

DELVING INTO ENGLISH SCRIPTWRITING: FROM CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION TO CREATIVE PRODUCTION

Beni Wijaya
Politeknik Negeri Sriwijaya
beniwijaya@polsri.ac.id

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Abstract: Intended to delve into the film scripts written by English students of Politeknik Negeri Sriwijaya Palembang, twenty-three students of the Introduction to Scriptwriting course were divided into 5 groups to carry out this research. Using a qualitative approach, the scripts were collected as the instrument and then analyzed using the data analysis method proposed by Leavy (2022). The results show that thriller and mystery films are the chosen genres. While focusing on the hospitality industry, students chose housekeeping, front office, and food and beverage. There is more than one main character developed in the film's stories in many different settings such as hotels, cruises, businesses, and universities. The script lasts six to ten minutes depending on the total number of pages in the script. This study shows that the script can meet the short film standards for the hospitality industry.

Keywords: Scriptwriting; English Classroom Instruction; Short Film

INTRODUCTION

English writing courses are an essential platform for increasing student productivity and creativity in today's digitalized world. It plays an important role in expressing one's thoughts, ideas, opinions, and attitudes. The power of writing allows individuals to exchange ideas and feelings, as well as convince and influence others. Some people write for personal enjoyment or other reasons. In higher education, writing allows students to track their progress and receive feedback from their teachers. Additionally, teachers can monitor students and diagnose any problems that arise. The significance of writing in language learning is evident.

Ouahidi (2021) emphasizes that good writing skills are urgently needed in higher education as they are the basis of academic success in higher education. For this reason, undergraduate students in the English Department study writing skills over multiple consecutive semesters. Topics taught during the semester that students can study include writing genres, essay structure, writing techniques, and more. Ultimately, they need to comprehend the academic writing conventions technically. Nonetheless, prior to the end of their study, most students find that their writing standards are low. Therefore, it is imperative to prioritize the development of student's writing skills in higher education to balance their needs with those of teachers.

De Smedt (2023) argues that Students' writing performance is largely determined by their motivation to write, as per the majority of studies. This concept is generally accepted. In writing instruction, teachers offer students a selection of topics to write about, tools to use with their own and writing partners, and clear instructions and goals to follow when working on the task. This allows them to increase their independence and adopt structured and comprehensive teaching behaviors. Writing Tasks Create a writing community within your classroom where students can share their writing and discuss creative writing processes and products.

It is believed that creativity can aid in the acquisition of valuable foreign languages. In their research, Dianawati and Mulyono (2016) emphasized the practical use of written English as a means of communication and promoted students' creativity in tackling problems fostered in the social community. Hai-yan (2014) suggests that task-based methods are a useful tool for teaching English writing in large classes, as they enhance students' comprehension of tasks related to them. Nevertheless, some factors demand future attention, such as task-based education and the role of supervision and assessment by the teacher.

In Indonesia's vocational higher education, many polytechnics with English departments introduce students to the writing process required in industry, especially creative industries. As learners experience the influence of new media, television, and movies, they gradually become immersed in the visual world, which can also influence their learning. One might think that with today's advances in technology, students would enjoy the writing process, but studies conducted earlier have revealed a lack of motivation among students to write because of their poor writing skills. According to Musburger (2012), the absence of budget, time, or production process capabilities may prevent the creation of paper from being transformed into a finished medium. Presently, production transition issues and solutions are left to the writer/director, who does not have the necessary production knowledge or skills to implement that original idea within the production process. Knowing the production process and its requirements in terms of time, energy cost and other necessary components ensures that both the director and producer produce a finished product that closely matches the descriptions.

Cooper and Dancyger (2012) assert that long and short films heavily rely on visual action to convey meaning and portray character, as well as the inherent reality of film. However, the short film goes beyond these characteristics and adopts a simpler and potentially freer approach. Dougan (2019) describes that a script should include description, dialogue, scenes, page numbers, margin, font, and size settings. The process involves developing the story, creating

characters, writing scenes, and writing moving pictures. Below is the blueprint of scriptwriting based on Ballon (2014).



Figure 1. Blueprint of Scriptwriting

As a first step, a scriptwriter must have a summary of what they want to write. Next, several scenes are written in the form of an outline. The final step is how the audience will react to the finished script. This research focuses on the short film scripts written by the English for Hospitality Industry students of Politeknik Negeri Sriwijaya Palembang as their group work for the final project in the Introduction to Scriptwriting course of the academic year 2023. This study is consistent with several related previous studies. Putra, Suwandi, and Sumarwati (2023) revealed that a problem-based learning model can improve students' scriptwriting skills. It encourages students to participate actively, work together, and think critically while also engaging in learning. Dewi (2023) added that university students showed positive attitudes towards script writing and performance. Additionally, Karwandi et al. (2022) concluded that creative writing allowed students to script together and write more creative and innovative texts.

