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EXPLORING OUTDOOR CLASSES WRITING CREATIVITY: TEACHING WRITING AT THE SEVENTH GRADERS IN EFL CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the use of outdoor learning strategies to enhance English writing skills among seventh-grade students at an Islamic school in Surakarta. It aims to foster student creativity and idea development through recount text writing in real-world contexts. The research also examines teacher and student perspectives on the implementation, efficiency, and effectiveness of outdoor learning activities. The study involved 21 students (14 female, 7 male) and 3 English teachers. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation, using observation sheets and interview questionnaires as instruments. A qualitative analysis approach was applied. Findings suggest that outdoor learning supports student engagement and writing development, although effectiveness varies depending on instructional clarity and student readiness. The study concludes that structured outdoor learning, combined with reflective guidance, can enhance students' recount writing abilities in English.

Keywords: *critical thinking, process skills approach, science learning,*

INTRODUCTION

Understanding or creating ideas from pre-existing thoughts is the first step in developing students' writing skills. Many of the grammar rules that apply in formal settings are taught to students in schools, preparing them for future work (Hamad Alqasham & Ahmed Mohammed Hassan Al-Ahdal, 2021). This suggests that various skills, including the ability to structure words, initiate phrases, and build sentences into entire paragraphs, are related to the writing tasks that students complete (Kenwening, 2023). Writing is the most difficult skill because not only does it require a lot of vocabulary in composing paragraphs, but it is also grammatically correct to be understood in addition to other writing rules. (Mahfuza, 2021).

Despite the recognition of writing difficulties, there is a lack of research focusing on exploring teaching methods that are specific on enhancing students' writing abilities especially in producing coherent recount text, such as outing classes combined with contextual-based learning. This research gap indicates the need for empirical studies that connect students' social and environmental interactions with their writing ability.

Students' creativity and personal growth are influenced by their environment. The goal of the learning environment is to encourage the development of constructive connections, inspire creativity, influence academic outcomes, foster a sense of responsibility, and possibly evoke students' interest in learning. (Sukirman & Dewi, 2021).

Through this, the function of teachers as mediators is very important to achieve these goals. Including inspiring students to continue learning and activities so that they can achieve their goals (Sakinah, 2023; Sugiarto, 2024). The primary responsibility of teachers is to build a better character in their students, and this can only be achieved as best as possible by having a strong dedication to quality learning services. (Salsabilah et al., 2021).

Standardized and inflexible processes lead to monotony and indifference of students in learning. Students motivation plays an important role in driving learning and, in turn, improving higher education grades because more motivated students are more likely to succeed in their ventures (Kong, 2021). Motivation learning is encouragement from within and outside the student that can affect the process and results of learning (Istifarriana & Email, 2020).

Therefore, several aspects distinguish this study from other studies or gaps in this study such as differences in the level of education, different fields of study, implementation context, and research time. In previous research, outing class activities only aimed to increase social senses with the surrounding environment. But in this study, outing class activities are carried out to increase social sense. Thus, it is anticipated that students' seamless social interactions would create an enjoyable and engaging learning environment that will increase their ability to communicate concepts in written sentences, such as recount texts.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Writing is difficult to learn, regardless of its importance. When a foreign language is used, the level of difficulty increases significantly. (Putri & Aminatun, 2021). *"Writing is the expression of language in the form of letters, symbols, or words. The symbols have to be arranged according to certain conventions, to form words, and words have to be arranged to form sentences"* (Byrne, 1988) in thesis of (Pardede & Herman, 2020).

Writing skills sometimes seem more complex than other language skills, which leads to people or students sometimes needing to choose the right words to convey it. Writing is

sometimes used as a communication activity intended to convey a written message or information. (Prabowo, 2022).

