing the strategy, the principal researcher became the teacher and was helped by a collaborator. The implementation of the strategy followed the following teaching scenario. The teaching scenario of each meeting can be seen in Table 2.
The observing stage was used for data collection. The collection was carried out by using the writing test which was administered at the last meeting to measure the students’ writing improvement after the implementation of the strategy.

The data collected were then analyzed in the reflecting stage. Reflecting refers to data analysis in which the students’ writing test sheets were analyzed by one of the researchers as Rater 1 and the collaborator as Rater 2. Rater 1 and Rater 2 checked the students’ writing test sheet, assessed the students’ writing by considering five writing components (e.g., content, grammar, organization, vocabulary, and mechanics), and agreed on one final score. The result of data analysis was used to determine whether or not the criteria of success have been reached. The study is a success if all of the criteria of success (Table 1) is achieved.

### RESULTS

#### The Students’ Individual Writing Test Result

Based on the result of the individual writing test which was administered at the seventh meeting, Wednesday, May 2, 2018, it is seen that the treatment could increase the students’ writing achievement. All of the students have passed the required minimum score improvement, 10 points better compared to which they gained in the initial score. Of those 30 students who joined the writing test, three students scored 95, five students scored 90, ten students scored 85, three students scored 80, four students scored 75, two students scored 70, two students scored 65, and one student scored 55. All of these scores were equal to or more than 10 points higher compared to which the students gained in the initial test. To be more specific, the students’ score improvement varied from the smallest 10 points to the largest 25 points. Out of 30 students, 10 students (33.33%) increased 10 points, 11 students (36.67%) increased 15 points, six students (20%) increased 20 points, and three students (10%) increased 25 points. This confirmed that the students made the required score improvement, 10 points were higher or better than which they gained in the initial test, meaning that the first criteria of success had been achieved. The students’ point improvement can be seen in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. Students’ Score Improvement in Writing Test Compared to that in the Initial Test](image_url)

The second criteria of success of this study had also been achieved as the students gained an average score which was higher than the minimum passing score (78). After the implementation of the strategy, the student’s average score increased to 15.67 points from 66.33 to 82. Also, the data analysis results show that the students improved all writing components assessed (content, grammar, organization, vocabulary, and mechanics). The comparison of the students’ writing components score between their initial and writing test is shown in Figure 2.

As can be seen in Figure 2, the students improved all writing components assessed. Compared to the
initial test result, the average content score increased from 3 to 3.5. The average grammar score also improved as the students achieved 3.3 compared to which they gained on their initial test which was only 2.5. In the aspect of the organization, the students also made significant improvement by achieving 3.4 from 2.8 in the initial test. In the aspect of vocabulary, the average score increased from 2.5 to 2.9. While in the aspect of mechanics, the students improved their average score from 2.9 to 3.3. Table 3 shows the average students score and the improvement in each writing components assessed.

Table 3. Students’ Average Score and Improvement in each Writing Components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Mechanics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Students Who Passed Minimum Passing Score

In addition to the students’ individual and average writing score, the number of students who passed the minimum passing score was also taken into account as the criteria of success in the study. As has been determined previously, the implementation of the strategy is a success when 50% of the students at least could pass the minimum passing score. The data analysis showed that after the implementation of the strategy, from the thirty students who joined the writing test, Twenty-one students (70%) could pass the minimum passing score (78). Meanwhile, nine students (30%) gained a score below the minimum passing score. This was good progress as there were only six students (20%) who could pass the minimum passing score (78) in the initial test.

DISCUSSION

The research findings have shown that all of the students could improve their score for at least 10 points better compared to which they gained in the initial test. Dealing with the average writing score, the students were successful in improving their average score by achieving 82, meaning that their average score was better or higher than the minimum passing score (78). Also, the majority of the students (70%) could pass the minimum passing score. These findings indicated that all of the criteria of success had been achieved. Hence, the implementation of project-based learning combined with process writing and Instagram was effective in enhancing the students’ ability in writing hortatory exposition text. The improvement the students achieved was due to project-based learning, process writing, and Instagram.

Regarding project-based learning, the implementation of project-based learning enabled the students to experience meaningful learning as the project was driven by real-life problems happened in the learners’
environment (Harun, 2006; Ur, 2012). In this study, we provided the students with topics which was related to their daily. Since the students lived in Ponorogo, we provided them with a sort of topics related to social, health, educational, and environmental issue in Ponorogo. The students were motivated when they were given topics which are related to them. This finding is in-line with a previous study conducted by Castaneda (2014) and Chiang, and Lee (2016) in which they also found that when students are presented with topics related to them, the students could keep their motivation towards the learning activity.

