

## Contact with the nature: Field trip strategy in enhancing writing descriptive text

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**ABSTRACT:** Field trips are recognized as important moments in learning; a shared social experience that provides the opportunity for students to encounter and explore novel things in an authentic setting. This paper is focused on analyzing the effectiveness of field trips on students' writing descriptive text for a group of 30 students of second semester of FKIP UIR Pekanbaru, Indonesia in the academic year 2016/2017 who were selected by using random sampling. The data were collected by giving tests (pre-test and post-test). This study used experimental research, through the Mann-Whitney U t-test. The normality of the test was analyzed through Kolmogorov-Smirnova. The results indicated that the asymptotic significance of less than 0.05 ( $p = 0.00 < 0.05$ ) means the students' ability in writing descriptive text increased significantly after learning through field trips.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Teaching English as a second or foreign language has been a constant challenge due to the interference of the first language. Efforts to motivate learners must first look into the teaching methods, as implementing the conventional way of teaching English was found to be unmotivating. Especially when they are restricted to classroom learning which would expose them to a limited scope of knowledge, the situation does not reflect a positive trend in teaching and learning English.

One of the core subjects taught at schools up to universities in Indonesia is the English language. The Curriculum Specifications prescribed by the Ministry of Education specify the four skills which need to be mastered by the learners, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Writing is one of the skills which needs to be mastered by the learners. Students learn different genres of writing like descriptive, expository, recount narrative, and others based on the prescribed syllabus of the Ministry of Education. Writing is generally considered to be one of the most difficult skills for foreign language students. Even native speakers have difficulty in showing a good command of writing (Johnstone et al. 2002).

Considering the fact that writing is often a challenge for EFL learners as it is considered to be the most painstaking and challenging language skill, the researcher, with several years of experience of teaching EFL in Indonesia, has been witness to this challenging task. It has been a challenging task for EFL teachers because students, as observed in their writing samples do not take much interest in writing either for academic, professional or personal purposes. Moreover, writing requires an in-depth understanding of the target language. On the other hand, they also have difficulty to explore their ideas as well into written form. Those problems cause the students to be bored in the classroom. They could not explore their ideas as well to write although the theme has been already clearly determined. In relation, Raimes (1983) thinks that: When students complain about how difficult it is to write in a second language, they are talking not only about the difficulty of finding the right words and using the correct grammar but also about the difficulty of finding and expressing ideas in a new language".

Moreover, the importance of teaching how to write focused on descriptive paragraphs can be analyzed from the viewpoints: inside the classroom and outside the classroom. The freshmen are faced with the need of describing events, experiences, areas, and objects inside the language classroom. No matter what the level is, students always ask about what they did during vacation. They are also requested to provide a physical description of themselves and others. Outside the classroom, most freshmen are supposed to put into practice all the knowledge that they have acquired in their English lessons. Nowadays, knowing how to write in English has become a transcendental feature of a 21st century citizen. Students have to express themselves in English in writing to establish relationships with foreigners and people outside the country. Most of the time, students have to describe events, experiences and so forth in their writing. Therefore, in writing that text, students need to observe things, places, and animals in their natural habitats.

From the explanation above, this research aims to find innovative ways to write descriptive text for students who have difficulty in creative writing class. Most students sometimes feel restricted when they have to write in a classroom. It happens because somehow they cannot get any ideas when they have to complete their writing tasks, so it makes them hate writing class.

Therefore, the need to develop an effective environmental education program ranks as one of the major challenges facing education in the next decade. Learning can take place anywhere. Not only in the classroom or in school environment. This is not just talking about a particular type of education, it could be any type, formal, informal or non-formal education, it is all about learning in general. Furthermore, in order to create an efficient learning ambience, language teachers need to focus on the core principles of the learning community which includes the integration of curriculum, active learning, and student engagement in field-based learning, all of which have been used to generate student interest, enhance student learning, and help them acquire hands-on experience. Though mostly used in education, field-based learning, primarily field trips, can be useful in undergraduate and graduate education where students connect the textbook and classroom learning with the real world.

Therefore, giving students and involving them in experiential learning experiences in a real world experience makes learning more meaningful and memorable. As a result, students will have more of a concept on the topic as they have learnt through their hand-on experiences. It allows students to have a real-world experience. For example, a textbook lesson on domestic animals can be enhanced by a trip to a local farm where the students can clearly see the domestic animals.

