PROCEEDINGS

The International English Language Teachers and Lecturers (iNELTAL) Conference 2018

Malang, October 27-28, 2018

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Keynote Speakers:

Derek Irwin	University of Nottingham Ningbo, China
Hayo Reinders	Unitec, New Zealand
Utami Widiati	Universitas Negeri Malang

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING: A MEANS TO ROCKET STUDENTS' LOW MOTIVATION AND WRITING SKILL

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Abstract: Low student intake is one of the causing factors that lead to students' low achievement. Such problem also happened to English Department of UNARS. Most of its students found it difficult to develop ideas into a paragraph. As a result, these students often felt anxious and unmotivated every time they got stuck while writing. Though lecturers could not do many things dealing with student intake issue, they still could help students increase their motivation and writing skill. One solution that can be used to solve the problems is by implementing Experiential Learning (EL) method. This Classroom Action Research implemented EL cycle by Cahyani (2003), a simplified cycle adapted from Kolb's cycle (1984) in Paragraph Writing Course. EL method requires students to learn from experience. EL is more specifically defined as learning through reflection on doing. Through the application of EL, it is expected that students have more meaningful and lasting learning processes, so they can make effective use of their learning. The findings of this research showed that EL could increase students' motivation to write and improve their writing skill. The results of the research are beneficial for the development of knowledge on students' learning styles and give some benefits to teaching practitioners and future researchers as well.

Keywords: Experiential Learning, CAR, motivation, Paragraph Writing, writing skill

INTRODUCTION

Paragraph Writing is one of compulsory courses that should be taken by students majoring in English Literature at University of Abdurachman Saleh Situbondo UNARS. This course is designed to develop students' skills in writing some types of paragraph including descriptive, cause and effect, comparison and contrast, persuasive, definition paragraph, and narrative paragraphs with all aspects determining a good paragraph such as topic, topic sentence, controlling idea, unity, and coherence. This course has only two credits, so it is only held once a week. Time allocated for this course makes it pretty hard for both the lecturer and the students to reach the teaching and learning objectives.

Low student intake also becomes one of the hindrance to Paragraph Writing course. Many of the students taking English Literature at UNARS did not have good basic English skills. Thus, they got many difficulties to learn English skills, including writing. The students' biggest difficulty in writing is how to develop ideas into paragraph. This is in line with O'Malley and Pierce's (1996) statement which says that writing course in a language classroom is not only about how to initiate the ideas, but also how to develop these ideas into unified thought. Due to their inability to develop ideas, when got stuck, the students usually felt unmotivated and ended up dropping out from campus. Meanwhile, motivated students are essential for qualified teaching and learning process. This is contrary to the characteristics of motivated students. Motivated students are signified by their willingness to pay attention, to voluntarily ask questions and give ideas, to work on tasks given, and to appear to be happy and eager (Palmer, 2007). Williams and Williams (2011) mention student, teacher, content, method/process, and environment as five key factors influencing students'motivation. To make students motivated in every meeting is a big homework not only for the faculty, but also for the lecturers.

Seeing that a writing course can be frustrating to students, a lecturer should be able to come with an effective solution for such problem. An effective teaching strategy that can motivate students and improve their writing skills should be employed. To make students get used to writing habits, the students should be made accustomed to meaningful writing activities. The word meaningful activities here means the activities that are able to facilitate the students to learn and investigate their own learning from the experiences they got and transform these experiences into learning experiences. One of teaching methods that has been proven to be effective in facilitating the students to have a meaningful learning process is Experiential Learning.

Experiential Learning theory was proposed by Kolb (1984) with some influences from Dewey, Lewin, Piaget. The theory highlights how experiences, including cognitions, environmental factors, and emotions, influence the learning process. Kolb's Experiential Learning style theory is represented by a four-stage learning cycle: concrete experience (doing/having an experience), reflective observation (reviewing/refelcting of the experience), abstract conceptualisation (concluding/learning from the experience), and active experimentation (planning/ trying out what have been learnt). The first two phases belong to grasping experiences, and the latters belong to tranforming experiences. However, the process does not necessarily begin with experience. Each student must choose which learning mode that works best to him/her personally based on the specific situation. Figure 1 shows Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle.
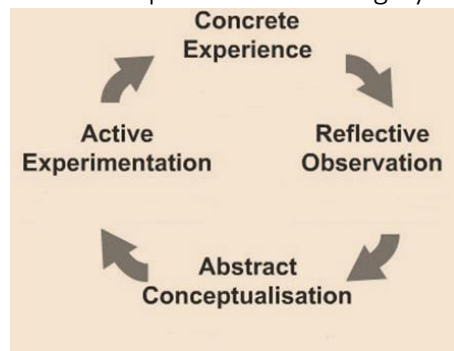
Figure 1. Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (1997)