In other words, writing is also the process of creating ideas in written form, and the systematic arrangement of ideas into coherent sentences and paragraphs for the reader. Writing allows us to communicate our thoughts (Jubhari et al., 2022), writing as a tool for indirect communication with others (Bahri & Paidia, 2023). Writing to communicate is a complex skill (Dragomir & Niculescu, 2020). In this case, the majority of students probably struggle to convey their thoughts orally in writing due to factors caused by the lack of real and direct interaction with the surrounding environment, especially in English.

The teachers create learning ideas by taking students out of the classroom and learning with the surrounding environment. This activity is usually called an outing class. Outing class is to foster students' creativity while imparting fundamental knowledge and abilities (Kharisma, 2024). In this approach, Student' are encouraged to learn by direct experience with this method, which involves engaging with things and circumstances in the natural world, such as when visiting parks, markets, or zoos (Utami & Zulfahmi, 2024).

In addition, Contextual Based Learning is an approach to education that emphasizes comprehending and using knowledge in practical settings. According to (Vygotsky, 1978) in (Muhammad, 2024) Thesis, he emphasized that contextual-based learning is important in broadening students' perspectives and enhancing their learning experiences through cultural and social interaction. In connecting, outing class activities integrate the relevance of learning materials with real-world context through contextual-based learning models.

Therefore, this study is done to fill the identified gap by investigating how outing class activities combined with contextual-based learning, can improve students' writing skills in recount texts and their social awareness. Previous studies are focused on social awareness, meanwhile this study emphasizes on the link between social interaction and written communication.

METHODOLOGY

Researchers employed a methodology in this study that falls under the category of qualitative methodology. The primary component of each study is its research methodology. The fundamental goal of this kind of research is to employ descriptive explanations rather than explanations based on statistical calculation. A qualitative case study could be used to describe the research design for this project.

Qualitative research is the following more useful general rule of thumb: generally speaking, qualitative research uses verbal data rather than numerical data (Busetto et al., 2020). A wide definition of qualitative research is any naturalistic type of investigation that works with non-numerical data. Qualitative methods rely on text and image data, have unique steps in data analysis, and draw on diverse designs by (Creswell John W, 2014) in (Charli et al., 2022). Observation, interviews, and document analysis are used to gather qualitative data to learn more about the difficulties they encounter and the efficacy of the collaborative teaching strategies that teachers present and put into practice. Specifically in this case, discussing the implementation of teacher's teaching styles to students in improving students' English writing skills in one of the Islamic schools in Surakarta.

The participants of this research are 21 students, 7 boys and 14 girls from 14th to 15th years old in seventh grade, and someone that very influential is the teacher in charge as well as the English teacher at one of the Islamic secondary schools in Surakarta. However, the researcher only took about 8 students to conduct a focus discussion group as a interview data, the number of students is justified based on purposive sampling to include students who actively participate and to represent diverse perspectives within the class. Smaller group size was chosen to facilitate more depth in the discussion and data collection manageability. In this case, the students were coded with (R1) for the first student to (R8) for the eighth student.

These research places are in *Keraton Kasunanan Surakarta, Pura Mangkunegaran*, and one of the Islamic schools of Surakarta. These sites were chosen due to their significance in cultural and educational in Surakarta, which provides a rich context for studying collaborative teaching methods and language learning experiences. However, these research sites may have limited generalizability to other schools in the regions or in other regions with different cultural and educational contexts. Since the commencement of the observation stage on May 5, 2024, the research has been implemented. On December 13, 2024, the interviews also have been implemented.

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Interview transcripts and observational notes were then analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was done to identify recurring patterns and themes that are related to students' difficulties and teaching method effectiveness. Thematic analysis also allowed qualitative data in this research to be systematically interpreted and come to a conclusion on collaborative teaching approaches.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of observations that have been made by researchers, outing class activities are carried out in 2 places, namely at the *pura mangkunegaran surakarta* and *keraton kasunanan surakarta*. This activity took place after proposal approval by the headmaster. In this implementation of this outing class activity, the task of students is to walk around the temple and be assigned to observe objects and activities around. Another task is students also have to write their activities and experiences in this outing class in the form of recount text.