## 2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITEATURE

### 2.1 *Field trips*

Many researchers have investigated knowledge gain and learning that occurred during field trips; (Tal & Morag 2009, Stainfield at al. 2000). It provides students with an opportunity to see and experience what they have been taught in the classroom. Field trips provide real world settings in which students are challenged to apply knowledge learned in the classroom. Many students enjoy the less formal setting in which the learning takes place (Falk 1983, Flexer & Borun 1984, Braund & Reiss 2006). As a result, these students may become more excited about their school subjects (Michie 1998, Storsdieck 2001). Field trips have great potential to positively affect students' learning (MacKenzie & White 1982, Flexer & Borun 1984, Lisowski & Disinger 1991, Farmer, Knapp & Benton 2007) and students' attitudes towards their education (Wendling & Wuensch 1985, Price & Hein 1991, Michie 1998, Hannon & Randolph 1999). Students who directly participate during a field experience generate a more positive attitude about the subject. (Behrendt & Franklin 2014) Fuller at al. (2003) conclude in their study that students perceived field work to be beneficial not only to their learning which develops the subject knowledge and the technical and the transferable skills, but also some concomitant values like social interaction with their lecturers and peers. The value of a field trip lies particularly in providing students with a better sense of the real world and direct experience with concrete phenomena.

Mayer et al. (2009) consider the reason why nature can be beneficial to creation. In all three of their studies they discovered that exposure to the natural world enhanced the positive emotions of the participant as well as increased their attention, motivation and the way they meditate and problem-solve. Alawad (2012) examined natural sound and whether this could be of benefit to the art classroom environment. She considered whether natural sound could foster creativity. This study found that natural sound in the art classroom enhanced students' creativity and raised students' marks in their art tasks (Alawad 2012). Therefore, looking to the natural locations for field trips, such as a desert and outside space could stimulate a student's creativity and thirst for knowledge. This study will explore the role of field trips within the English curriculum. In particular, it will consider if field trips positively affect students' creative thinking and practices in writing descriptive text. As the aim of this research is to observe the subject in its natural state and possibly collect samples.

Field trips offer opportunities to students that they may not have known existed, and expose them to learning experiences that cannot be duplicated inside the classroom. These "out-of-school" experiences have been a tradition since the earliest schools were founded. The outdoor field experience has traditionally been an important component in curricula. Students do seem to benefit from the learning experiences that occur outside the classroom according to another key researcher into the area of field trips. Patrick (2010) proposed that field trips should be weaved into the teaching schedule as this will provide an opportunity for students to view information for themselves and use their own senses to touch, or feel materials that they had previously only heard about (Patrick 2010). This immediacy and accessibility is a key feature of field trips and one of its redeeming features. Leaving the school premises is a social experience and one, which provides a change of tempo and scenery for students which will allow them to learn through their experiences and reflections. The fact that everything and every event of life provides information for education, justify teacher's effort to take students outside the four walls of the classroom for effective learning. This could be better explained in the values that educators attached to the relevance of field trips in the teaching and learning process. The traditional practice of field trip as an instructional strategy takes the students outside of the school environment. Thus field trips become a form of community contact instructional strategy adopted in the formal school system for the purpose of education.

Field trips are recognized as important moments in learning; a shared social experience that provides the opportunity for students to encounter and explore novel things in an authentic setting. Krepel and Durrall (1981) describe field trips as a school or class trip with an educational intent, in which students interact with the setting, displays, and exhibits to gain an experiential connection to the ideas, concepts, and subject matter. Futher. Oloyede et al. (2006) inferred that field trips are the act of taking pupils out of the classroom into the community for the purpose of learning. Nabors et al. (2009) share the same view as the prementioned authors that field trips are a type of experiential learning that gets children away from the traditional classroom setting and into a new mode of learning. Tal and Morag (2009) have different opinions from those of other scholars, they describe field trips as student experiences outside of the classroom at interactive locations designed for educational purposes. This view is that the general perception of people as regards field trips are any teaching and learning process carried out by a group of people outside of the classroom environment.

The purpose of the trip is usually observation for education to provide students with experiences outside their everyday activities, such as going on the trip with the teacher and their classmates. Field trips are also used to produce civilized young men and women who appreciate culture and the arts. It is seen that more-advantaged children may have already experienced cultural institutions outside of school, and field trips provide a common ground with more-advantaged and less-advantaged children to have some of the same cultural experiences in writing descriptive text.

Field trips cannot replace school-based education but they should not have to compete to demonstrate their pedagogical worth. In formal education, learning outcomes are customarily pre-decided independently of the learner, for example through curricula and defined standards. In field trips, learners are invited to drive their own learning outcomes. Notwithstanding,

the learning outcomes a field trip can impart are conditioned by the structure of the field trip, the personal context of children, the social context of the visit, the novelty of the physical context, teacher agendas and actions during the field trip, and the quality of preparations and follow-up experiences.

