



## THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF WRITING IN INDONESIAN: A CASE STUDY OF A PRIMARY SCHOOL

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**Abstract:** This case study is about the teaching of writing in an Indonesian state primary school, that is, in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara Province. It aims at finding out: 1) how writing in Indonesian is taught in the research school; 2) how competent the students are in writing in Indonesian as the results of their teachers' teaching of writing in Indonesian; 3) proper teaching techniques done in order to better the atmosphere of the teaching and learning of writing in the research school. The method used was a case study with the school as a research object and the teachers teaching Indonesian writing in the school and their students from grade I to grade VI learning to write in Indonesian as research subjects. This study was done from July to November 2017. The data collected through interviews, observations, and documentary studies were analyzed descriptively. It was found that the teaching and learning of writing in the school was traditionally done, that is, it was not to improve students' writing in Indonesian, but to improve other skills like reading, speaking, and listening. Despite such a traditional method in the teaching and learning of writing in Indonesian, it was found that the students could write generally well in Indonesian. The teachers in the school believe that they need to do some changes in order to ensure that their students can write well in Indonesian like: "joining more courses/trainings on the teaching and learning of writing for publication;" continuing their formal study/degree; providing more teaching facilities so that it is much easier for them to teach writing, to revise, to edit, and to publish their students' writings; and, working hand in hand with fellow teachers to improve their students' writing competence.

**Keywords:** *teaching, writing in Indonesian, teachers, primary school students, and case study*

### INTRODUCTION

How writing is taught and learned has been a major topic of discussion in the last 50 decades. In the teaching and learning of writing in English as both a native language and a second/foreign language, such approaches to teaching writing as *process approach* (Graves, 1975/1983; Spandel, 2004; Abas & Aziz, 2016; Sevgi, 2016) and *genre approach* (Kress, 1982/1986; Martin, 1985; Martin & Painter, 1986) as well as *contextual approach* (Tans, 1993; Tans & Semiun, 2015) have been introduced in primary and secondary schools as well as tertiary levels worldwide. Yet, the teaching and learning of writing in Indonesian, the national language of Indonesia, seems to be rare, at least as it is seen in international publications. It is, therefore, relevant to answer the question how writing in Indonesian is taught and learned in its Indonesian context, that is, in a primary school as the focus of our study.

For a developing country like Indonesia, answering the question is crucial for several reasons. First, by understanding how writing in Indonesian is taught and learned, Indonesian students' writing skills in their national language could be significantly improved and, through their great writings in Indonesian, the quality of Indonesia as a multicultural

nation would, in turn, be made better, that is, more prosperous, more secure, and peaceful.

Secondly, it will also help them to improve their writing in any languages, including in one or more of around 600 local languages in Indonesia and/or in any international languages like English because one's writing competence in one language positively affects his/her writing competence in other languages (see, for example, Cummins, 1979/1991; Tans, 2008). This, in turn, will not only preserve the local languages, but also bring Indonesian people's ideas to the world that will also make the nation and the world altogether far better.

Thirdly, for young Indonesians, particularly those studying in primary schools, answering how writing in Indonesian is taught and learned will help them improve their speaking, listening, and reading skills, that is, the language skills they need to succeed in learning in schools. In other words, by improving their writing in Indonesian, they can also improve not only their speaking, listening, and reading skills in Indonesian, but also Indonesian language itself as a means of learning in schools or elsewhere. This will also help them not only to succeed in the next levels of their education (i.e. secondary and tertiary ones), but also to create more brilliant minds needed to develop

Indonesia in such a way that it may become a well-developed nation in the near future (see, for example, Tans, 1994).

Fourthly, understanding the nature of the teaching and learning of English is also beneficial for the Indonesian Government who is now trying hard to change its oral tradition, which is nowadays widespread, into a strong written tradition. This is seen through its regulations that motivate its teachers and lecturers around the country to actively write and publish their writings as a prerequisite for their promotion (Cf. Alisjahbana, 1990; Sehandi, 1997; Navis, 1997; Aman, 2014; and, Nais, 2015).

Fifthly, Indonesian writing as a language skill, which is an integral part of the teaching and learning of Indonesian as one of core school subjects in Indonesian schools, is not yet comprehensively complemented. Its teaching and learning aim, for example, is not to improve students' ability to write in Indonesian but to support their mastery of other language skills, that is, reading, speaking, and listening as well other linguistic aspects like grammar and word choice. This results in students' failure to actualize their writing potentials which, in turn, make them passive in writing and in publishing. This is why it is important that the teaching and learning of writing in Indonesian is well understood so that Indonesian students can improve their writing competence and, through writing, their reading, listening, and speaking skills. An improved writing competence also means not only improved publication but also better understanding of such subjects as natural science, social science, language, culture, religion, and arts they learn in schools. This, in turn, helps them to be smarter and more skillful with great characters. In that sense, the aim of the Government of Indonesia to change its society from a strong oral tradition to a strong written tradition can then be achieved.