During the implementation of project-based learning, the students were asked to work in a group. Working in the group in completing the project enabled the students to feel more secure and comfortable in completing the project and to collaborate with their group mate in sharing their ideas on the writing project ideas, giving additional input, and having peer correction. Engaging the students in group work is beneficial as it increases the students’ participation and learning outcome (Ahangari & Samadian, 2014 and Aminloo, 2014). Similarly, Brown and Lee (2015) and Ur (2012) state that engaging the students in a group work helps the students to feel more secure in the learning and therefore they are more capable of participating. Moreover, they suggested group work since it develops the students’ responsibility and autonomy. In addition to that, working in groups enables more students to contribute ideas in a discussion process (Ur, 2012).

Meanwhile, one of the project-based learning stages, ‘Create a Schedule’ stage enabled the students to set the project dateline or due date of each writing steps which were comfortable to them. The schedule made the students be able to manage their time and monitor their project progress easier. Having a project schedule, the students could work in a more organized way of completing the writing project. In this study, the schedule was then put in the form of ‘project check-up’ which then filled by the students at the end of each meeting. This project check-up helps the researcher to record who was absent in the meeting, who finished the writing task on time, and who was late in completing the project. The project check-up recorded in this study was found effective in triggering the students to be punctual in finishing each writing steps.

Moreover, during the implementation of project-based learning, especially on the ‘Project Monitoring’ stage, the students were assisted by the researchers in the form or oral and written feedback or correction. The feedback or correction we have provided the students with helps they needed in the aspect of content, grammar, organization, vocabulary, and mechanics so that they could produce a good writing final product. Feedback was proven helpful for the students. According to Biber, Nekrasova, and Horn (2011), feedback stimulates the students’ writing improvement. Hattie and Timperley (2007) state that the type of feedback and the way it is given can be differently effective. In an attempt to maximize the feedback effect, the researcher gave both oral and written feedback in this study. Feedback is so beneficial for the success of learning. Meanwhile, a study conducted by Ismail, Maulan, and Hasan (2008) and Hidayati, Ashadi, and Mukminatun (2018) found that feedback was helpful and provided a platform for the students in doing self-revision.

The implementation of project-based learning in this study was effective in improving the students’ writing skill. The findings of this study are similar to the findings of several previous studies which focused on the implementation of project-based learning, such as Wang, Ten, and Lin (2015), Sadeghi, Biniaz, and Soleimani (2016), Astawa, Artini, and Nitiasih (2017). Sadeghi, Biniaz, and Soleimani (2016) found out that the students who were taught using project-based learning gained a better score than those who were taught using instruction based on student textbooks. Meanwhile, the research finding by Wang, Ten, and Lin (2015) prove that the student’s ability in composing a writing product improved after the implementation of project-based learning. Meanwhile, Astawa, Artini, and Nitiasih (2017) found that the implementation of project-based learning enhanced the students’ writing skill as well as their confidence and creativity. All of these previous studies are evidence which supports the finding of this study.

Process writing contributed as well in this study in supporting the implementation of project-based learning to enhance the students’ ability in writing hortatory exposition. Each of process writing steps (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) benefited the students and helped them to improve their writing ability.

In the planning step, the students were able to activate their background knowledge about the topics they chose. Hermasari (2018) states that having enough background knowledge triggered the students to generate their ideas easier and led the students to have better writing content. It was proven by improve-
ment the students made in the aspect of content. The students increased their content average score from 3 in the initial test, to 3.5 in the writing test. In addition to that, the planning step helped the students to gain the maximum score (4) in term of content. It was proven by the fact that 16 students gained maximum in the writing test. This was significant progress as there was no student gained a maximum score in the initial score.

The drafting step enabled the students to make a rough draft comfortably as in this step; they were told not to worry about making mistakes. The drafting step was then continued by the revising step, which was used by the students to revise their rough draft. These two processes writing steps made the students were able to organize their ideas better. It was proven by the data that the students could increase their average score in the aspect of the organization, from 2.8 in the initial test to 3.4 in the writing test. Related to individual improvement in the aspect of the organization, the number of the students who gained maximum score (4) also increased from only one student in the initial test to twelve students in the writing test.

The editing step offered a good opportunity for the students to check their draft in the aspect of grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. In this step, the students were given enough time to check whether or not they made mistakes in the aspect of grammar, diction, capitalization, spelling, and punctuation. This step was effective in improving the students writing skill in the aspect of grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics as it triggered the students to be more sensitive in term of those three writing aspects. The effectiveness of the editing step was proven by the improvement the students made in the aspect of grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. The students’ average score of grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics aspects was better or higher that which they gained in the initial test. Compared to the initial test, there were also more students who gained the maximum score (4).