Experiential Learning values experiences as the learning sources. Hence, the central role in the learning process is students' experiences (Safriani, 2015). As defined by the Association for Experiential Education (AEE) in Maulana (2015), experiential education is a process through which the students learn to construct knowledge, skills, and values from direct experiences. Experiential Learning gives students a real experience by doing some tasks. Assignments carried out through Experiential Learning help students relate theory to practice and analyze real-life situations in light of course material (Lewis & Williams, 1994). Experiential Learning not only involves students in activities, but also helps students to bring out the meaning of doing the the activities. Transfer of learning skills are needed by students after the learning process; therefore, the learning process is not only to prioritize facts or concepts, but it requires experiences in understanding the facts or concepts. According to Schwartz (2012), Experiential Learning is divided into two categories: field-based learning and classroom-based experiential learning. The former is the oldest form of experiential learning. The activities can be in the form of practicums, service learning, cooperative education, and internships. Classroom-based experiential learning can be

implemented through role playing, simulations, presentations, games, case studies, and other kinds of group works.

Experiential Learning can be implemented in the form of programs, courses, and assignments. Experiential Learning has also been carried out many times in the form of training. Usually activities that apply Experiential Learning combine aspects of recreation and adventure so that the effects of activities during training can provide lessons to members of the training. Experiential Learning methods have also been used several times in research to improve the quality of learning. Sriani (2013) et. al applied Experiential Learning method to improve students' writing on descriptive paragraph in class VII Tampaksiring. Taung et. al (2014) also applied Experiential Learning in Science learning at the elementary school level to improve students' learning outcomes. Agustin et. al (2014) analyzed how Experiential Learning was applied to reduce distress in students. In addition, Purwaningrum (2014) in her research analyzed how Experiential Learning was able to internalize students' mind skills. There were also Handaka et. al (2016) who utilized Experiential Learning to improve students' critical thinking skills in learning.

The difference between previous research with this research lies in the object of research, namely the second-semester students of English Literature Study Program. In addition, the Experiential Learning method in this study was used at the level of higher education. The application of Experiential Learning method was in the form of learning steps in the Paragraph Writing class. Considering the success of previous research in utilizing Experiential Learning method in learning, the researcher believed that this method is also able to improve students' writing skills in the Paragraph Writing class. It is expected that the application of the Experiential Learning method is able to help the second semester students of UNARS' English Literature Study Program have a pleasant learning atmosphere because Experiential Learning makes the students learn from their own experiences. Students take advantage of their experiences during the learning process and transfer them into a new knowledge (learning by doing). Through this method students have a more meaningful learning experience so that it will indirectly increase their learning motivation and ultimately will improve their understanding and skill in writing.

This research is expected to contribute theoretically and practically. The expected theoretical benefit is that this research can contribute to the development of science in the fields of education, English learning, and the development of learning methods. This research is also expected to provide practical benefits to other researchers who wish to develop learning plans by applying Experiential learning methods in different fields or objects of research. In addition, the results of this study are also expected to be useful for language teachers at the school levels and higher education levels.

METHOD

This classroom action research adapted Kurt Lewin's model (1997). Kurt Lewin's model has four stages, they are planning, acting, observing, and reviewing. The research was carried out in three cycles that consisted of two meetings each. The research was conducted to eight second-semester students majoring at English Literature at UNARS. The data from this research were quantitative data (students' writing scores) and qualitative data (students' responses when Experiential Learning method was implemented). The data were obtained from the students' test results and during the learning process. The data during the learning process were obtained through observation. The instruments used to collect the data were writing scoring rubric, and

observation sheet. The data were analyzed by comparing them to criteria of success. The criterion of success developed for the quantitative data is as many as 75% of the total number of the students got score indicating minimum passing grade. The minimum passing grade was got from three aspects: material's complexity l, supproting capacity, and student intake.

