

Conference Paper

The Effect of Literature As Authentic Materials for Writing Essays in A Blended Learning Setting

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Abstract

The current situation of teaching and learning process has undergone a drastic change during the COVID-19 outbreak. The conventional classroom meeting is no longer available because of the pandemic. As a result, the classroom interaction is blended with the online learning model until the end of the semester. In a blended learning setting, teachers are forced to be innovative to reach the instructional objectives. As most learning is done online, the use of authentic materials is considered relevant to the current situation. Many authentic materials are available online. Yet, there is no sufficient information on whether the authentic materials can improve college students' ability in writing essays in a blended learning setting. The purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of literary genre as authentic materials on students' writing performance. As such, this research uses an experimental design. The target population of the study was all fourth-year students of the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology, University of PGRI Wiranegara, Pasuruan, East Java, Indonesia. Samples were employed using a systematic random design. The treatment was conducted in 14 meetings between March and June 2020. The main instruments used to collect data were pre-test and post-test. The students' writing was rated by two ratings using the Jacobs ESL-Composition Profile. The result of the one-sample *t*-test computation using the IBM SPSS 25 showed that there is a significant difference in the students' writing performance before and after the treatment ($\alpha = 0.00 < 0.05$). Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of authentic materials in literary genre can improve the student's ability in writing essays.

Keywords: authentic materials, literature, essay, effect

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1. Introduction

The outbreak of COVID 19 has forced the teachers/lecturers around the world to change the way of their teaching. The typical classroom interaction at the beginning of the semester was drastically shifted into a blended setting in which almost two-third of the remaining semester must be conducted online. This pandemic made the

teachers/lecturers adapt to change and fit themselves with the current situation. They have to adjust not only with how the learning should be conducted but also with the type of learning materials they have to present to reach the instructional goals. This is the point where the blended learning approach has become the favourite of any educational institution because it goes beyond the educational physical boundaries. Blended learning is often called hybrid learning (Allen, Seaman, & Garrett, 2007; Idris, 2018) or mixed learning.

With all the limitations during the pandemic, teachers/lecturers are forced to be innovative and make the best use of technology. Instead of relying on textbooks, teachers/lecturers can shift their attention to the authentic materials available on the internet. Authentic materials are those that use the natural and communicative language for real communication in the native speaker context (Kilickaya, 2004; Tamo, 2009). The authentic materials can be in the form of audio (songs), visual (printed materials, pictures, photographs), and printed materials (Maroko, 2010). Other forms of authentic materials are newspapers, magazines, articles published on the internet (Sundana, 2018), and fictions/ short stories and other forms of literary works (Setyowati & Sukmawan, 2019).

The use of authentic materials for language learning is not something new. Research to date has shown that the use of authentic materials is beneficial for students' ability in learning foreign language skills. In general, authentic materials are effective to improve learners' listening comprehension (Ghaderpanahi, 2012; Sabet & Mahsefat, 2012; Woottipong, 2014). Some of them are in the form of songs (F. Ghanbari & Hashemian, 2014; Solihat & Utami, 2014), while others are in the form of movies (Li & Wang, 2015; Qiu, 2017). Research also has shown that authentic materials are beneficial to improve reading comprehension (Marzban & Davaji, 2015), reading motivation (Lin, 2004), vocabulary learning (N. Ghanbari et al., 2015), and learners' integrated skills, such as reading and writing (Drolet, 2010).

In the teaching of writing in a foreign language, especially in the Indonesian context, we are interested in how authentic materials influence the students' ability to write. The type of authentic materials used for teaching writing are printed materials (short stories) (Setyowati & Sukmawan, 2018) and printed texts (El-Sulukiyah & Aisyah, 2019), or web-based materials, such as YouTube and picture series (Styati, 2016), and websites (Sundana, 2018). All of this research shows that authentic materials are beneficial to improve the students' ability to write better.

