

# AUTHENTIC MATERIALS IN ESSAY WRITING CLASS: AN ALTERNATIVE LEARNING TOOL

Ana Ahsana El-Sulukiyyah<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>English Education Study Program

STKIP PGRI Pasuruan

Pasuruan, Indonesia

aahsana3@gmail.com

**Abstract**—Writing can not be separated from the journey in learning English. Learners have to learn it with other language skills and components. However, writing has to be one of the scary activity among learners. To have good writing performance, learners have to be able to apply their ideas and use their good sentences. Teachers are forced to be creative and innovative to help learners enhance their ideas in writing. Authentic materials can be one of the alternative learning tools to gain learners' ideas to write. Authentic materials can bring learners direct contact and reality of life, which are believed to enrich the writing performance. Besides, authentic materials can bring learners real rhetorical functions. The sources teacher used for gaining authentic materials in class are from popular fairy tales and some other reading texts. This research conducted in essay writing class, where learners are expected to write good essay, one of them is Compare and Contrast essay. This paper reviews some theories and describes the use of authentic materials in essay writing class and its advantages after applying it. It is qualitatively describes the application of authentic materials in writing Compare and Contrast essay. Furthermore, this paper can give contribution for the development of English teaching and learning activity moreover in using good tools to enhance learners' performance and mastery.

**Keyword**— alternative; authentic; essay writing; materials; tools

## I. BACKGROUND

In learning English, learners are introduced to four skills, they are speaking, writing, reading and listening. Speaking and writing are productive skills whereas listening and reading are passive skills. In speaking, learners are expected to explore their ideas through spoken language to have fluent communication but in writing, learners are hoped to express their thoughts in the written expression dealing with sentences and paragraphs. Some research shows that writing is not easy to apply in. Learners still have poor performance in writing in English (Katilie, 2003). Furthermore Alwasilah (2007) finds that writing still be a complicated part for English learners. Feez and Joyce state that to make good written texts, teachers have to give correct tools in writing class. From those previous research it is believed to give more creative tools to gain learners' performance in writing. Authentic materials can be one of the alternative.

There are some definition about authentic materials, Nunan (1999) defines authentic materials in spoken or written language data that has been produced in the course of genuine communication, and not specifically written for purposes of language teaching. According to Dascalos and Ling (2005) authentic materials deal with social life activities and not meant for pedagogical experience. Harmer in Hartatik & Rahmah (2016) show that authentic materials give good learning output to support learners' writing performance.

Berardo (2006) states authentic materials give positive impact to learners' motivation in writing, because they do not only learn how to

write but also learn the language experience from the daily world shown in authentic materials. Whereas Gilmore (2007) defines that authentic materials are produce for social experience, the example is Newspaper. It is made to give information and bring the communication through reading the news. News can be taken as the materials for teachers to teach and bring it the class to apply the social and accustomed atmosphere to learners.

Authentic materials are varied. Gebhard (1996) divides the types of authentic materials, they are:

- A. Authentic Listening-Viewing Materials, it can be radio, TV shows, TV commercials, professionally taped audio short story and song.
- B. Authentic Visual Materials, teachers can get materials from slides, photographs, children's artwork, pictures from magazines, pictures from internet and X-rays,
- C. Authentic Printed Materials, the materials we can take can be Newspaper articles, sport reports, catalogs, brochures, coupons, messages and so on. The creative English teachers can mix and match those variation of authentic materials. It does not mean that if teachers teach speaking so they can only use Authentic Listening-Viewing Materials. All types of authentic materials can be applied in English classroom as the alternative learning tools.

Furthermore, there are some advantages can be taken from the use of authentic materials in English class as one of the alternative of learning tools as stated in Qamariah (2016), they are as follows:

- A. it can be modified, because learning language is natural, the social experience in authentic materials are in line with the teaching purposes, teachers can give some examples from authentic materials taken from daily life then discuss with learners.
- B. Authentic printed materials can give learners precise examples of studying

English texts and its components, it bring complete contents and opportunity.

- C. Authentic materials are understandable, it is realistic and applicable to be taken to the classroom.

It is in line with Kilickaya (2004) finds that authentic materials take the language students to feel authentic learning and real life language. Another prove was also given by Gilmore (2007). It was comparing the impact of authentic versus textbook materials to develop students' communicative competence of the experimental group in an experimental study at a Japanese university in a year and found that students in authentic materials treatment, get significant progress over the control group significantly. The tests were conducted six times to measure some types of competences.

On the other hand, there are also the kontras over the pros of the use of authentic materials. Gardner and Miller (1999) shows contradictive statement. The first reason of contra comes from the language complexity aspect. Authentic materials can be culturally bias or too problematic to understand outside the language community, it is not appropriate to beginner level or elementary students. The second problem is the learning reduce. The authentic materials can have unfamiliar vocabulary, and the learners cannot possibly understand it. The last reason why it becomes contra is the authentic materials do not have language target and sometimes containing provoking items or contents.