Table 1. Criteria of Minimum Passing Grade

Aspect	Scoring Criteria		
Material Complexity	High (1)	Medium (2)	Low (3)
Supporting Capacity	High (1)	Medium (2)	Low (1)
Student Intake	High (1)	Medium (2)	Low (1)

In this research, the level of material's complexity is 2, carrying capacity is 2, and student intake is 2. Thus, the minimum passing grade is:

$$\frac{(MC + SC + I)}{9} \times 100$$

$$\frac{(3 + 2 + 2)}{9} \times 100 = 77.78$$

That way, if there are at least six students in class who scored 78 during the writing test, the Experiential Learning method is proven to be effective in improving students' writing skill.

Quantitative data obtained were analyzed to measure students' writing skill using the assessment rubric of writing paragraphs adopted from Brown (2007). There are five aspects assessed in the paragraphs made by students, namely: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanic.

The success criteria for qualitative data was signified by as many as 75% of the total students show a positive response (score 3 or score 4) from the indicator of student activity in class. The qualitative data obtained were formulated and explained qualitatively based on the results of the observation when Experiential Learning method was implemented. This qualitative data illustrated the activeness of students in the class and was indicated by the frequency of students asking questions or giving opinions. The results were assessed using a Likert 1-4 scale which is described as follows:

1 = students never contribute
2 = students rarely contribute (1 time)
3 = students are active enough to contribute (2-3 times)
4 = students are very active contributing (≥4 times)

Engagement level in class	Never contributes to class by offering ideas and asking questions (0 times)	Rarely contributes to class by offering ideas and asking questions (1 time)	Proactively contributes to class by offering ideas and asking questions (2-3 times)	Always contributes to class by offering ideas and asking questions (more than 4 times)

Figure 4. Scoring Rubric for students's Engagement Level

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this research, the improvement in students' writing skill and motivation was got after three cycles. The implementation of Experiential Learning in Cycle 1 was only effective in levelling up students' motivation to write, but not their writing skill. Then, the implemenation of Experiential Learning in Cycle 2 still could not help the students meet the criteria of success in both writing skill and motivation. Activities carried out in Cycle 2 were only effective in helping the students maintaining their motivation to write. This was more or less similar to the result of Cycle 1. However, a different result was got in Cycle 3. The students could meet criteria of success both in their writing skill and motivation. Briefly, it took three cycles (six meetings) to prove that Experiential Learning was efective in levelling up students' motivation to write and their writing skill. The indicator of improvement in motivation was shown by students' willingess to ask and give questions/opinion during the activities. They also were active during group work. The indicator of students' improvement in writing skill was shown in their writing test result that met minimum passing grade. The following are the detailed information about the results of Cycle 1, cycle 2, and Cycle 3.

In Cycle 1, the material presented was descriptive text. There was only one student who scored above the success criteria (score78) for their writing test. The remaining seven students received scores below 78. For student activity assesment, there were already seven students who got scores 3 and 4. In other words, more than 75% of students succeeded in achieving the success criteria for the activeness factor. From the activities carried out in Cycle 1, some information was revealed:

1. The students had to learn several types of descriptive text in just one meeting. Meanwhile, the time allocated was very little to introduce several types of descriptive text.
2. Then, the place used for observation seemed less attractive to students. The place used was only the campus area.
3. The time given to practice making a descriptive paragraph outline was too short so that the experience gained during group work was not optimal enough to improve students' writing skills.
4. Students were only grouped once in the second meeting to practice paragraph writing.
5. The students had a limited range of English vocabulary.
6. There was one less active student in class when asking or giving ideas.
7. The students looked less excited when given individual assignments.

Hence, the suggestions that should be made in Cycle 2 included:

1. If there are several texts that must be learned, it is better for students to focus on just one type of text.
2. The paces/objects for observation should be familiar to students.
3. The time needed to practice makes the text have to be longer and remain in groups.
4. Students are required to bring a dictionary to help them find vocabulary in English.
5. Motivation and reward for students are important to increase students' motivation.
6. Group activities must be multiplied to make it easier for students to learn because working in groups can help students understand the material so that the learning experience gained becomes more meaningful.