During the field trip it is possible that teachers divide learners into groups and assign them team tasks. When groups work together throughout a field trip, it improves learner communication with peers. Educational trips offer interaction and cooperation among students, teachers, other administrative staff and representatives at the field trip destination who offer guided tours and conduct question-and-answer sessions. This allows learners to expand their educational networks through interacting with others during field trips (Arduini, 2012). This social training also provides for the learners who come from different social-cultural backgrounds an opportunity to behave and control emotion in different situations (Shakil et al. 2011).

## 2.2 *Features of field trips*

1. Facilitate the learning of abstract concepts. Taking students on a field trip makes learning more effective as they will be able to gain vast ideas on the topic.
2. Motivate students through increased interest and curiosity. Field trips can add variety to the regular classroom instructional program and they tend to be special and enjoyable learning experiences. As a result, students will develop positive attitudes in students toward related classroom activities.
3. Increase student-student and student-teacher social interaction. Field trips provide an opportunity to involve students, parents, and the teachers in the instructional program. Students can select the place to be visited, developing questions to ask, writing reports or thank you letters after the trip, or evaluating the experiences.
4. Develops social awareness. Field trips make students aware of learning activities in everyday life.

## 2.3 *Purpose of field trip*

From the previous research, it can be drawn that the purposes of field trip are as follows:

1. Experiential learning experiences. Involvement in a real world experience makes learning more meaningful and memorable. As a result, the students will have more concept of the topic as they have learnt through their hands-on experiences.
2. Concrete skills such as note taking. Students have to develop questions to be asked, write reports or thank you letters after the trip, or evaluate their experiences. By doing such activities, students will develop various skills such as note taking skills, speaking skills, and writing skills will enhance.
3. Additional variety to the regular instructional program; they tend to be special and enjoyable learning experiences, ones which develop positive attitudes in students toward related classroom activities. Field trips are rich in educational possibilities because students learn from actual firsthand experiences, rather than by simply reading or hearing about something.

Moreover, field trips help the students appreciate the relevance and importance of what they learn in the classroom. Furthermore, field trips are rich in educational possibilities as students learn from actual hands-on experiences, rather than by simply reading or hearing about something. Therefore, involvement in a real world experience makes learning more meaningful and memorable compared to regular classroom instructional programs.

## 2.4 *The procedures of field trips*

Myers and Jones (2009) describe that educational field trips should be designed around specific educational objectives. If a field trip is not planned well in advance it will end in confusion and will be a waste of time and money. So field trips should be planned as a cooperative

activity involving full pupil participation under the teacher's supervision. When planning and organizing a successful field trip, three important stages should be included i.e. the pre-trip stage of a field trip involves two major components: administration and instruction. The second stage of a successful field trip is the trip itself. It also has two components: the role of the student and the role of the teacher. The third and final stage of a successful field trip is the post-trip stage which also consists of two components: debriefing and culminating activity. The objective of this study is to know if there is a significant effect of field trips on students' writing descriptive text.

### 3 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

From the aforementioned objective the following are the research hypotheses;

(H0): There is no significant effect of field trip on students' writing descriptive text.

(H1): There is a significant effect of field trips on students' writing descriptive text.

### 4 METHODOLOGY

The population of this study was 180 second-year English major students in the second semester of the academic year 2016/2017 at Islamic University of Riau Pekanbaru Indonesia. The study sample consisted of two classes each consisting of 30 students selected by simple random sampling from seven classes. Therefore, the researcher took the experimental group on two separate field trips to the zoo and a museum. The field trips were each a day in length. The students in this group were given writing materials (explaining all components of writing) and supplementary material prior to each trip. While, the control group of students (30 students) were also given the same writing material, this group was not taken on these trips.

Data were collected from the students' scores of the pre-test and post-test of writing descriptive text. The data obtained from this method of teaching in the study was analyzed and interpreted through quantitative analysis. Quantitative data includes the data obtained from the pre-test and the post-test. The t-test was to compare the students' writing descriptive text.