When it arrives at its place, students can observe firsthand and learn new vocabulary in the first place, which includes temples, *keris*, traditional musical instruments, spiritual objects, and more.

Additionally, the student's assignment is to look for and acquire 50 new verbs and nouns. Students then write down the new words and translate them into English. Students can also engage with the environment through this outing class activity, particularly with tourists who are visiting. They are also required to write down their conversation. In every time, place, and journey, students can make the best use of the time available. Then, to gain more experience, when moving from the first location to the final location, the teacher invites students to ride public transportation.

Inside the bus, students are also enthusiastic about observing things around them such as the view from the bus. On the bus, students are also assigned to take note of new vocabulary and then translate it into English. In the field, when working on the task of conducting interviews with tourists and recording vocabulary, students are divided into groups so that they can work together, but afterward, the recount text task becomes an individual task.

Based on interviews with some of the students, the memorable experience in this activity is that they can learn English with fun because they can learn while in a new and different setting and place, that is comfortable, and also the memorable experience is when they dare to speak with native speakers directly, and during the trip they can record new things that they previously did not know such as new vocabulary in English, and they can record their learning experiences using English in the form of recount text.

This activity also helps build students' courage and confidence when interacting with the social environment, especially with people they have never interacted with before. This is related to the implementation of learning that brings students closer to the social environment in Vygotsky's theory of contextual based learning method. According to (Vygotsky, 1978), in essence, contextual-based learning is learning designed so that students can relate the material to the real environment for problem-solving. In addition, students are grouped in activities so that they can discuss together and this is also included in the concepts in the theory of contextual-based learning according to Vygotsky. However, the findings do not report if there were any students who struggled or did not benefit from the outing class, which is a limitation in assessing the overall effectiveness of this activity.

1. The use of outing class learning strategies in enhancing writing skills

Based on the results of interviews with the coordinator teacher of outing class activities at one of the islamic schools in surakarta, this activity is an annual activity specifically in the english special program class of one of the islamic schools in surakarta. Outing class activities can be carried out if the proposal submitted is approved. Then the school subsidizes this activity.

According to one of the teachers of that school the result of the interview, mrs. D said that *“the purpose of these activities or outing class activities is to enrich the vocabulary and of course, outing class activities are also expected so that students can rewrite the stories they can based on their experiences in the form of writing which can help them to improve their ability to explore words, convey ideas, and assemble stories based on their experiences directly in english”*.

The main purpose and expectation of teachers selecting outing classes as a learning strategy in enhancing english language skills is to expand students' vocabulary so that it affects students' writing skills, especially in writing recount texts. In this sense, good writing skills are good at grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. The use of lexical structures under the work at hand and knowledge of grammar and syntax by the communication goal are examples of language-related abilities that demonstrate learners' language proficiency, (Dragomir & Niculescu, 2020). These skills can help learners enhance their language proficiency. Students also benefit from teachers' effective use of writing skills improvement.

This activity is also incorporated into english learning in the section on improving students' ability to write recount text. Because this activity can be related to recounting text. According to (Sartika et al., 2022), a recount text is a text is a text that discusses past occurrences in chronological sequences, such as diaries, to inform or entertain the reader.

Therefore, this activity was created by the teacher to help students develop ideas and hone their ability to string words and then apply them in the context of writing stories that have occurred in the past or based on their experiences in english. The activity of going around and recording new vocabulary was also carried out in the second place.

Another supporting factor is that the coordinating teacher also believes that students are more enthusiastic and easily remember words according to what they experience or from their experiences. Instead of learning to make up stories in class based on books and pictures. With this activity, they can further explore the ideas and memories that exist in

their brains and connect with the real environment, so they can learn directly from their own experiences. Yet, the study does not address possible challenges such as students who might feel overwhelmed by the amount of vocabulary to record or those who may feel anxious interacting with strangers, which could limit the benefits for some learners.