The blended learning in this study is considered unique because the setting was set up by force. The government of Indonesia issued three types of order for the teaching activities during the pandemic of COVID 19, namely: stay at home, learning

from home, and work from home. These issues result in a drastic change from face-to-face interactions to online learning activities in which most of these were done unwillingly both on the teacher's and students' side. Yet, research on blended learning has flourished in recent decades. Based on Rahman's (2018) research, it was found out that blended learning is more effective than the conventional method. He did an experimental research comparing the blended learning method and the face-to-face learning. The result of his study shows that the blended learning group outperformed the conventional group. Newer studies have also revealed that blended learning method has a higher chance of providing better quality teaching and learning processes in this 21st century (Dahlia, Musty, & Rahman, 2020; Salas-Rueda, 2020). Indeed, the use of blended learning is not something new. Teachers and educators have applied blended learning since the invention and the development of technology (Idris, 2018).

Despite the abundant research in the use of authentic materials for teaching language skills, there is not much information about the effect of authentic materials when they are used in a blended setting. The research provided in the literature has discussed the use of authentic materials in the normal setting where face-to-face interaction is available. Moreover, there is not much research dedicated to finding out whether literary texts as authentic materials have effects on foreign language students' essay writing performance. This research, however, is intended to investigate the effect of literary works (shorts stories and narrative poems) on the students' writing ability in writing essays. Thus, the research question is formulated as follows: *Is there any difference in the students' essay writing performance before and after they use literary texts as authentic materials?*

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Authentic materials

The use of authentic materials is well-known in the educational setting. Language teachers and practitioners used real-life materials for teaching languages for hundreds of years (Gilmore, 2007). Yet, there is no conclusive definition of authentic materials. Peacock (1997) states that authentic materials are materials that are not created and produced to accomplish instructional aims. On the other hand, Tamo (2009) defines authentic materials as those that involve the use of language for natural communication in the context of where it is spoken. Yet for Kilickaya (2004), authentic materials are texts or discourse, both in written and spoken form, used for natural communication based on

the native speaker context. For Gilmore (2007), the term authentic materials lay heavily on how the word 'authentic' is defined. For him, authenticity may relate to the text, the participant, or the combination of the two. Thus, according to Gilmore, the definition of authentic materials depends on the text source and production context. With the varied definitions of authentic materials, it can be inferred that authentic materials are materials used for real communication in the native speaker context, in which their production and creation are not for classroom teaching.

There are many types of authentic materials. In the broader umbrella, these types of materials are categorized into printed materials, audio, and visual (Maroko, 2010). Other forms of authentic materials, according to Setyowati and Sukmawan (2019), are literary works, such as novels, short stories, poems, play, YouTube videos, movies, songs, talk shows. These materials are abundant in the real-life context both in the printed version or web-based version.

2.2. Authentic materials for teaching writing

In the field of second and a foreign language (FL) setting, the use of authentic materials for teaching writing is readily applicable for helping the students to write better. Setyowati (2016) investigated the use of flash fiction to teach essay for college students in foreign language context. The result of her study indicates that many students are able to state a thesis statement in the opening paragraph, even though they are not able to develop the main idea in the body of the essay. Other studies also show that authentic materials can be integrated into the teaching of reading-to-write activity. Setyowati and Sukmawan (2018) investigated the students' opinions when they learn to analyse the intrinsic elements of prose in the form of essay. The result reveals that most of the students feel writing a short story analysis in the form of essay helps them to understand the stories better as well as improve their writing ability and critical thinking skill.

In addition, research in general has shown that authentic materials are beneficial for both the students and teachers (Al-Azri & Al-Rashdi, 2014). In the context of language learning in Indonesia, the use of authentic materials to teach writing has been extensively researched. First, Styati (2016) investigated the effect of authentic materials on students' ability to write paragraphs in a private university in Madiun, Indonesia. The research subjects were college students who learned English as their major. In her study, she used digital photographs as authentic materials. Through a quasi-experimental design, she found out that the digital photograph was effective at improving the students' writing skills. Another experimental study was also conducted by Sundana (2018).