#### 4.1 *Procedure of research*

Before the experiment, the writing test and the rating rubric were designed. Then, the test validity and reliability were identified. the objectives of teaching writing and the writing topics were formulated. Next, the Teacher's Manual was designed to provide step-by-step procedures for teaching writing using field trips. It included how to help learners apply the suggested three stages of the field trip strategy. The experiment began on the second week of the first term of the academic year 2016–2017. At the beginning, out of seven classes, the participants were randomly assigned to the control group (Class A, N = 30) or the experimental group (Class C, N = 30). Then, they were introduced to the purposes of the study. The writing test was administered to both groups as a pre-test. Afterwards, the control group was taught writing descriptive text through a traditional method. The teacher demonstrated the process of writing by giving a sample of good writing while showing students photographs or posters of the object being discussed. Next, the students were asked to write descriptive text based on the topic given. Finally, the teacher and students together discussed the results of students' writing. While the experimental group was taught writing by using the field trip strategy which included three stages. At the end of the experiment, both groups were post-tested using the same writing test. Field trips are recognized as important moments in learning; a shared social experience that provides the opportunity for students to encounter and explore novel things in an authentic setting. It is important to recognize that learning outcomes from field trips can range from cognitive to affective outcomes (Heath 2012).

## 4.2 *The procedures of field trip based on this research*

### 4.2.1 *Before the field trip*

The teacher visited the sites (museum and zoo) prior to the field trip to gather information about them. In the classroom, the teacher demonstrated the process of writing. Teacher and students discussed the focus and purpose of the field trip together, while showing photographs and posters of the sites. After a while, the teacher organized all of the administration and instruction. Then the teacher asked for permission from the dean. Afterwards, the teacher explained about the location and checked all the details about the trip. Further, the teacher set a standard conduct code and discussed money usage, lunch plans, dress code and other necessary things and then, discussed how to ask good questions and make a list of the open-ended observation questions to gather information. Thereafter, the teacher checked an overview the field trip schedule. Likewise, Pace (2004) and Myers and Jones (2009) state that one needs to prepare a conceptual foundation on which the students may connect their experiences before the trip. In brief, the teacher gave instructions by explaining the rules in the pre-trip session. Finally, the teacher checked the students' preparation such as required documentation.

### 4.2.2 *During the field trip*

When the field trip began, the teacher divided learners into groups and assigned them team tasks. When groups work together throughout a field trip, it improves learner communication with peers. The teacher may need to help some students become comfortable in the new environment. Then, the teacher asked students to apply field trip strategy by giving the topic while connecting the students' experiences on the trip with concepts and lessons taught in the classroom. Next, the teacher kept the students engaged and used worksheets to help students focus on exploring and learning the targeted concepts. Afterwards, the teacher let students do excursions to locations selected for educational purposes, during which students interacted with exhibits, facilities, and surroundings in their functional settings to gain an experiential connection to ideas, materials, or phenomena they study (from afar) in the classroom. Furthermore, the teacher gave students extended opportunities and encouragement to engage in discussion with their peers/ group. Finally, the teacher asked students to explore their ideas into writing descriptive text.

### 4.2.3 *Post trip*

The students' experiences need to be reinforced through discussion, activities, reading, a television show or movie (Falk & Dierking 2000, Kisiel 2006a, Orion & Hofstein 1994, Pace & Tesi 2004, Tal & Steiner 2006). At the beginning, teacher helped students to connect new classroom concepts to the students' field trip experiences. Thereafter, the teacher started each topic by exploring it with the students through class discussion and through sharing her own ideas and her writing. The students shared their observations and reactions to field trip experiences. Furthermore, they were asked to create a classroom bulletin board displaying material collected while on the field trip. Therefore, this served to demonstrate the process of writing in order to give the students the experience of being good writers, to help them get the sense that this was a collaborative endeavour to provide examples of good writing. Furthermore, the teacher corrected students' writing, these pieces were revised and "published" in booklets which were put on display in class, and students were encouraged to read and write comments on each other's writing in their free time. In relation to this finding, Moffett (1968) suggests that the topics started with the students' concrete experiences and moved towards more abstract concepts. Consequently, this aimed at making the writing tasks more relevant to students by introducing topics related to their experience and social world and by providing a real audience and a real purpose for writing.

## 5 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research project was aimed at establishing the effectiveness of field trips on students' writing descriptive text in a group of 30 students. Based on the analysis of the data and the

findings the researcher states that students showed an improvement in their writing descriptive text. As a result of the implementation of Process writing can be shown in the following table.

Table 1 shows that only the data of the experimental class is normally distributed  $0.117 > 0.05$ . Therefore, to determine whether the hypothesis should be rejected or not. This was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The decision role is such that the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected if the value of sig. (2-sided) is less that 0.05. the essence of the hypothesis is to determine the effectiveness of field trips on students' writing descriptive text.

