

## THE USE OF JOURNAL WRITING PROJECT IN PROMOTING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' LITERACY

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### Abstract

The aim of this paper is to study the use of journal writing project in promoting university students' literacy and to investigate the strengths and weakness of such project. This research used the qualitative method and collected the data through interview, questionnaire, and observation. For analyzing qualitative data, the researcher used constant comparative method. During the 12-weeks an English Graduate lecture attended by 23 students was selected as the subject of the study. The students were required to work in a pair and to pass three steps in journal writing project involving conducting a mini research, writing a manuscript, and sitting for final test. The study revealed that journal writing project can promote the students' literacy. In addition, the implementation of this project had several strengths, such as the students' frequency of reading increased, students were accustomed to write their ideas, students could practice the theories directly, the students were trained to conduct research and send the results of the study to the internal journal. In contrast, the weakness of this project was the students were required to acquire the basic knowledge of journal writing techniques first. Consequently, it needed a long time to conduct this learning process.

**Keywords:** Journal writing project, literacy, reading, writing, qualitative method, international journal

### INTRODUCTION

Teaching English literacy in university students is more important than English proficiency today. According to SK Dirjen DIKTI No. 152/E/T/2012 each university student has to produce manuscripts that should be published in national or international science journal publishers. The decree issued by DIKTI, then, to increase literacy skills of the academician in Indonesia, especially for graduate and post graduate students. This nature of literacy is more complex nowadays.

In this study, literacy is defined as the ability of the individual to read and write Keefe and Copeland (2011). Literacy encompasses people at any given time and is involved when they are engaged in reading a book or texts, watching television or reading a billboard (Weller, 2009). In another definition, literacy is the ability or potentiality to read written texts and write texts at a specified proficiency level from cognitive and socio-cultural approaches (Powell, 1999). According to Gee (1989), literacy is the mastery of or fluent control over a secondary Discourse. In his view, Discourse means "ways of being in the world, they are forms of life which combine words, act, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes (Gee, 1989).

Literacy has been used to evaluate the language education since it is not only concerned with the ability or potentiality to read and write, but it also includes how students can behave appropriately to the context of circumstances and culture. In this study, the teacher tries to convince the university students to care about new issues that emerge in the society and the world. Literacy practices refer to "the customary, habitual ways in which people read and write in their daily lives" (Rodby,

1992, p. 27). The researchers of this theory assume that interactions and participation in literacy activities are important because the participation is both the product and the process to create the product.

According to Pisa (2009), the Indonesian student literacy rate is low, in general at the level of three while the students' literacy rate of the neighboring countries can reach 4.5 and 6. And in the International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in 2013, the data indicated that the reading level of Indonesian society is at position 41 of the 45 countries. Indonesia lagged far in the publication of books, publication of articles and international journals. Recorded in 2003, the position of Indonesia is ranked 134 of the world, with an index of 0,88 articles per 1 million inhabitants. And in 2016, Indonesian is ranked 121 of the world for the literacy level.

Based on the phenomenon, the lecturer in the English Education Department in Surakarta tries to use Journal Writing project in promoting the university students' literacy. This strategy is based on Project Based Learning model of teaching for 21<sup>st</sup>-century classroom. The essential elements of this teaching strategy include significant content, need to know, driving question, voice and choice, 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills, in-depth inquiry, reflection and revision, and public presentation (Everette, 2015). In brief, the aims of this study are to describe the use of journal writing project in promoting university students' literacy and to investigate the strengths and the weakness of it.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The research was conducted at a University in Surakarta in 2016. The participants consisted of twenty-three graduate students of English Education Department. This was a qualitative case study. A case study is a type of ethnographic research study that focuses on a single unit, such as one individual, one group, one organization, or one program. The purpose is to arrive at a detailed description and understand of the entity (the "case"). The underlying question is "How is the use of journal writing project in promoting university students' literacy and what are the strengths and weakness of it?" (Ary, 2010)

In this study, the instruments used to collect the data were questionnaires, interviews, and observation. The data of the current study were collected by observation, an open questionnaire to the lecturer and interview. These multiple data gatherings or triangulation could be used to enhance the validity of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Moreover, to increase the trustworthiness of the data, the researcher conducted prolonged sufficient engagement and persistent observation in the field, member checking, and external audit.