He investigated the effectiveness of using authentic materials for teaching writing at the university level. He divided the students into two groups: experimental and control groups. In the experimental group, the students were given authentic materials to write a descriptive text where the materials were taken from the internet, namely from <https://www.booksie.com>, <http://www.imdb.com>, and Readers' Digest Magazine, while those in the control group were not. The results of his research indicate that authentic materials were effective in improving students' ability in writing descriptive texts. A relatively recent study has also been conducted by Arifa (2011). She investigated the effectiveness of authentic materials for teaching procedure texts to tenth-year students at MAN Model Palangkaraya, Indonesia. She found out that the experimental group who used authentic materials produced better texts than the control group (non-authentic materials) did.

A newer study has been conducted by El-Sulukiyyah and Aisyah (2019). They conducted a classroom action research project to find out the effectiveness of authentic materials to teach writing to college level students in STKIP PGRI Pasuruan, Indonesia. They conducted the research in three cycles by using printed materials. They used printed texts downloaded from the internet to teach the students to write an expository essay. The result shows that there was an improvement from cycle 1 to cycle 3. At the end of the cycle, the researchers concluded that authentic materials were effective to improve the students' ability to write an essay.

3. Method

An experimental design to answer the research questions was used in this research. The target population was all the fourth-semester students of the English Education Study Program, Universitas PGRI Wiranegara, who were joining the essay writing course. To take the sample, systematic random sampling was employed. As a result, there were 18 students who participated willingly in the research. Some tests were used as the main instruments to collect the data. We developed the pre-test, post-test, and instructional materials. They were all tried out and validated. The scoring rubric used to score the compositions in the pre-test and post-test was Jacob's ESL composition profile. Two writing lecturers scored the students' essays. To analyse the data, we used one-sample-t-test analysis in SPSS 25.

3.1. Procedure

Before the treatment, the students were told that they were grouped for research purposes. There were 14 meetings all together to collect the data. The pre-tests and the first four meetings were conducted before the stay home order was issued by the government. Because of the pandemic, the rest of the meetings were carried out through online interaction (WhatsApp Group/WAG, telegram, and Google Meet). The instructional model follows writing as a process procedure, in which each activity was divided into three parts: prewriting (brainstorming and drafting), writing, and publishing. The process of giving feedback and the students-teacher conference was also conducted online. The students checked their linguistic accuracy by using Grammarly free application and checked the originality of their papers by consulting free plagiarism online application (*Plagiarisma*, *smallseotools*) before submission. The students set the planning time during the online class and the writing time outside class.

The authentic materials used are the literary genre, mostly short stories, and one narrative poem. We developed instructional materials for research purposes. The instructional materials were developed by following the Research and Development procedures (R&D), namely, planning, developing, validating, trying out, revising, final form. Similarly, the pre-test and the post-test underwent a similar process. The pre-test was about the students' solution to be economical on the use of water, and the post-test was about the students' opinion on the use of plastics for everyday life. The type of essays used in the study was the argumentative essay and expository essay developed using problem-solution, example details, compare-contrast, cause-effect essay, and process essay. The authentic materials were adjusted to the topic of the essay. They are *The Little Match Seller* by HC Andersen, *The Giving Tree* by Shell Silverstein, *A Girl Who Asked Why* by Shon Meta, *Life AC* by Manuel Aquipa, and *The Sneetches* by Dr. Zeuss. At the end of the sessions, the students were required to respond to the materials and write their thoughts about the story by using particular types of paragraph development.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1. Fulfilling the statistical assumption

Four assumptions had to be met before running one sample t-test analysis. Firstly, the dependent variable in the study was measured at the **interval** scale. Secondly, the data were independent. To check whether there were no significant outliers, we ran the

SPSS program to check whether there were any extreme scores in the pre-test and post-test.