2. Students' and teachers' perspectives about the effect of outing class learning strategies on writing skills

Based on the result of the researchers' interview with students who are participants in the focus group method, related to the first question, that is *“what do you know about outing class activities?”* Students with initials (r1) responded that according to her, *“outing class activities are teaching and learning activities outside the school. This activity is a fun activity because they can learn in a different atmosphere than usual”*.

(r2) responded that outing class activities are *“learning activities that also provide direct experience for us to also interact with people around, especially there our activities are around the palace, and there are tour guides, tourists, and others, so we are guided to be confident and can interact with others.”*

(r3) also responded that *“outing class is a fun learning activity and we can learn while healing because we are not learning in school so it's not boring, that because learning outside we can learn directly with what is around us.”*

Mrs. D as a teacher also responded *“alright, as we have implemented, outing class activities are teaching and learning activities provided by the teacher to be carried out not in the classroom or outside the classroom. The goal is that students are not bored in carrying out learning activities. The activities can be carried out anywhere, even in the school field, including outing classes. But usually, the school holds it close to pura mangkunegaran and keraton kasunanan surakarta. Usually also go to tourist destinations in yogyakarta for eighth grade”*

Also supporting mr. Tr one of the teachers, explained based on his opinion that *“outing class activities are activities designed to provide learning experiences for students so that they can be more interactive with other people in their learning environment, namely outside the classroom and even outside the school. In addition to providing learning experiences, it can also help students develop the knowledge they get in class”*

Based on the opinions of several students and teachers in focus group discussions regarding outing class activities, teaching and learning activities are carried out outside the classroom and can be carried out anywhere such as historical places or museums or even

in the field but with a more pleasant and less boring learning atmosphere. This is related to (Lele et al., 2023) this in essence is through this outing class program, it turns out that it can channel students' boredom into positive things. Children can use play activities as a means to solve their intellectual problems. By playing, children can channel their curiosity.

In addition to offering enjoyable educational activities, this outing class activity gives students claim that it also helps them write better because they are required to record vocabulary and specifics of the activities they have done, which are then written as recount texts.

Applies outing class learning activities not only helps students reconnect with the learning obtained in the real word but also can increase student learning motivation (Jubhari et al., 2022) The learning strategy chosen by the teacher in the form of contextual based learning which applies outing class learning activities not only helps students to enhance learning motivation, in this study contextual based learning succeeded in helping students in improving students' learning abilities, especially in writing english.

Furthermore, outing classes have been shown to improve student motivation and learning outcomes in english vocabulary courses, according to severalghonivita et al., 2021)(Muhammad, 2024). In this study, outing classes help junior high school students advance their proficiency in english, particularly in writing recount texts in the language.(r1) stated that this activity provided experience for him and helped his learning process, especially in writing *“yes, this activity had an effect o improving my writing skills, because during the activity we are also told to record vocabulary and summarize the activities so that we can practice writing neatly and while practicing it can also help us to remember every word we write so that when later rewriting it becomes more structured”*

(r4) also supported the statement from (r1) that *“i think it has an effect too. Although to be honest, from the beginning we have been able to write in english because of the additional class, namely the special program, but with this activity, we are more able and used and trained”*

Additionally, from (r5) about the effect of outing class activity in enhancing writing skills, she responded *“if this outing class activity has to do with writing? I think so. Because before, i was often suddenly blank. At first, i thought of writing something down, but with the outing class activities like that time, i was asked to record the activities, then when i got the assignment to write a recount text, i already had a record of the time of*

activities, so i could just re-record it while remembering again and adding it. After that, now i often write something down if i have something in mind so that it helps me remember again when i forget it in the future”

In this case, outing class activities also provide benefits or influence the learning process of students. Additionally, helps encourage students in developing their social spirit but also helps students develop their cognitive abilities, especially in english subjects. The outing class learning activity strategy is utilized by teachers in enhancing students' enthusiasm for learning and students' logical intelligence even in math learning and in its explains proved to be effective, (Utami & Zulfahmi, 2024). In this case, students are helped to make it easier to remember and also convey what is in their mind through writing.