Such a traditional change should start from a primary level of education because it is the foundation of all individuals' entire process of education: if their educational foundation is strong, they can then move successfully to the next level of their education. However, if their educational foundation is weak, they may fail in studying at the next level of their educational processes. This is particularly true in writing as means of written communication: students who are good at writing would be more successful than those who are not. It is, therefore, important to study how primary school students learn to write in Indonesian as it would determine their success or failure in their learning of any field of study later on.

Sixthly, it is commonly assumed that writing is not learned and taught comprehensively in school, including writing in English as a foreign language (like that of English as a foreign language (see, for example,

Tans 2012/2014) because of teachers' lack of knowledge, skills, and determination in writing and publishing their writings. It is, therefore, hoped that through this research the teachers responsible for the teaching and learning of writing in schools can solve their problems as such so that they can then actively write and publish their writings themselves and, at the same time, they are more capable to teach their students how to be active and consistent in writing and in publishing their writings as well.

Finally, having good competences in writing and in publishing their writings as well as in teaching their students to write and publish their writings would lead the teachers to other aspects of writing itself, that is, reading, discussing (speaking), and other activities involving their senses needed to support their writing competence since writing is a language skill that, in many cases, depends on such aspects to be improved. In other words, writing and publishing helps them improve their professional, pedagogical, social, and individual competences in teaching. This, in turn, would improve their ability to empower their students in and beyond their classrooms and other people reading their writings.

It is acknowledged that findings of a case study like this one cannot be generalized. Yet, we believe that some findings of this study can give some generally important ideas on how good practices of teaching and learning writing in a language can be implemented so that it may succeed and, therefore, give some advantages not only to the learners themselves but also to those who read their writings which, in turn, can create a better world for all, in Indonesia or elsewhere.

## OBJECTIVES

This research has three major aims. Firstly, it is to find out how writing in Indonesian is taught in the research school. Including in this is to find out whether teachers in the school teach writing in Indonesian using different method/strategies and whether they use different methods in teaching good and poor student writers. Secondly, it is to find out the overall results of students' writing competences in such a context. Thirdly, it is to get some insights on what should be done to better the atmosphere of the teaching and learning of writing in the research school.

What is implied in those aims is an intention to create an Indonesian society with a strong literacy tradition and to help Indonesian students more successful in and after their school learning as the impacts of their good competences in literacy. It is hoped that they can then be more functional when they are successful in their learning, that is, they can be more successful in making their families, social environment,

and Indonesia as a nation better in very aspect of their lives.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The teaching and learning of writing in both an L-1 (native language context) and L-2 (second/foreign language context) has been traditionally done, that is, its aim is not to improve students' writing skills but to improve other skills like speaking, listening, and reading. It is also to improve students' mastery of such language aspects as grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics rather than writing itself. This way of teaching writing is generally called a traditional method whose result has been disappointing: students cannot write well (see, for example, Graves, 1983; Tans, 1999a/b/2012/2014).

To overcome the problem, writing theorists have tried to introduce three new approaches of teaching writing in the last five decades, that is, *process approach*, *model/genre approach*, and *contextual approach* (Tans, 1993). These three approaches are described below.

In the process approach of teaching writing, writing is seen as an individual process. That is, it is a writer's absolute responsibility to make sure that his/her writing runs well along the process of writing which goes through *pre-writing activities*, *writing activities*, *rewriting activities*, and *post-writing activities*, including publication. These activities are seen as individual activities (see, for example, Graves, 1975/1983).

Because of its individual nature, writing teachers who believe in this approach give their students total freedom to write on their own, that is, to choose their own topic to write on, to write and rewrite it as well as to publish it. Their students are also allowed to be free not only in writing any kind of writing they want to, namely, narration, argumentation, exposition, description, and/or creative writings (poems, short stories, even novel, and drama) but also in ways of writing it, that is, writing with or without an outline, branching and/or brainstorming.

Within the process approach philosophy, writing teachers just act as motivators and helpers. Yet, teachers may help their students when such help is needed in, for example, choosing a topic to write on, in writing, *rewriting*, and in publishing their writings. In other words, when such help is not needed by their students along the process of writing, the teachers may not help. This is based on writing-as-a-process theory, namely, writing is an individual process and others, therefore, would intervene when such intervention is needed by a (student) writer. If it is not needed, there is no need to do so.