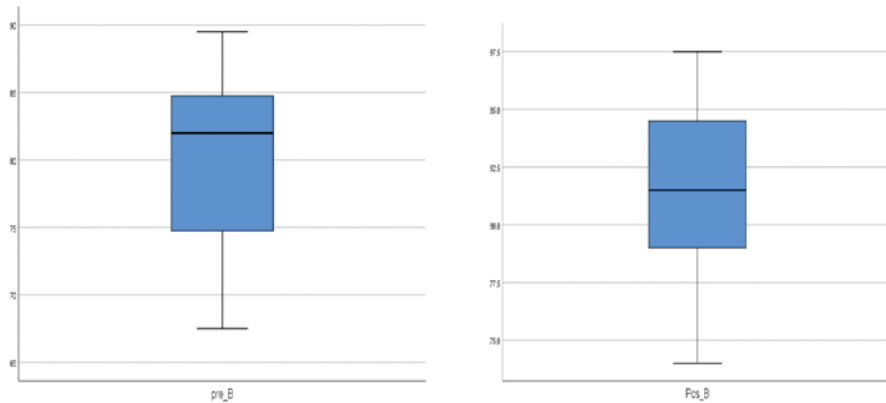


Figure 1: No outliers in the pre-test and post-test scores.

The box-whisker plot in the pre-test and post-test (Figure 1) shows that there are no significant outliers. Before and after treatment, all students were equally well. The last assumption was the test of normality. It is a prerequisite for any statistical tests to check the normality distribution of the data because normal data is an underlying assumption in parametric testing. Kolmogorov –Smirnov, and Shapiro-Wilk are the statistical analysis used to test for normality. The error variances is normally distributed if the *p-value* is the same or bigger than the α value ($p \geq \alpha$). The α value determined is 0.05.

TABLE 1: Results of the normality test.

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-test	0.171	18	0.176	0.922	18	0.141
Post-test	0.136	18	0.200*	0.962	18	0.639

Based on the Shapiro-Wilk output, the significance value (sig) for the pre-test is 0.141, while the significance value for the post-test is 0.639. Based on the Shapiro-Wilk normality test, the pre-test and post-test significance values are higher than 0.05 (>0.05). Therefore, it can be concluded that the pre-test and post-test scores were normally distributed. Because the research data were in a normal distribution, parametric statistical analysis was run.

4.2. Hypothesis testing

Before hypothesis testing, analysis of the mean scores of the students' writing before and after treatment was carried out. Table 2 shows that the mean score for the treatment

is higher than the pre-test. The mean score in the post-test group is 81.7778, while the mean score of the pre-test group is 80.0278. This shows that there is an improvement in the students' overall performance in writing essays.

TABLE 2: Descriptive statistics.

	N	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Pre-test	18	80.0278	6.72894	1.58603
Post-test	18	81.7778	3.66711	0.86435

Looking at the descriptive statistical analysis, it seems that the post-test scores are better than the pre-test scores. Yet, to make sure whether the mean difference is statistically significant, we ran a one-sample t-test statistical analysis. The research is to test the null hypothesis whether “there is no difference in the students' writing performance before and after the use of authentic materials”. This null hypothesis was tested using a.05 level of significance ($p = .05$). The decision to reject or not to reject the null hypothesis was based on the comparison of p and α . If the computed p -value is higher than or equal to.05 level of significance ($p \geq \alpha$), this study did not have enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis. On the other hand, if the p -value is smaller than or equal to.05 level of significance ($p \leq \alpha$), the null hypothesis was not accepted.

TABLE 3: One-sample test.

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	95% Confidence Interval of the difference	
					Lower	Upper
Pre-test	52.940	18	0.000	79.86842	76.6988	83.0380
Post-test	17.684	18	0.000	77.47368	68.2694	86.6779

Figure 2: Result of one-sample t-test analysis.

Table 3 shows that there is a difference on the students' writing performance between before and after the treatment in using literary texts as authentic materials ($p = 0.000 < \alpha = 0.05$). This shows that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

4.3. Discussion

Teaching and learning in the blended learning setting during this pandemic has changed the way the teachers teach and the way the students learn. The use of printed textbooks is slowly abandoned as most learning activities rely more on technology. Everyday life materials are abundant, and they free, rich, and available on the internet. The use of authentic materials gives benefits both for the teacher and the students (Al-Azri & Al-Rashdi, 2014).