Martinez (2002) shows two further weaknesses of the application of authentic materials. The first is authentic listening materials can be hard to learners to understand because of their various accent. Furthermore, authentic materials can be out of date, means that the teacher brings some news or videos to the class, it can be old news or videos, it can be outdated.

But although the use of authentic materials have some advantages and disadvantages and controversial, teachers can bring them as the alternative to have creative learning. Of course, teachers should choose the best materials will be given to the class. It can be integrated in some parts of language learning as stated by Qamariah

(2016).

She shows some strategies how to apply the authentic materials as the way to build language literacy for adult learners, they are:

- A. Analyze students' needs. Our students are our client, what they need to build themselves is our part to have good communication with them. Teachers must be able to conduct the teaching learning process as students' need not teachers' want.
- B. Let the students to be apart in selecting the authentic materials. After knowing their needs, engage them to find the authentic materials which are appropriate with their needs.
- C. Select good materials from local/popular items among students. authentic materials can be varied from items, content, region etc. Try to have it locally, so students can feel the real life language context.
- D. Asses the assessment authentically.
- E. Use the authentic materials in authentic ways.

Martinez (2002) gives some ways for the teachers to apply the authentic materials in language classroom, they are as follows:

- A. Give an easy task: Teachers may simplify the task and make it balance with students' capability. Do not make the English classroom become more difficult with the presence of authentic materials. Authentic materials are brought to the class to support the system of teaching learning process not to bring another problems.
- B. Classify the materials: When the teachers decide to apply authentic materials in the class, they should have more collection of it, then they can classify authentic materials to appropriate proficiency of students' level. There are some classification plans: (i) vocabulary understandably; (ii) sentence structure consideration; (iii) simple texts; (iv)

degree of redundancy, with ideas/facts expressed more than once; (v) degree of repetition, with the same form of words repeated; and (vi) very specific context or genre of communication which to some extent pre-determines how participants behave

- C. Stage the materials: make sure to have appropriate reason to bring the authentic materials in class. Students may have good interest to supportive materials.

This research conducted in Essay writing class, learners were trying to make Compare and Contrast essay when this research going. This research shows ways of teaching and describe the application of authentic materials in essay writing class as the alternative learning tools to help learners enrich their ideas to have better writing experience.

## **II. RESEARCH METHOD**

It is a descriptive research, the goal of descriptive research is to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics (Nassaji, 2015). This research is more concerned with what rather than how or why something has happened. Therefore, the data gained by the observation. In such research, the data may be collected qualitatively, but it is often analyzed quantitatively, using frequencies, percentages, averages, or other statistical analyses to determine relationships.

The observation occurred in STKIP PGRI Pasuruan, in Essay Writing class for the fourth semester students of English Education Study Program class B 2017 generation for this academic year (2018/2019). There are 15 students in this class. The research conducted in 3 meetings of Compare and Contrast part to know the application of authentic materials. The authentic materials used in this research were (1) authentic printed material taken from the story of Bawang Putih and Bawang merah and Cinderella, (2) authentic printed material of the example of Compare and Contrast Essay written by the previous generation, (3) authentic listening-viewing material, taken from FCE Listening and Speaking Professionally Audio, the audio talking about caste classification in a small village in

America and caste in Hinduism culture in Bali.

The research observed in detail the teaching and learning activities in applying those authentic materials and described the development of students' writing performance. In every meetings students were shown the authentic materials, understand them and started writing.

### III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The application of authentic materials in Essay Writing class. There were three meetings observed in this research. The first teaching step was the authentic materials discussion and thesis statement and compare and contrast arrangement. The second step was the activities of full writing. In Comparison and Contrast Essay, students are expected to be able to find some similarities and differences in the two objects their compared. The authentic material used in the first meeting was authentic printed material taken from kids story Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih and Cinderella. The lecturer gave those two stories to be compared. Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih is Indonesian story about cruel step mother and step sister's behavior and treatment to their step family. In line, Cinderella is also a story about step daughter treated badly by her step mother and step sisters. Students were directed to compare and contrast those two stories. They read those stories in some minutes and found some things to be compared.

After founding the similarities and differences students discussed it in class and make the introductory paragraph with good thesis statement. Then the next activity was students started to write down their essays.