The second approach is model/genre approach (see, for example, Kress, 1982/1986/1994). This

approach believes that writing teachers have to introduce first genres/models/kinds of writings they want to introduce to their students before asking the students to write in those genres/modles/kinds of writings themselves. This means that teachers have to introduce, for example, what a poem is or its characteristics before asking their students to write poems themselves. It is also the case for other kinds of writing like narration, description, and exposition; teachers should introduce first characteristics of those kinds of writings, particularly their generic structures, and give some examples before they ask their students to write those kinds of writing themselves. So, in writing those kinds of writing, the students may rely on what they know about them or they may immitate any peice of writing they have read to produce a piece of writing on certain genre hemselves.

Such examples may be obtained from their teachers or from their field trips in order to get some data and/or pictures on what they are going to write. In the light of this approach, it is, therefore, important for students to go, for example, to a beach themselves before they describe the beach in their writing. In writing about the beach or anything, that is, in describing it, teachers will help their students if and only if such help is needed. In other words, if the students do not need any help from their teachers in writing, teachers may not interfere/help.

The third approach is contexttual approach (see, for example, Tans, 1993). In this approach, teachers may apply both approaches, that is, genre and process approaches, in the their class based on the needs of the students. That is, for students who prefer process approach should be taught using the process approach; those who prefer model approach should be taught using the model/genre approach. In other words, for students who like to study first characteristics of certain piece of writing (e.g. a poetry) before they write in that model (e.g. poetry) should be taught first the characteristics of that peice of writing (e.g. poetry) before they write a poem themselves. That should also be done in writing other kinds of writing. On the other hand, for those who would like to start writing without being introduced to certain piece of writing should be allowed to write on any topic they are interested in. Along the process of writing, teachers may help when such help is needed.

Although the approaches are theoretically different, they are indeed similar in the following philosophies of writing (teaching and learning): 1) writing is taught and learned with the aim of making students' writing ability better – it is not just to improve other language skills or aspects; 2) writing teachers are active in helping their students along the process of writing when such help is needed in such stages of writing as finding a topic to write about, content

development, organization, structure, and mechanics as well as publishing; 3) writing teachers themselves are also active in writing in order to show their students that writing needs effort and that it is not a kind of work that can be finished in just one single effort as it indeed needs a series of hard efforts; and, 4) the end process of writing is publishing; people do not write just to put their writing in their desks; they write to make their writings/ideas go public by publishing them.

## METHOD

This research is included in the so-called descriptive-qualitative research, that is a research paradigm aiming at describing a phenomenon objectively (see, for example, Bogdan & Biklen, 2007: 69-76). In this research, the phenomenon to be investigated is the teaching and learning of writing in Indonesian in a primary school in the City of Kupang,<sup>1</sup> Indonesia.

In that sense, this study is a case study, that is, the teaching and learning of writing in Indonesian in the research school. Its aim is to know how writing is taught and learned in that school.

This research was done in a state elementary school from July to November 2017. The school was chosen for several reasons, one of which is that based on the criteria stated by the local office of the Education and Culture Ministry, the school is regarded as one of the best in the City of Kupang. In other words, it has been chosen because, among other things, it is one of the favorite primary schools in town. To get the data, some multimethods, namely, interviews (oral and written) with 15 teachers to know how they teach writing and 39 students to know how they learn to write, observations to know how writing in Indonesian is taught and learned in the school, and documentary studies i.e. from grade I to grade VI students' writings and their teachers' writings (Cf. Borg and Gall, 1989: 393). It turns out that there have been 28 pieces of students' writings that have been analyzed, namely, grade I 5 pieces of writing, grade 2 four pieces, grade 3 five pieces, grade IV five pieces, grade V four pieces, and Grade VI five pieces.

It is important to note here that Indonesian is a language that uses Latin alphabets. So, the students handwrote their writings using Latin letters and those students' handwritings were typed by the researchers as the students handwrote them, that is, the researchers simply copied their writings without any changes.

To make sure that the data collected through interviews, observations and documents, are correctly gathered, the researchers had written some field notes which were, in turn, regarded as data sources as well.

The interviews were in Indonesian, but they have been translated into English for this article.