The last step of process writing was publishing. The students posted their final writing product in a social network, Instagram. Dung and Quynh (2018) state that social media, including Instagram, offers an interactive design which makes the learning becomes enjoyable when it is involved in the classroom. Publishing the final product in Instagram motivated the students of XI IPA 2 Bilingual as they were so familiar and were so into Instagram. The researcher argued that involving Instagram in this study as a media for publishing the students’ writing final product would make the learning became more interesting. As suggested by Ur (2012) that ensuring interesting classroom activity is one-way teachers might use to raise the students’ motivation. Several previous studies which investigated Instagram and its’ effect on students’ motivation had been carried out by some researchers (e.g., Akhiar, Mydin, & Kasuma, 2017; Zidny & Suharso, 2017; and Handayani, Cahyono, & Widiati; 2018) and the results indicated that employing Instagram in the classroom made the students more interested and motivated in the learning activity.

In addition to the steps of process writing applied in this study, the improvements the students made was also influenced by peer correction which was done at the end of the planning, drafting, revising, and editing. Peer correction focused mainly on grammar and mechanics. It made the mistakes the students made in terms of grammar and mechanics were visible so that they could notice the mistakes, correct them, and memorize the correct form. During peer correction, although the students showed that they were reluctant and did not like being corrected by their peer, peer correction is crucial for learning. Ganji (2009) and Behin and Hamidi (2011) had proven that peer correction was more effective in improving the students’ writing than teacher correction. In addition to that, peer correction benefits the students in enhancing not only their writing skill but also their motivation and confidence during the writing process (Shokrpour, Keshavarz, & Jafari, 2016).

The findings of this study showed that using process writing could improve the students’ writing. The results of this study correspond to several previous studies on process writing (e.g., Alodwan & Ibnian, 2014; Bayat, 2014; Faraj, 2015; and Mehr, 2016) which reported the effectiveness of the implementation of process writing in enhancing the students’ writing skill. Alodwan and Ibnian (2014), as well as Mehr (2016), had proven that the students’ writing skill could be improved by using process writing. Meanwhile, not only improving the students’ writing skill, Bayat (2014) and Faraj (2015) found that implementing process writing also decreased the students’ anxiety during the writing process and increased their confidence.

All of the elaborations above confirmed that the implementation of project-based learning combined with process writing and Instagram could enhance the students of XI IPA 2 Bilingual ability in writing hortatory exposition text. It can be proven by the data that after the implementation of the strategy, all of the
students could increase their writing average scorer as well as increase their score by at least achieving 10 points better or higher than which they gained in the initial test. Also, there were more than 50% of the students could pass the minimum passing score. Hence, this study all criteria of success had been successfully achieved in one cycle.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion in the previous chapter, a conclusion can be drawn that the implementation of project-based learning combined with process writing and Instagram improved the students’ writing ability especially in writing hortatory exposition text. The research finding showed that all of the students (100%) increased or improved their writing scores for at least 10 points better or higher to which they gained in the initial test. This individual writing score improvements lead to the improvement of the students’ average writing score. Compared to the average writing score of the initial test, the students gained a better average writing score after the implementation of the strategy. The students improved their average writing score of 15.62 points from 66.33 in the initial test to 82 in the writing test, which was higher than the minimum passing score (78).

Moreover, there was a significant improvement in terms of the number of students who passed the minimum passing score (78). In the initial test, there were only six students (20%) whose writing score is equal to or more than 78. After the implementation of the strategy, there were twenty one students (70%) who could pass the minimum passing score (78). These findings showed that all of the three criteria of success had been achieved. Hence, the researcher concluded that the implementation of project-based learning combined with process writing and Instagram was a success.

There are several suggestions related to the implementation of project-based learning combined with process writing and Instagram in teaching writing hortatory exposition. The suggestions are for both the other English teachers and future researchers. For English teachers, more specifically the English teachers in SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Ponorogo, it is suggested for them to consider implementing project-based learning combined with process writing and Instagram as one of the alternatives to solve problems faced by the students dealing with writing hortatory exposition text. Meanwhile, English teachers in general who have students experiencing similar writing problems may also use this strategy to help their students in improving their students’ writing ability. In addition to that, English teachers can also make use of this research as a reference in designing and developing their teaching-learning activities. In applying this strategy, the other English teachers may make some modifications such as using other text genres, combined it with other social media platform, etc.

Future researchers of the same are recommended to make use of this study as one of their reference in conducting their research. In conducting their classroom action research, future researchers can implement this strategy at a different level of education, different text genre, or different language skill.

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