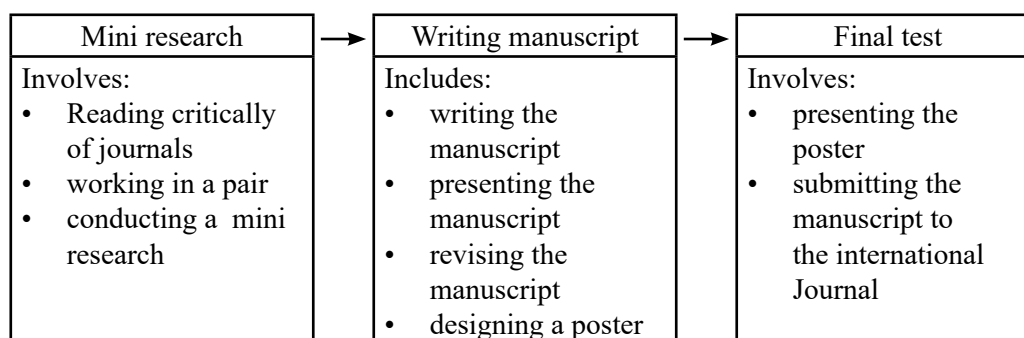
The transcribed data were analyzed by using Constant Comparison Method (CCM). It is an inductive data analysis procedure by comparing incidents in the transcribed data to other incidents, incidents to categories, and categories to other categories (Creswell: 2012, p 434). It was the two founders of Grounded Theory (GT) who first introduced the term and procedure of CCM in their book *The Discover of Grounded Theory* (1967). The processes of collecting and analyzing the data in CCM are conducted concurrently and simultaneously. In their book, Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe four stages the constant comparative method: (1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory and (4) writing the theory. These stages are the original conceptualization of grounded theory in 1967. **A systematic design in CCM emphasizes the use of open, axial, and selective coding. Open coding is used to develop major or core categories with axial coding to develop categories around the core. Think of a wheel with a center and spokes extending. The spokes are all related to the central category. A visual model is developed called an axial coding paradigm. Selective coding is then used to develop propositions or hypotheses based on the model, showing how the categories are related. The resulting theory can take the form of a narrative statement, a picture, or a series of hypotheses.** (Ary: 2010, p 464)

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *The Use of Journal Writing Project in Promoting the University Students' Literacy*

There are three stages in the use of journal writing project in promoting university students' literacy in English Education Department classroom. The journal writing project stages are shown in Fig. 1. First all, the lecturer constructed the concept of Academic Writing involving journal writing. In this stage, the lecturer focused on the important of academic writing especially writing a journal for university students. Then, the lecturer divided the whole student in pairs. She assigned "journal writing project" to each pair. This project should be finished in 12-weeks lecture.

Fig 1. Journal Writing Project Stages flowchart



Before conducting mini research, the lecturer assigned critical reading task of International Journal that was related to students' plan for mini research. This task aimed to develop the students' knowledge especially the up to date issue occurred in the world and to enhance students' frequency of reading. In the process of reading journals, the students understand the problems and the topic that most interest their group. The students did not only understand but also identified, analyzed and solved the problem that occurred in the process of reviewing the journal. After four weeks lecture and the pair work received the approved topic for the research. Since then, the pair works were allowed to carry out the mini research and started start to collect the data and analyze the data.

The second stage was writing the manuscript. This stage consisted of looking for information about International Journal, writing the manuscript based on the result of mini research, presenting the manuscript in the front of the classroom and revising the manuscript. Before writing the manuscript based on the result of mini research, the students were required to search for guideline for authors of an International Journal. This step is very important since the student learned the expectation of a certain international journal including how to write the abstract, the font of the word, and reference style. Then, the students presented their manuscript in front of the classroom. The lecturer and students gave suggestion for the revision of the manuscript. Last but not least step was the student had to design a poster according to the manuscript.

The second stage helped the students to develop their writing skill in writing manuscript, to stimulate their creativity in designing the poster, and to produce or create the scientific work in the form of manuscript and poster.

The final stage was sending the manuscript to an International Journal via email. Before sending the manuscript, the team presented the poster in the workshop event. Prior to this, the students had to check grammatical and spelling of their manuscript through grammarly.com and made sure that the similarity of the manuscript was less than 10 % from the bibliography. The soft file of manuscript and poster had to be submitted to the lecturer for evidence that they conducted this project. Through this stage, the students can improve their speaking skill in the poster presentation and critical thinking process and learn in socio-culture contextual learning in submitting the

manuscript into International Journal.

### ***The Strength and the Weaknesses of Journal Writing Project in Promoting the University Students' Literacy***

The result showed that journal writing project can promote the students' literacy. From the twenty-three students, there were 72 % students who felt their literacy increased and developed especially in reading and writing skill. Through this project, the students' frequency of reading increased, students were accustomed to writing their ideas and the result of their research. In addition, the students were trained to conduct the research, the students can practice the theories directly and send the result of their studies to internal journal. This process could not be separated from critical thinking skill and socio-culture contextual learning.

Even though this project had a lot of advantages, it also had the weaknesses. First, it needed a long time to conduct this learning model. Because it was only conducted in 12 weeks, some students felt that they needed additional time for the deeper research. On the other hand, some students had difficulties in gathering and choosing the topics for their mini-research. Second, according to the lecturer, the students need more time to acquire the knowledge in the basic of journal writing techniques.

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this journal writing project can promote the students' literacy skills, especially in reading and writing skill. The result showed that journal writing project can improve the students' frequency of reading, the students' academic writing, and the students' habit of writing their result of their research. In terms of socio-culture contexts, the students were trained to conduct research, present the poster presentation according to the research, to practice the theory immediately and to send the manuscript to internal journal. The shortcoming of this project is that it was time consuming since the students should be trained for basic journal writing before journal writing project was ready to be implemented.

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