The documents studied are analyzed focusing on writing contents (e.g. description, arguments, and narration), writing organization, word choice and sentence and paragraph structures, and writing mechanics. The researchers rely on education research theories by Borg and Gall (1989), content analysis theory by Odel (1977) and Ivancic (1995) in analyzing descriptively the data collected.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on its objectives, the results of this study are grouped into three major parts, that is, how writing in Indonesian is taught and learned, students' Indonesian writing competences based on the "methods" applied by Indonesian teachers in the research school, and what makes the teaching and learning of Indonesian writing better.

### How Indonesian Writing is Taught and Learned

Regardless of the curriculums adopted in the school, that is, School-Based Curriculum and 2013 Curriculum, it is found that the teaching and learning of Indonesian writing in the school is traditionally done (Cf. Tans, 2010). This means that the aim of the teaching of learning Indonesian writing in the school is not to improve students' writing competence in Indonesian, but to improve their competences in reading, listening, and speaking in Indonesian. As a teacher says on this issue:

Basic writing method is done by giving/writing some letters and simple words as examples and asking the students to imitate/copy and to bold what is written. I also utter a letter/word and my students write down what I have uttered. In addition, I ask them to write missing words of a written story and to write a poem. In lower grades, I usually train my students to write letters, use those letters to form words, and use those words to form sentences (IT-11, p. 11<sup>2</sup>).

Other teachers add, writing activities are usually done by asking their students to read a text and "rewrite it under my [a teacher's] supervision" (IT-10, p.10), by "showing them how to write capital/small letters and asking them to imitate what I [a teacher] write" (IT-14,

<sup>1</sup> The name of the school remains confidential for research ethical reason.

<sup>2</sup> IT-11, p.11 = Interview with the Eleventh Teacher, research data p. 11.

p. 14), and by teaching them how to write punctuations (IT-1, p.1)

Other teachers add the following insights: 1) I teach writing in Indonesian by asking my students to read a story and rewrite it under my supervision (IT-2, p. 2); 2) I ask my students to write a conclusion of a text they have read or to write down their answers to the questions related to the text they have read or to write down important things they learn from the story (IT-3, p. 3); 3) I ask my students to summarize a text they have read and write a simple conversation based on the text (IT-4, p. 4); 4) I ask my students to pay attention to each single letter that makes up a word or to each word that makes up a single sentence (IT-12, p. 12). In that sense, a teacher says that a good student writer is a student who can write complete letters that form a word and complete words that form a sentence (IT-10, p. 10). On the other hand, one who cannot write well is one who cannot write complete letters of a word and complete words of a sentence (IT-5, p. 5).

In addition, the following activities are also done: 1) training my students to correctly hold a pencil in writing and to sit properly; 2) training my students to move their hands appropriately in writing; 3) introducing letters by singing; 4) doing exercises on connecting some dots with certain letters; 5) training my students to bold certain letters; 6) training my students to spell certain syllables of certain words; 7) dictating (IT-6, p. 6) and 8) reading (IT-15, p. 15).

It seems that teaching writing in a traditional way like this is not a new phenomenon in the context of Indonesia. At junior and senior high school levels, in the teaching and learning of writing in English in particular, writing is taught and learned to improve students' listening, speaking and reading as well as their mastery of English structure and vocabulary, instead of writing itself (Tans, 2012/2014).

Based on the methods stated by the teachers above, Aruri<sup>3</sup>, a Grade I student, wrote the following Text 1 as the result of his listening to his teacher's dictation.

Text 1  
(By Aruri)

*Pulang Kerja ayah membawa 9 buah jeruk/After working, father gives us 9 oranges  
2 jeruk ayah berikan KePada KaKaK Lebih dulu/Father gave two oranges to the elder brother first  
Adik mendaPat 2 buah jeruk/The younger brother got 2 aranges  
sisa 5 buah jeruk Ayah berikan Pada ibu/Father gave the rest 5 oranges to mother.*

Text 1 shows that the aim of learning and/or teaching writing is to develop students' listening skills by listening to their teacher's utterances and imitate them by writing those utterances on a piece of paper. What they write is, of course, what they hear. What is written is, in turn, their real competence. In this sense, writing is not about constructing ideas into a piece of paper even when they are not able to write letters into words and words into sentences (see, for example, Graves, 1983).

Like Aruri, Yoate, Grade II, also wrote Text 2 below based on what he heard from his teacher.