The result of this study shows that the use of authentic materials is effective to improve the students' ability to write essays. The descriptive statistics analysis shows that there is an improvement in the students' overall performance after the treatment. Before the treatment, the students' score average was 80.0278, and after the treatment, their average performance score is 81.778. This indicates that the students' writing performance after the treatment is 1.75 points higher on the post-test compared to their mean score before the treatment. The data from the standard deviation in the pre-test shows that the students' scores spread out farther from the mean than the post-test. The standard deviation for the mean score of the post-test is 3.06183 lower than the standard deviation for the mean score of the pre-test condition. Looking at these data, the scores of the post-test are more tightly grouped around the mean than those of the pre-test.

The computation of one-sample t-test analysis shows that indeed there is a mean difference between the pre-test and the post-test. The difference is significant at $p = 0.000$ ($p. 0.00 < \alpha. 0.05$). The finding indicates that the null hypothesis, which states there is no difference in the students' essay writing performance between before using authentic materials and after using authentic materials, was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

The finding of this study confirms another previous research. The result of this study is similar to Arifa (2011), Styati (2016), Sundana (2018) and El-Sulukiyyah and Aisya (2019). All those studies show that authentic materials are effective to improve the students' ability to write better. In this study, one of the factors that bring the success of rejecting the null hypothesis is the implementation of process writing. After reading the authentic materials, the students did not directly respond to the texts. They discussed the content of the literary works and had some question and answer sessions with the lecturer. After that, they wrote the first draft and was given feedback by the lecturer. The essays submitted to the lecturer were the ones that were already revised by the students.

Writing indeed is not a linear process. To produce a good piece of writing requires a series of processes. The process writing has become one of the most recognizable approaches to teaching writing in this century (Graham & Sandmel, 2011). One of the important steps before writing is the planning part or the drafting part (Setyowati et al., 2018). During the planning session, the students not only generate and organize ideas but also set writing goals (Hayes & Flower, 1980). The planning strategies are varied. The students can make explicit outlining (webbing), or make drafts (Setyowati, Widiati, Latief, 2017; Setyowati et al., 2018). In this present study, the students' strategies to make a plan is by using a series of drafts. The initial draft was not the final of the writing product. Sometimes, the students revised their drafts twice, perfecting and improving their ideas, the contents of their essays, and the language use.

Thus, we would infer that the use of authentic materials is effective to improve the students' writing under the following conditions. First, the teaching and learning process es follow the stages of writing as a process approach. As stated by Graham & Sandmel (2011), the use of process approach is effective to help learners' write better as it improves the quality of their writing. Secondly, there should be a student-teacher conference to give feedback and comments to improve the quality of the composition. Feedback is important for the improvement of the essay. Research has confirm that giving positive feedback can increase the students' motivation and their enthusiasm in learning (Yingwen & Jian, 2016). Research also has shown that students need time to revise their essays. The revisions usually are for spelling, vocabulary, and language (Barkaoui, 2016).

And third, the students should finish their composition at their own time. In the present project, we gave untimed writing to the students to finish their drafts. According to Na and Yoon (2016), time is a predictor for better writing. They believe that when the students' writing activity is untimed, they have more strategies to finish their writing tasks, which results in a better quality of writing.

5. Conclusion

The researchers conclude that the use of literary texts as authentic materials is effective to improve the students' ability to write essays. Referring to the relevant previous studies, the use of authentic materials for teaching English as a foreign language in the blended setting during the pandemic of COVID 19 is equally effective with the normal condition. The limited face-to-face interaction does not give impact to the students' ability to write. Yet, some considerations must be fulfilled to achieve the maximum result in the

teaching and learning process, namely the appropriate approach to teaching writing, time devoted to feedback and revisions, and the untimed writing.

This research has some limitations. Firstly, the size of the sample involved in the study is small. Thus, the result applies only to the population under similar characteristics. To have more applicability and generalization, future researchers need to generate more samples for a wider population. Secondly, the researchers do not explore the learners' opinions and feelings when they used literature as authentic materials for learning to write. Having more information about their difficulties when reading literature as authentic materials is beneficial for the quality improvement of the learning sources. And third, the researchers have limited knowledge of the time spent in finishing the writing task. Gaining information about students' length of time spent during a task accomplishment will benefit the writing assessment in the future. All in all, the present study has confirmed that literary works both contemporary and classics are effective to enhance the students' essay writing performance.

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