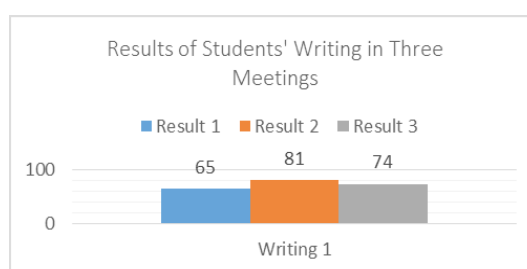
The second meeting conducted a week after the first meeting. Here, the Lecturer started the class by discussing the result of first meeting's writing made by students. The result showed that students were still confused to arrange the comparison side. That was why the next authentic printed material given was the example of Compare and Contrast Essay made by the previous generation or their senior. Students were shown those essay and compare with theirs. Lecturer and students discussed again and more about the step of comparing the two part in Comparison

and Contrast Essay. They found the mistakes and tried to write again, the theme was still the same, comparing two kids stories, Bawang Putih and Bawang Merah and Cinderella.

In the third meeting, students had accustomed to write the Compare and Contrast Essay, so the lecturer gave them authentic listening-viewing material, from professional audio of FCE Listening and Speaking Cambridge Examination which was talking about caste classification both in America and in Bali, Indonesia. Students were listening to the audio while taking note to have the material besides they were given the text to read, then they started to have writing activity about caste classification.

Students' writing results were scored by writing scoring rubric taken from Jacobs (1981) which is scored (a) content; the writing has to be substantive, knowledgeable and assigned to the topic, (b) organization ; the ideas of the writing has to be clearly stated, cohesive, well organized and expressed fluently, (c) vocabulary: it has effective diction or idiom choice and usage, (d) language use ; the text has to be in effective complex construction, has few errors of agreement, tenses, word order and preposition, and (e) mechanics ; it demonstrates mastery of conventions, has few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization and paragraphing.

The results of three students' writing are as follows:



From the chart, we can know that, the students' writing performance are varied, in the first meeting, the average class score is 65, but it is increased in the second meeting in 81 average score then in the third meeting it goes down into 74.



## **A. Discussion of Authentic Materials**

### **Application**

The findings shows that authentic materials can help students increase their writing performance especially in writing Comparison and Contrast Essay. It is in line with Qamariah (2016), authentic materials can help teachers to bring language to be natural, and give social experience. Besides, authentic materials can show students the real example of the lesson teachers bring to the class.

In the first meeting, students were still not accustomed to write Compare and Contrast Essay, but they knew how to get the data to write. As stated before, in the first meeting the lecturer gave the students the collage of kids story, they were *Bawang Putih & Bawang Merah* and *Cinderella*. These stories are well known by them. As stated in Gilmore (2007) that authentic materials are produced for social experience.

Students were experienced to these stories, so after the lecturer explained what is Compare and Contrast Essay, they directly knew what were the similarities and the differences between the two. They began to write the essay, but the class average score was only 65. Some problems happened here, the lecturer did not give them the authentic example of Compare and Contrast Essay, it made the organization of the essays were still did not well organized and the ideas did not expressed fluently in the form of written expression.

In the second meeting, lecturer gave students the authentic example. The authentic material came from the essay made by the previous generation/class. The essays showed the precise model of Comparison and Contrast Essay. It is hoped to make students' writing became better after knowing the examples. According to Rahmah (2016) good writing output came from the real model or examples it was called authentic materials. In this step, students got good writing output, the class average score was 81, it was higher than the first writing results they submitted. Students were given real example, how the essay was arranged and what were the steps of making the Comparison and Contrast Essay. They started to write again, and the results were good.

Berardo (2006) stated that authentic materials gave good impacts and support students' improvement. It is in line with the result of class average score in the second writing performance. Although they wrote the same topic, but they wrote better. The organizations were more cohesive and fluent. The sentences were expressed well. Besides, the mechanical writing rule was also better. They knew the example, how to paragraphing and capitalizing better. Then the words diction, idiom usage and tenses got better.

Qamariah (2016) stated that bring the authentic materials in authentic way. In this meeting, the authentic material given was printed material of essay writing result of previous year generation. It was the real example how the students wrote essay writing. That was why, the score increase well, from 65 average score to 81 average score. Authenticity of the material brought authentically in the classroom. Students' needs were fulfilled, the drought of ideas enrich by the authenticity of this material.

Next, in the third meeting, students were not given printed material. The authentic material given was listening material from professionally audio. Genhard (1996) said that authentic material carried into the class can be varied. It did not mean that we teach writing then the material must be only printed or only text. This third meeting tried to break the limit. Lecturer gave students authentic listening-viewing material. They did not only listen but also read the text. It taken from FCE Listening and Speaking Cambridge Examination. If in the first and second meeting they wrote about the comparison of two kids stories, but in the third meeting they have different topic. It was about caste classification. The audio spoke about caste classification in a small village in America and also in the culture of Bali Indonesia. The lecturer chose it because Balinese culture is popular among students.