Text 2  
(By Yoate)

*Edo suka olahraga sepak bola/Edo likes soccer sport.*

*satu tim sepak bola terdiri atas sebelas pemain/One soccer team consist of 11 players.*

*mereka saling bekerja sama/they play cooperatively.*

Since it is aimed at developing students' mastery of reading/recognizing/writing letters and words correctly, the teaching of Indonesian writing stops when the students are able to read/recognize, and write those letters/words. In other words, after helping their students to be able to read and write some letters/words, the teachers do not see it as their job to help their students produce a piece of writing based on their own construction of ideas. The students themselves also believe that reading, not writing, is their main job after knowing how to read. It is, therefore, understandable that they do not write any piece of writing when they are able to read. Some pieces of writings as the data for this research have been written because of the researchers' request and most of them have been the products of imitation/copy and paste rather than students' real piece of writing, that is, a piece of writing in which they construct their own ideas in their own piece of writing. The absence of a wall magaize in the school to publish students' writings and the absence of students' writings which are "published" on the walls of each class is another proof of that phenomenon, that is, writing in the school has been traditionally done; writing is not for publication (O-1, p. 1<sup>4</sup>).

How writing is taught as stated above affects how students learn to write in Indonesian. In an interview on 25 September, 2017, one teacher says that his students learn to write by, among other things: 1) immitating their teachers' utterances; 2) studying the letters/words introduced by their teachers; 3) writing down letters/twords uttered by their teachers; 4)

<sup>3</sup> Like the name of the research school, the names of the students mentioned in this article are not real names.

<sup>4</sup> O1, p. 1 = Observation 1, p. 1, on 25 September, 2017

labelling pictures; and, 5) free writing although it is rarely done.

The students in the school, however, have their own ideas on how they learn to write in general in Indonesian as they say:

- 1) *learning to write by writing a poem or a story (IS-1/26/27, pp. 1/26/27<sup>5</sup>);*
- 2) *learning actively so that their writing competence can be better (IS-2/17, pp. 2/17);*
- 3) *learning actively so they can write (IS-3/11/24, pp. 3/11/24);*
- 4) *concentrating well and using prefix and suffix correctly (IS-4, p. 4);*
- 5) *thinking well and accarately (IS-5, p. 5).*
- 6) *reading and studying the reading text carefully (IS-6/25/28, pp.6/25/28)*
- 7) *reading and writing diligently (IS-7/17/19/21, pp. 7/17/19/21);*
- 8) *reading our school books (IS-8, p. 8 );*
- 9) *using Indonesian well and correctly (IS-9, p. 9);*
- 10) *doing my homework, writing a summery, writing poems, and taking notes (WM10, hlm. 10);*
- 11) *learning to write continuously (IS-12/23/29, pp. 12/23/29;*
- 12) *learning to write short stories, reading a lot, and learning to master Indonesian and other foreign languages (IS-13, p. 13);*
- 13) *writing neatly in order to be easily read (IS-14, p. 14);*
- 14) *using Indonesian well, writing, showing my writing to others who can write well and correctly in Indonesian (IS-15, p. 15);*
- 15) *revising my writing to make it better and clearer (IS-16, p. 16);*
- 16) *learning harder including learning to use Indonesian better (IS-17/18, pp. 17/18);*
- 17) *using sentences and punctuations correctly (IS-30, p. 30);*
- 18) *spelling and using capital letters correctly (IS-31, p. 31);*
- 19) *using Indonesian well so that it can be easily understood and explaining clearly what is written (IS-32/33, pp. 32/33);*
- 20) *learning to write regularly (IS-27, p. 27).*

Those kinds of learning strategies in line with what their teachers did in teaching had helped the students to have the following kinds of competences: understanding letters and being able to use them in forming words and, in turn, using some words to construct some sentences and using some setences to some construct paragraphs and

some paragraphs a whole discourse as it had been seen in our research. This has been, of course, a part of their long journey to becoming great writers if their teachers and parents/siblings as well as any person interested in helping them become writers help them actively and appropriately day by day so they can be great writers later.

Despite the fact that process approach, genre/model approach, and contextual approach (see also, Tans 1993/1999b for the elaboration of these terms) were not appllied in the school as it applied what was called traditional way of teaching Indonesian writing, there was a difference among the teachers in treating good and poor student student writers (O1-O3, pp. 1-3): 12 teachers treated the students differently, yet three others treated them similarly.

For good student writers, the teachers usually did the following things: 1) encouraging and motivating their students to maintain their good performance/competence in writing (IT-2/14, pp. 2/14); 2) saying nice things to their students and giving them some rewards (IT-3/12, pp. 3/12); 3) putting those good student writers in different groups from those who are not; those who are good at writing are given more challenging/higher level tasks like dictating several words in a row, dictating one sentence or more and/or one paragraph (IT-9/11/12, pp. 9/11/12); 4) asking their students to help their friends who cannot write well (IT-15, p. 15).