The notion of authorial integrity is rejected in collaborative scriptwriting, which also challenges the concept of an "authentic voice" that is a key component of creative writing education. The act of writing a screenplay undermines the idea that creativity is an inborn talent, personal or unique ability. Unlike the beginning of publication, creative writing commences before and finishes publication. Ahour and Mukundan (2009) showed that analytical rating scales in a classroom context had a positive impact on the diagnosis of weaknesses and strengths in students' writing. Alfaki (2015) posited that college students encounter obstacles in acquiring writing skills, as well as learning about spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

In addition, Anwar (2022) explained that students' writing performance can be improved by using collaborative learning strategies to share ideas. During collaborative writing learning, students can engage in discussions with others to gain insights and ideas while also providing assistance and suggestions during the writing process. Hekmati et al. (2018) conceded that, through artistic practice, students develop visual literacy skills and go beyond the given writing formats to discover their writing formats to bring texts such as films to life. Finally, El Khairat and Sariani (2018) confirmed that guided writing tasks helped students improve their

screenwriting skills, especially in grammar and organization of scriptwriting.

Recently, little research has been conducted on how writing class instructions in English foster students' creative production, especially through short films. Essays, paragraphs, and sentences were the primary focus of most of the research. According to Baker (2016), the lack of academic journals that publish screenwriting makes it hard to study screenwriters in higher education. The primary reason for this is the absence of scripts written in academic settings being deemed as legitimate research papers or creative works. It is still believed that a screenplay is not an independent creation, but rather something made into upcoming films or TV shows. Despite being produced, screenplays are now being published as creative research in various academic journals, with scripts being considered texts in their own right.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach that emphasizes content analysis. Leavy (2022) explains that a qualitative approach involves exploring the depth of meaning, people's subjective experiences, and their process of making meaning. Through this method, we can develop a strong understanding of the topic by comprehending the significance that people attach to their lives, such as activities, situations, circumstances, people, and objects. The methodological basis of this approach is inductive designs that seek to create meaning and produce descriptive and rich data. Purposeful sampling is commonly used in this approach to determine cases that are rich in information and which answer the most effectively to research questions and objectives.

In this research, five short film scripts from the English students of Politeknik Negeri Sriwijaya Palembang became the main instrument. 23 students were taking Introduction to Scriptwriting class and were divided into five groups to write a short film script (5-10 minutes in length) about the hospitality industry as the class's final product. It was their group project during the semester and had to be submitted before the final exam week. By using this project-based learning activity for one semester, they had many weeks to finish the script collaboratively in their groups from the first week until the last week under the supervision of the researcher. They needed to report the progress of the script while learning the guidelines in class every week. The script covered genre, theme, title, setting, characters, and conflict. Eventually, the researcher collected the final scripts in August 2023 as the pre-requisite for their final exam.

The data analysis stages were proposed by Leavy (2022) which consist of initial immersion, coding, categorizing, theming, and interpretation to delve into the scriptwriting

process.

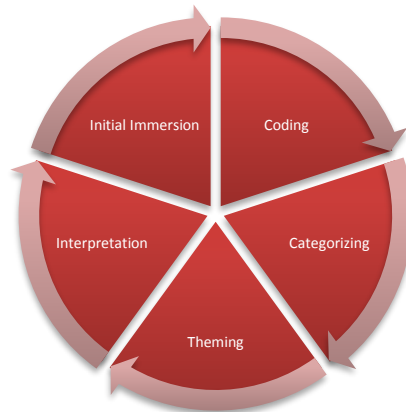


Figure 2. Stages of Qualitative Data Analysis

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The results of data analysis are focused on their way of developing the stories, creating the characters, writing the scenes, writing the moving pictures, and rewriting the film script.

Table 1. Story Development

Group	Genre	Topic	Title	Synopsis
1	Mystery	Housekeeping	Rest on Water	Lana is a housekeeper on a cruise ship. She is often being disrespected by her colleagues.....
2	Thriller	Housekeeping	Room Homicide	A housekeeper works like any other day, but one day she finds a pale woman hanging in front of the hotel's TV room.....
3	Thriller	Food and Beverage	The Spice	Wijaya University is an elite campus under the auspices of International Prisly which is well-known for its hospitality industry.....
4	Thriller	Front Office	The Simper	A girl named Grace has aspired to work in a hotel since she was a child.....
5	Mystery	Front Office	FouScale	Azuri Cosmetics, a beauty company, is currently at its peak.....

To develop the story, the class instruction began with determining the genre, topic in the hospitality industry, title, and synopsis of the film from March 2023 to April 2023. Most of the students loved thriller and mystery genres due to their experiences and the growing popularity of those movies today. Regarding the hospitality industry, they mostly chose housekeeping, front office, and food and beverage departments as the film focus. They were also able to find an interesting title that had not been used as a title of any single movie production. In their groups, the synopsis was written well by describing the lines, plot, and main characters. This finding confirms that collaborative learning helps students develop their ideas easily because they can exchange information and give suggestions to each other in writing the film script (Anwar, 2022).

It helps improve their writing process during the collaboration. De Smedt (2023) added that having writing motives in line with their field of study can positively influence writing achievement. Additionally, weekly guided writing assignments help students improve their scriptwriting skills, especially when it comes to organizing their screenplay writing (El Khairat & Sariyani, 2018).