In fact the average class score of the third writing result was not as satisfied as in the second meeting. Some problem found here. Students do not know and could not imagine that village in America. Bali was popular, but that village was not among them. That was why they had difficulty to express their idea about the village similarities

and differences with Bali. Another problem was because the audio. Listening for story and making conclusion of what they have heard was not as easy as only reading the information.

It is in line with Martinez (2002) that authentic listening materials can be hard to understand because they bring various accent which are difficult and do not understandable among students. Qamariah (2016) also stated to give local authentic materials content which are popular among students so they can get and understand the context. Showing the caste classification of a village in America made them hard to feel social life there although the comparison was Bali.

Still in Qamariah (2016) the selection of authentic materials must based on the students' needs not the teachers' want. Students' need to write good Comparison and Contrast essay so, teachers have to apply creative ways to get students raising achievement.

It is in contrary with the theory from Gebhard (1996) it was said that some variations of authentic material they were authentic printed material, authentic listening-viewing material and authentic visual material were good to bring to the language class. But in this essay writing class, authentic printed materials were bringing better solution than authentic listening-viewing material.

The weakness was found in the content and organization. The contents were not substantive and the organizations were not as cohesive as the second results. Although they had the data of similarities and differences between the two information, but the ideas still did not as fluent and pretty like in the second results. That was why the average class score was only 74. It was rather lower than the second writing submissions.

But furthermore, the results of average scores in the first, second or third could be concluded into raising or increasing. For the first meeting, the students were not experience with the authentic material and Compare and Contrast Essay, then they were given the good example. The results were increasing. The results in the third meeting were also categorized in better performance than the first meeting. It is showed that authentic

materials gave good role and support to increase students' writing result, they got better content, better organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The teaching learning process are developed within the time. Teachers should have ammunition to make the class alive and motivated. The alternative can be the use of authentic materials. The offering of authentic materials are varied based on students' appropriate needs. Teachers should select and also engage students in choosing the good authentic materials can be brought into language class, especially essay writing class. From the observation done by the researcher in those three meetings, it can be concluded that authentic printed materials still become the good alternative to bring the real language life in essay writing class.

The printed materials are easier and more popular among students. But teachers must be sure that the authentic printed materials given must be up to date and concerning. Do not give an out of date data, like an outdated news, an old magazines and a previous month celebrity articles. It can make decrease students' interest to the related materials.

Futhermore, the variation of authentic materials can be integrated in language classroom. In this research, the researcher has observed the integration of authentic printed materials and authentic listening-viewing materials. Other researcher in the next research can also integrate the various types of authentic materials, it can be done in language classroom or non language classroom.

#### V. REFERENCES

- Alwasilah, C. (2000). *Perspektif pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di Indonesia dalam konteks persaingan global*. Bandung: Andira.
- Alwasilah, C. (2007). *Language, culture and education: A portrait of contemporary Indonesia*. Bandung: Andira.
- Berardo, S. A. (2006). *The use of authentic materials in the teaching of reading*. *The*

- Reading Matrix Online Journal*, 6(2), 60-69.
- Berardo, S. A. (2006). *The Use of Authentic Materials in the Teaching of Reading*. The Reading Matrix (Vol 6) 2. September, 2006.
- Dascolas K, & Ling, J.J, (2005). *Authentic Text or Adapted Texts- That is the Question!* Online. Retrived on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019 from <http://dspace.mah.se/bitstream/handle/2043/1964/authenticandadapted.pdf>
- Feez, S., & Joyce, H. (2000). *Creative writing skills: Literary and media text types*. Sydney Phoenix Education.
- Gardner, D & Miller, I. (1999) *Establishing Self Access*. Cambridge. University Press.
- Genhard, J.G. (1996). *Teaching English as a foreign language: A teacher self-development and methodology*. Ann arbor: the university of Michigan press
- Gilmore, A. (2007). *Authentic materials and authenticity in foreign language learning*. *Language Teaching*, 40(2), 97-118.
- Jacobs, H.L., Zingraf, S., Wormuth, D., Hartfield, V., and Hughey, J. (1981). *Testing ESL composition: A practical approach*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Katilie, N. (2003). *Improving students' ability by using scaffolding strategy in the process of writing at STP Negeri 3 Tolitoli*. (Unpublished Thesis). State University of Malang, Malang, Indonesia.
- Kilickaya, F. (2004). *Authentic materials and cultural content in EFL classrooms*. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 10(7).
- Martinez, A. (2002). *Authentic materials: An overview*. *Karen's linguistic Issues*.
- Nunan, D. (1999). *Second language teaching and learning*. UK: Heinle & Heinle publishers.
- Qamariah, Z. (2016). *Authentic Materials, an Alternative in English Classroom*. *Proceeding of the Second National Conference of English Language Teaching*