For those who could not write well, the teachers did the following things: 1) individually guiding the students in such activities as writing neatly and holding a pencil properly (IT-2, p. 2); 2) guiding and training the students to write letters accurately (IT-13/14, PP.13-14); 3) motivating the students to study harder/do better and give them some rewards when they show some improvement so they can study on their own at home (IT-6, p. 6); 4) grouping them in a learning group which is different form those who are good at writing and then guiding them in writing letters into syllables into words into sentences untuil they can write well, that is, writing, two or more sentences correctly (IT-10, p. 10); 5) asking them to join an additional writing course for 20-30 minutes after school hours (IT-11, p. 11); 6) giving them more attention and having more intesive dialogues with them to know what their problems/weaknesses are in writing (IT-15, p. 15); and, 7) giving them more exercises in general, copying any piece of writing assigned to the students by their teachers (IT-8, p. 8).

### Students' Competence in Writing in Indonesian

It was found that writing in this research was viewed in two major perspectives. The first is writing which means students' ability to recognize/read/copy letters and use them to form and/or write syllables. It is

<sup>5</sup> IS-1/26/27, p. 26-27 = Interviews with students 1, 26, and 27, pp.1, 26, and 27.

also about using those syllables to form/write some words and then write those words to form some sentences that they copy from their teachers and/or from their reading texts. In this context, it is acknowledged that most students are able read and “write” fluently (IT-1-15, pp. 1-15; O-1, p.1).

The second is writing as means of constructing original ideas/meanings and write them down as a discourse, no matter how many words are used; it may mean a single letter/syllable/word/sentence or a complete discourse which is longer than a sentence. In this sense, the students at their level, particularly upper grade students, were also good at writing although some students, according to some teachers, were not good yet (IS-1-15, pp. 1-15; O-1, p.1).

Such a good competence in writing, according to one teacher, was the result of students’ strong willingness to succeed (IT-8, p.8) as he said, “students can write well because they have willingness to enrich their writing.” Another teacher added, “their writing is good because it is easily readable” (IT-4, pp.4).

The following Text 3, the first paragraph of a story by Jule, Grade VIC, entitled *Berlibur ke Rumah Nenek* (Having Holiday at My Grandmother’s Home), according to the researchers, was an example of the fact that the students were good at writing when they were given some opportunities to do so.

#### Text 3

*Berlibur Kerumah nenek/ Having Holiday at Grandmother’s House*  
(By Jule, Grade VIC)

*Pada hari libur aku dan keluarga ku /On holiday my family and I pergi kerumah nenek. Perjalanan sangat/went to grandmother’s house. The trip jauh tapi saya dan keluargaku tetap senang/is very long, but my family and I were still happy untuk pergi kesana. Sesampainya disana/to go there. After arriving there saya dan keluarga saya diajar untuk/my family and I were taught by my grandmother to membuat kerajinan tangan dari neneku/ make some handcrafts. Sala-satu kerajinan tangan yang dibuat/One of the handcrafts made by neneku adalah keranjang/my grandmother was basket.*

Although Text 3 is not perfect in itself it terms of its content, word choice, sentence/paragraph structure, organization, and its mechanics, yet it was classified as good for a piece of writing by a grade six student who rarely tried to write on her own on regular basis. At least Jule had tried to originally build up a story of her

own whose content, word choice/sentence/paragraph structure, organization, and mechanics were not only quite interesting, but also good/correct. This is why it is regarded as a good piece of writing.

This is also the case for Text 4 below, the first paragraph of a story by Granama, Grade VB, entitled *Berkemah di Sekolah* (Camping at School). Despite such mistakes as spelling (e.g. *tinggalah* which should be *tinggallah*, *L.1*, or *desa* which should be *Desa*, *L.2*), it is regarded as a good piece of writing as Granama was able to construct her ideas clearly in that piece of writing.

#### Text 4

*Berkemah di Sekolah/Camping at School*  
(By Granama, Grade VB)

Pada suatu hari, tinggalah seorang anak yang bernama Vanya  
[One day, there was a girl named Vanya].  
Dia tinggal di sebuah desa yang bernama desa Naimata  
[She lived in a village named Naimata].  
Selangung Pelajaran Ibu guru memberitahukan bahwa mereka akan  
[When they had their class, their female teacher told them that]  
berkemah di sekolah Vanya dan temanya sangat senang sekali  
[they would camp in their school Vanya and her firends were very happy].