Table 2 shows the statistical description of the pre and post test results of the two types of instructional strategies on the students' writing descriptive text with conventional strategy pre-test Mean of 52.333, field trip strategy pre-test Mean of 55.5000, and conventional strategy post-test Mean of 64.1667, field trips strategy post-test Mean of 76.1667. To determine if the observed effectiveness is significant at the 0.05 level, the Mann-Whitney T test was used and the summary of the analysis is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 shows the results from the pre- and post-trip students, respectively. The asymptotic, two-tailed significance (also known as the  $-p||$  value) generated from the Mann-Whitney U test. The asymptotic, two-tailed significance is an indication of probability that the  $-$  null hypothesis $||$  cannot be rejected. The null hypothesis here is that the data from the independent samples come from the same population; in other words, the samples are not different from each other. Thus, a low value of the significance indicates that the null hypothesis can be rejected and the two samples are different from each other. The statements with the asymptotic significance of less than 0.05 ( $p = 0.00 < 0.05$ ).

From Table 3 the results show that there is a significant effect of the field trip strategy on students' writing descriptive text with  $0.00 < 0.05$ . This means that the null hypothesis (H0) is

Table 1. The normality of the test.

	Kolmogorov-smirnova			Shapiro-wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Experimental class	0.144	30	0.117	0.945	30	0.126
Control class	0.173	30	0.022	0.935	30	0.065
Experimental class	0.174	30	0.022	0.921	30	0.028
Control class	0.219	30	0.001	0.888	30	0.004

a. Lilliefors significance correction.

Table 2. Statistical description of field trips and conventional strategies on students' writing descriptive text.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test of experimental class	30	40.00	70.00	55.5000	8.64531
Pre control class	30	40.00	70.00	52.3333	8.48257
Post experimental class	30	60.00	90.00	76.1667	8.87493
Post control class	30	55.00	75.00	64.1667	4.56435

Valid N (list wise) 30.

Table 3. Mann-whitney u test for the descriptive writing text test.

	Score
Mann-Whitney U	170.500
Wilcoxon W	635.500
Z	-4.208
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000

a. Grouping Variable: class.

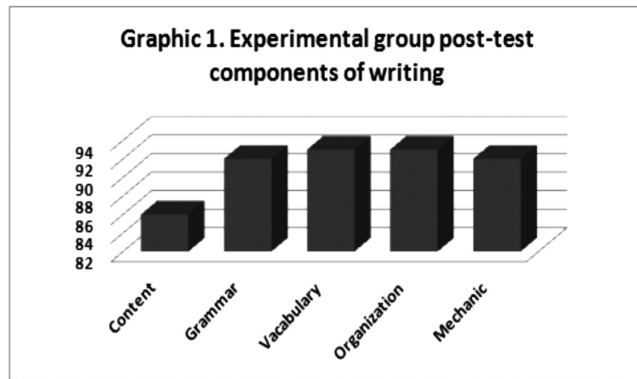


Figure 1. Illustrates the experimental group's post-test evidence that the highest component scores of writing were for vocabulary and organization (93), while the lowest was for content (86).

rejected and (H1) is accepted. Furthermore, field trips enhance learners mental development through observation and offer opportunities to students to explore their ideas based on their own experience. In other research Mhgoub M Yassir (2014) agreed that field trips to natural and industrial locations were a beneficial learning aid and a means of fostering students' creativity and practices in art education. Obadiro (2016) found that virtual field trips and real field trips are effective strategies in enhancing students' knowledge in Social Studies. Haw-Jan "John" Wu (2009) stated that field trips do increase student interest in OM among other positive feelings of the students. When students have an interest, they tend to learn the subject materials better.

## 6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, field trips applied to the Process approach were a suitable strategy for EFL students from the first grade at Islamic University of Riau Pekanbaru, Indonesia to increase their writing descriptive text. In addition, this type of resource was a means for increasing students' motivation to improve and practice their descriptive writing text. Even though they attained, the results of this study reveal that subjects who went on field trips out performed students from the control group who used the conventional strategy of writing. Moreover, it should also be noted that having students experience real-world activities outside of the classroom may have positive results not measured in this or any similar short-term study. The majority of the related literature deals with the more general sphere of informal science education, which covers natural—or social—science-based learning activities such as short-term visits (hours to a day) to natural areas and more structured settings such as museums and zoos, aquaria, or gardens. In addition, the study found that students learn quite a lot. In particular, enriching field trips contribute to the development of students into civilized young men and women who possess more knowledge about art, have stronger critical-thinking skills, exhibit increased historical empathy, display higher levels of tolerance. Here, the researcher reviews the informal science education literature with a focus on the effectiveness of informal science learning experiences on the students' writing descriptive text.

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