According to (Byrne, 1988) *“sometimes writing comes easily, if we are in the right mood or have a clear and perhaps pressing need to express something, but as a rule it requires some conscious mental effort: we think out our sentences and consider various ways of combining and arranging them”*.

In connection with this, is in line with brynne's theory that writing is an easy thing if the writer has the right mood, and it is easy to express something through writing. However, creating interesting writing requires careful thought to express through writing and even needs reconsideration in composing the right sentences.

In this case, one of the objectives of this outing class activity is to provide a comfortable and fun learning space so that it can create a good mood for them; so that students can learn comfortably. This is also related to vygotsky's theory of cbl, namely the theory of learning strategies for students to learn directly with their social environment with activities that provide a pleasant atmosphere for students. Therefore, outing class activities are one of the factors that provide learning objectives in developing students' english writing skills, especially in expressing their ideas or thoughts through writing.

Because in activities, students are given the space to explore their social environment and express what is in their minds with real things. In line with the results of interviews with several students who gave statements that the point is that outing class activities are learning activities outside the classroom with a pleasant learning atmosphere such as when they are in the field, they note some vocabulary which according to students is 'new' vocabulary and record activities which will then be compiled in the form of recount text. So that from a pleasant learning atmosphere, students can express ideas, and even convey their imagination through writing. Yet, there is little to no critical reflection on possible

negative experiences or difficulties students faced during the outing class, which could provide a more nuanced understanding of the method's effectiveness.

3. Teacher perspective on the efficiency of outing class strategies

This activity can be assessed as efficient by looking at the process of running this activity as well as the results of the value of students' writing skills, especially recounting text material in english subjects through observation results and the results of interviews with students with interview data collection techniques in the form of focus discussing groups.

According to evidence from field observations and interviews with the majority of students, this activity is effective and efficient for several reasons. Some of this includes giving students a different learning environment and allowing them to learn more freely, which not only helps them communicate their thoughts but also boosts their motivation and enthusiasm for learning. They can also express their ideas in this situation, and they can write stories based on the outcomes of their educational experiences or, more unexpectedly. For the teacher, the primary benefit of this approach is, of course, that it facilitates both evaluation and student development tracking. Supported by (Muhammad, 2024) this study shows that the outing class-based contextual learning approach can be a useful substitute for learning english in junior high school.

As in this school, when students are invited to *keraton kasunanan surakarta* and *pura mangkunegaran surakarta* students can take note of their experiences and write the reports activities on recount text, so this helps the students' writing process. And it helps them make their writing more real and interesting because it is based on direct observation. Furthermore, in this outing class activity, students often interact with new environments, especially with tour guides and even with tourists, and read instructions or brochures. This of course also increases students' courage and confidence which has an impact on students' writing skills. Nonetheless, this study does not include quantitative data or control groups to more rigorously measure the impact of outing class activities on writing skills, which limits the ability to generalize these positive outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The outing class learning strategy was implemented to enhance students' English writing skills by providing contextual learning experiences. Prior to its execution, the school obtained approval from parents and the principal through a formal activity

proposal. The activity involved group-based vocabulary collection, observational journaling, and the development of recount texts based on students' experiences. While the strategy appeared to increase student engagement and offered a creative approach to language instruction, its effectiveness warrants critical examination. There was limited evidence to demonstrate measurable improvement in writing skills, and individual differences in learning styles may have influenced outcomes. Additionally, the absence of structured assessment tools made it difficult to evaluate the strategy's overall impact. Future research should explore how outing class activities compare to traditional writing instruction, investigate their long-term influence on vocabulary retention and narrative structure, and consider how to adapt such strategies to meet diverse student needs.

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