Beside those relatively good pieces of writing, the students in the school also produced some pieces of writings which are not that really good. In this sense, a teacher says, “there are some students who cannot write well as their writings cannot be read well by other people” (IT-6, p. 6). This is also acknowledged by another teacher who said that “some students can write well, yet some cannot; there are some who can understand quickly, yet there are some others who are very slow to understand” (IT-7/14, p. 7 &14). “Some students,” another teacher adds, “find it quite difficult to write punctuations and capital letters” (IT-15, p. 15). This supports the fact that the teaching and learning of Indonesian writing in the school is traditionally done, that is, writing means producing correctly punctuation, capital letters, as the teacher says; it is not about devloping ideas, writing them down, and rewriting them before it is published.

### **Making the Teaching and Learning of Indonesian Writing Better**

Although some teachers say that what they done in teaching is good, so there is no need to make some changes in their teaching, yet most of the the teachers interviewed believe that they have to improve

their ways of teaching in general, in the teaching and learning of Indonesian writing in particular, in order to better their students' competences in general, in writing in Indonesian in particular (IT,1-15, pp. 1-15)

It is believed that such changes can be done based on the students' problems in learning to write in this context. So, the question is what the students' problems are in learning to write. Based on the observations and interviews the researchers have done and on the documents related to students' Indonesian writing competence, the students' problems are as follows. First, they have less opportunities to improve their writing competence because what they have learned is simply learning to memorize letters/syllables and learning to write/copy words their teachers want them to copy, i.e. traditional ways of teaching and learning to write (O1-3, pp. 1-3). This means that when writing is supposed to be taught within such approaches as process approach, genre approach, and contextual approach, with such activities as *prewriting activities*, *writing activities*, *rewriting activities*, and *publication* as well as active help from their teachers along their writing processes through individual and/or collective conferences to revise and or edit students' writings, the students in the school seem to have no activities as such in their efforts to learn to write and/or write to learn. In other words, their problem is that the teaching and learning processes of Indonesian writing in the school have not been properly done, in terms of theories and practices of learning to write and/or writing to learn. So, the students have rarely written any piece of writing because their teachers fail to motivate them to write regularly. This is shown by the fact that the researchers have just collected 28 pieces of writing by the students of the school when we did our research. What is surprising is that all of the writings were written because the researchers asked them to write. In other words, the school has no documents of its students' writings. In this sense, their problem in writing is not the fact that they have no potentials in writing; they have no real opportunities to actualize their writing potentials through real ways of writing for publication. (O, 1-3, pp. 1-3).

The second problem is related to their writing products. Although it has been stated that the students in the school can write well in general, they fail to grow well as Indonesian student writers. The researchers also have no proof to say that the students have developed well as student writers since there is no wall magazine or the Internet website in which the students publish their writings on. There is also no documentary portfolios showing students' writing development from time to time when they are in the school (O,1-O3, pp. 1-3).

In other words, the problem is that the students have not been intensively helped to improve their writings along

their journeys to becoming student writers. This, in turn, results in their writing products as stated above that can be enriched further (e.g. its content, word choice/sentence/paragraph structures, organization, and mechanics like spelling, punctuations, capitalizations, syllable splits, and spacing, yet they fail to do because they have not been supervised well (O,1-O3, pp. 1-3).

The third is that the teachers themselves do not write to publish or do not write themselves when their students write. In fact, teachers' writing with their students is important to show that writing is challenging, that is, even teachers need some great efforts to write well. Yet, despite such challenges, writing can be done.

The teachers believe that the teaching and learning of Indonesian writing in the school can be made better by overcoming the problems mentioned, that is: 1) in addition to the teaching and learning of writing letters/syllables/words/sentences by copying them, students should be given more opportunities, writing regularly, on daily basis, to write through such activities as *prewriting activities*, *writing activities*, *rewriting activities*, and *publication* as this will motivate them to write more right from grade I (IT,2, p. 2); 2) teachers should be more active in helping their students to improve their writing by intensively revising and editing them so that they are worth publishing in their school website or wall magazine for their level of competence; and, 3) the teachers themselves should also write for publishing with their students to show that writing needs effort and that even the teachers themselves struggle to write, yet they can do it (IT, 3-4, pp. 3-4).

In addition to those efforts, it is also important that the following things be done: 1) writing competition at school, district, regency, and provincial as well as national level should be done regularly to improve students' and teachers' writing (IT, 5, p. 5); 2) students' parents should be more active in helping their children to improve their writing competences by helping them in doing their homework, allowing their children to have extra course on writing/literacy, providing good reading books at home (IT, 8/11, pp. 8 & 11); 3) helping poor student writers regularly by giving them extra writing class to improve their writing competence (IT, 9, p. 9); 4) individually guide the students in writing to know what their strengths and weaknesses are in writing and help them accordingly (IT,12, p. 12).