Table 2. Creating Characters

Group	Character(s)	Total
1	Lana, Adrian, and Marella	3
2	Ivy, Addison, and Madelyn	3
3	Annisa, Sasongko, Belia, Tedy, Dera, Marchel, and Dea	7
4	Judas and Grace	2
5	Aleesha and Sagara	2

Furthermore, all the students were asked to focus on the synopsis to determine the main characters that fit with the film stories from April 2023 to May 2023. Apart from deciding the names, they needed to describe the roles of each so that they could match the film's genre, topic, and title for better character development. It was found that the characters consisted of two to seven for each film script. According to Cooper and Dancyger (2012), the short film essentially centers around the character, and complex characters are the mainstay of short films, rather than developing complex relationships between them.

Table 3. Writing the Scenes

Group	Conflict	Total Scenes
1	A body was found by Lana, one of the ship housekeepers	28
2	Addison is shocked to discover that she has put herself in grave danger by investigating the killer to help her sister	27
3	As Annisa and her group start a food and beverage project, the map starts to appear when all the students turn into zombies who are suspected of being contaminated by the food cooked that day	30
4	During their dinner date, Judas put sleeping pills in her drink. Grace faints and is locked up in the storeroom of The Ophelia Hotel and Judas unleashes his lust and violence to fulfill his desires.	24
5	Media reports about the disappearance of deer at the Zoo have been happening frequently in the past year	22

From May 2023 to June 2023, they had to decide the number of scenes in the film by focusing on the main conflict. The scenes range from 22 to 30. This resulted from several dialogues and conflicts in the film script to show the interaction among characters. Ballon (2014) argues that the conflict between the characters is central to the film's plot. Characters' internal conflicts and emotional connections are essential to a successful plot. The power of conflict is evident in every compelling story and character. Despite the absence of conflict, the characters have no drive or desire to succeed. Every written scene needs to have a connection, from the opening scene that sets up the problem to the climactic scene that ends the storyline.

Table 4. Writing the Moving Pictures

Group	Setting	Duration
1	Cruise	8 minutes
2	Grand Palm Hotel	8 minutes
3	Wijaya University	10 minutes
4	The Ophelia Hotel	6 minutes
5	Azuri Company	6 minutes

Writing moving pictures is an important element in attracting the film audience. By having the right duration that matches the settings, words, and messages, the film will leave a great impression. From June 2023 to July 2023, the students had to determine the precise settings to make the film alive like the award-winning films they watched in the class. Since the assigned short film related to the hospitality industry, most of the groups chose hotels, cruises, companies, and universities to be the selected spots. Dougan (2019) states the distinctive feature of films and television is the stories that are told on screen. A well-crafted film showcases a narrative through the use of visual elements. Time plays a role in the presented scenario. The length of the script must be equivalent to the length of the finished film, each script page is usually equivalent to one minute. By using the screenplay metaphor as a model for constructing movies, it becomes apparent that the only information written should be the ones presented to the viewer after each scene.

Table 5. Final Version of Short Film Script

Group	Script	Total Page
1	INT. CRUISE HALLWAY (10.00 a.m.) A brunette-haired girl with a beautiful smile is walking whilst pushing a trolley full of linens in the hallway to clean six cabin rooms in it.....	24
2	INT. GRAND PALM HOTEL - DAY Ivy, a housekeeper, is going about her day like any other until she discovers a pale woman hanging in front of the hotel's TV room. She is frozen in place, staring in horror at the sight before her.....	21
3	INT. ON CAMPUS – MORNING The students began to enter the campus area. A janitor is giving leftovers to the campus dogs.....	38
4	INT. OPHELIA HOTEL – DAY A girl named Grace has aspired to work in a hotel since she was a child.....	14
5	INT. LIVING ROOM – NIGHT Aleesha watching a cosmetic commercial on a TV. WALL CLOCK (showed 8 p.m.) TAKE HER PHONE.....	15

The last part of the classroom instruction was the final version of the film script. The students had to submit a well-written script based on the format required for creative production from July 2023 to August 2023. The script range is from 14 to 38 pages. Scripts are not written for film or television audiences. The audience's preference is for watching movies rather than reading text. To create a film or TV series, aspiring writers must read the script and use their insights to make it happen (Dougan, 2019). Thus it is urgent to have a perfect script before the film production.

CONCLUSION

With the rapid growth of creative media like films, English language teachers in the hospitality industry can partake in developing students' creativity in the field. Since there has been only a little research on script writing, the instruction of writing activities in English classrooms should not always be emphasized in academic writing such as essays, paragraphs, and sentences. By focusing on their field of study, the results show that the scripts were well-written based on their interests and experiences. The blueprint of scriptwriting reflected in the way the students developed the stories, created the characters, wrote the scenes, wrote the moving pictures, and rewrote the film script must be taken into account. These elements can advance their writing skills to meet the standards of the creative industry nowadays. Since this study analyzed the script content qualitatively, it is recommended that future researchers investigate the difficulties and language problems during script writing.

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