In Cycle 2, the students learned cause-effect paragraph. In cycle 2, there were only three students who achieved writing scores of more than 78. This means that activities in cycle 2 had not succeeded in improving students' writing skill. However, in Cycle 2 seven students reached

the criteria of succes in terms of activeness level. They showed indicators of engagement in class by asking and giving opinions. From Cycle 2, someinformation was also revealed:

1. There were still less active students in class. This was because these students did not really like the topic of discussion: learning English.
2. Students' writing score still did not meet the criteria of success because there were still some students who did not bring a dictionary. It made them unable to understand some unfamiliar words they found during the activities.
3. Students did not know how to put together ideas when required to write paragraphs. They felt there were too many ideas and found it difficult to compile them into a whole paragraph.
4. There were some student who were still left behind during the group work because of the existence of superior students in group.

Therefore, the improvements made for Cycle 3 were:

1. Topics given to students must be more interesting, especially the ones that can provoke students' curiosity and interest.
2. Emphasizing the importance of using dictionaries when learning.
3. Introducing mind mapping techniques to students.
4. Giving more attention to group work. Motivation must be given to the less active. The division of groups will be arranged by the lecturer so that it is more balanced. The benefits of group work must be more emphasized on students, especially when facing group assignments, students are given an understanding that the members of a group have the same goal to reach.

Cycle 3 was also held in two meetings. The text taught was definition paragraph. In the third writing test, there were already six students who achieved scores above 78. With this, it could be said that the activities in Cycle 3 succeeded in improving students' writing skill. Further, the students were all active in class. They asked and gave opinions during group activities. In other words, activities in Cycle 3 succeeded in increasing students' motivation to write.

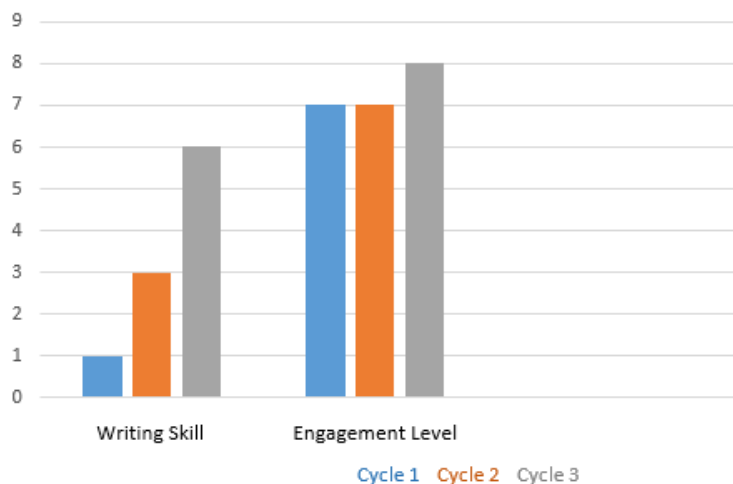The detail of students' levelled up motivation and writing skill is displayed in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Results of Cycle 1, Cycle 2, and Cycle 3

It took three cycles to prove that Experiential Learning is effective in increase students' motivation and writing skill. This might be caused by several reasons. The low intake made it quite difficult for the students themselves to learn quickly. Slow learners cannot be forced to adapt and

adopt to a new thing/environment in a short time. However, the curriculum English Literature of UNARS gives the students a very limited time (two credits, 100 minutes a week) to have a writing class (in this case, it is Paragraph Writing course). Besides, it was also revealed during the class that some of the students also had limited general knowledge. This also influence their speed in understanding a topic given. However, if the activities in the teaching and learning process was designed so well that slow learners can learn from their experiences, the process of their learning will be menaingful for them. As the result, they will feel motivated and confident to write. The enjoyable atmosphere will also help them develop ideas to write.

CONCLUSIONS

From the implementation of Experiential Learning to thestduents majoring in English Literature at UNARS, the researcher has some conclusions that can be drawn. First, Experiential learning method has proven to be effective in increasing students' motivation in writing. Experiential learning method can also improve students' writing skill in the Paragraph Writing class. Besides, the learning process in groups can help improve student activity in the classroom. Lastly, direct simulation techniques effectively provide an understanding of the learning processes and strategies that each student goes through.

Furthermore, there also some suggestions that the researcher give based on the results of this research. The application of a simulation / role play will help students formulate their learning experience as a reflection. Then, working in groups will streamline the implementation of experiential learning. Since Experiential Learning relies on students' preferred learning styles, it is better if the lecturer develop the teaching scenario so well that each indiviual can feel facilitated during the activities. For UNARS, it will be wiser if the campus reanalyzes the now curricullum implemented in English Literature study program. An English basic skill course needs at least two meetings in a week (2 x 2 x 50 minutes) to be taught to students to give better results.

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