To make sure that the teaching and learning of Indonesian writing can be made better, it is important that the teachers are well prepared. In that sense, it is urgent that the teachers do the following things: 1) joining more courses/trainings on the teaching and learning of writing for publication conducted by such institutions as universities and relevant institutions (IT, 1, p. 1); 2) doing further studies, masters level, on



language education in general, on the teaching and learning of writing in particular, to improve their understanding of the art of teaching and learning to write and writing to learn so that they can be more professional later on in teaching writing to their students (IT, 3, p. 3); teachers should have writing facilities that make it easier for them to write and to help their students in editing/revising their writings and, in turn, helping them to be better in writing (IT 4, p. 4); and, 4) teachers should also work hand in hand with publishers so that they can have access to publish their writings and their students' writings. Having publication of their own makes it easier to help their students as they can rely on their own writings as references (IT, 6, p. 6).

## CONSLUSIONS

In conclusion, it is important to state here that the teaching and learning of Indonesian writing in the school has been done not to improve students' writing competence, that is, to develop their ideas through writing, but to improve their reading, speaking and listening as well as other language aspects like word choice and sentence structure. Writing is simply taught in order to enable them to write letters, syllables, words, and sentences by copying what is said and/or written by their teachers. After knowing these letters, syllables, and words, they are supposed to be able to read Indonesian texts. It is what we call traditional way of teaching and learning Indonesian writing.

Although it is traditionally done, it is acknowledged that students' writings indicate that the students can write well as their writings are classified good. This indicates that the students in the research school have great potentials to be good writers. In that sense, if they are given more opportunities to write to develop their writing competence, that is, to construct their own ideas and publish their writings, such potentials can perhaps be actualized.

Such pieces of writings as their own writing results seem to be natural. That is, the students themselves write informally, unconsciously, to be good student writers. The methods used by the teachers in teaching are more or less the same, that is, For good student writers, teachers usually do the following things: 1) keep motivating the students to write better; 2) saying nice things to the students whose writing is good and rewarding them; 3) grouping students based on their writing competences; 4) relying on students to help each other.

For those who are poor writers, the teachers' methods are as follows: 1) individually guiding the students in such activities as writing neatly and holding a pencil; 2) guiding and training the students to write letters accurately; 3) motivating the students to study harder/do better and give them some rewards when they

show some improvement so they can study on their own at home; 4) grouping them in a group which is different from those who are good at writing and then guiding them in writing letters into syllables into words into sentences until they can write well, that is writing, two or more sentences correctly; 5) asking them to join an additional writing course for 20-30 minutes after school hours; 6) giving them more attention and having more intensive dialogues with them to know what their problems/weaknesses are in writing; and, 7) giving them more exercises in general, copying any piece of writing assigned to by their teachers.

Despite the fact that the students can write naturally, the teaching and learning of Indonesian writing in the school has the following problems: 1) they have less opportunities to improve their writing competence. This means that when writing is supposed to be taught within such approaches as process approach, genre approach, and contextual approach, with such activities as *prewriting activities*, *writing activities*, *rewriting activities*, and *publication* as well as active help from their teachers along their writing processes through individual and/or collective conferences to revise and or edit students' writings, the students in the school seem to have no activities as such in their efforts to learn to write and/or write to learn; 2) Although it has been stated that the students in the school can write well in general, they fail to grow well as Indonesian student writers. since there is no wall magazine or the Internet website in which the students publish their writings on. There is also no documentary portfolios showing students' writing development from time to time when they are in the school ; 3) The third is that the teachers themselves do not write to publish or do not write themselves when their students write

To make the teaching and learning better in the school, the problems should be solved first, that is, students be given more opportunities to write and publish their writings; it is also important that the teachers themselves try their best to write with their students and publish their writings.

In addition, it is a good idea that the teachers are encouraged to do their studies at higher level in order to improve their knowledge of theories and practices of the teaching and learning of writing.

In addition to those efforts, it is also important that the following things be done: 1) writing competence at all levels be done; 2) parents be more active to help their children improve their writing competences; 3) helping both poor and good student writers regularly and individually guide the students in writing to know what their strengths and weaknesses are in writing and help them accordingly; 4) joining more courses/trainings on the teaching and learning of writing for publication conducted by such institutions as universities and relevant institutions; 5) teachers

should have writing facilities that make it easier for them to write and to help their students in editing/revising their writings and, in turn, helping them to be better in writing; and, 6) teachers should also work hand in hand with publishers so that they can have access to publish their writings and their students' writings.

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