

WRITING FOR REAL PURPOSE: EXPLORING TAIWANESE CUISINE THROUGH COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT: *For the purpose of improving English major students' writing skill and having it employed in their daily life, students were asked to find out special food which was not yet exposed to the public and introduce it in written English. Based on the group project-based learning, forty six students formed into twelve groups from a technological university located in the center of Taiwan participated in this project. In the findings, it shows that students spent a lot of time looking for unassuming but delicious food and attempting to find out certain counterpart words of their special dishes in English. They became aware of specific traditional food and built even better friendship with one another. In conclusion, students not only learned English writing skills and might be able to make use of it in reality as being food writers; they also obtained the technique of building the sound interpersonal relationship.*

KEY WORDS: EFL Writing Skills, Taiwanese Cuisine, Food Writers, Collaborative Learning, Project-Based Learning, Teamwork Building.

INTRODUCTION

Rational of the Study

According to the statics of Tourism Bureau, there were nearly 9,900,000 visitors travelling to Taiwan in 2014. And, about 7,000,000 out of them were for tourism purpose. The growth rate of foreign visitors to Taiwan is speedily increasing annually. Owing to the growing tourism industry, the quantity of human resource is relatively in great demand. In addition to the only one university named the University of Hospitality and Tourism, many colleges in Taiwan either set relevant departments, such as Travel Industry Management, Tourism Recreation Management, and Food and Beverage Management, or change its original name of the department from Foreign Languages to Tourism English, or add tourism issue as one of the department's objectives to cultivate more students to possess required knowledge and skills about the tourism industry. The tourism industry covers a wide range of areas, such as hotels and restaurants management and sightseeing tour. In particular, Taiwanese cuisine is the one that is well-known internationally. Taiwanese people are fond of having various kinds of food

and many Chinese sayings can conform to their eating culture. For example, the sayings of 「甲飯皇帝大」 and 「皇帝不差餓兵」 reveal how important Taiwanese people concern about eating. The former saying literally means that having meal is as important as being an emperor and the latter the emperor will not ask the hungry soldiers to run errands for him. What is more, Cable News Network (CNN) voted 2015 the top ten worldwide delicacies locations and Taiwan earned the first place. The food issue is of great worth and inspired the teacher/researcher to implement a further research project.

In this study, a group of English major students from a technological university located in the center of Taiwan were designated to conduct group projects on exploring specific Taiwanese food. It is one of the goals in the English program that attempts to foster students to become tourist guides. It also matches the objectives set by the university where the students in this study registered. By means of mainly imparting practical instruction supplementary with research purpose, the university aims at educating students to pursue practical application skills in school so that it can meet the industry's needs and smoothly get employment when students graduate from the college. The purpose of this study attempts to improve students' English writing skills and help students better realize local Taiwanese food they used to have but not notice in their daily life. By means of doing research about specific food and introducing its specialty in English written language, hopefully, they will become competent food writers or tour guides on Taiwanese food introduction.

For the purpose of helping English major students integrate their writing skills to the real purpose, in this study, it mainly examines both students' English writing skills and what extent they realize the local traditional food by checking their group reports written in English. It attempts to reach the goals of making writing as parts of daily life, being familiar with the typical Taiwanese food and being competent Taiwanese gourmet guides, and learning team work building skills.

The Significance of the Study

Eating out is one common life style for Taiwanese people and many restaurants attempt to provide various delicacies to satisfy their customers. Although many famous foods always attract the public attention, there are still more delicious foods quietly hiding in the neighborhood. Although many Taiwanese cuisines have been introduced by media, such as TV, magazines, and on the Internet, less was focused on discussing the unassuming, delicious and inexpensive food. It is one of the purposes to carry out this project by digging out the unknown but fine foods which are neglected by people.

In the process of conducting the research projects on specific food, students not only can build

and reinforce their content knowledge on specific food, for instance, the name of the ingredients, the cooking way, the food description skills, and the food tastes, they also strengthen their English writing skills by means of composing the written reports. In addition, they may become more aware of the traditional Taiwanese food which they did not notice before and be capable of introducing the special food to foreign visitors.

Most importantly, through the physical experience of conducting the project, students obtain the skills of composing reports about food and have their writing tasks put into real practice. The unassuming tasty food illustrated in their reports will become well-known as well.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Of the different language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), many studies claimed that writing is the most challenging for English learners and is more difficult than other three skills (Cumming, 2013; Dixon & Nessel, 1983; Snow & Uccelli, 2009). According to the news report (Chinatimes 2014), English writing is also the most weakness among college students in Taiwan. Therefore, many scholars and educators have devoted to exploring effective pedagogies to improve students' writing capacity. For example, Ikpeze (2009) observed a class that the instructor infused technology into the literature lessons by adding an online literature discussion. The discussion format proved to be an empowering activity that enabled students to take control of their learning. The online discussion created a learning place where students could read and write. Chen (2013) investigated how a English writing class can be integrated into a class involving English for specific purpose. 68 participants from two different sources, English and non-English programs, conducted projects collaboratively based on their majors and interests. It indicates that connecting English and non-English programs is a way to help both parties develop their specific disciplinary knowledge and English competency when the subject topics are popular and more general to the public. By means of writing reports about events occurred on campus and in their everyday lives, in Chen's study (2014), it also revealed that students not only could develop their writing competency creatively and authentically, they also learned problem-solving skills with their team members.

According to the Committee on Science (2007), the high school experience does not provide enough authentic problem-solving and project-based activities for students to be prepared mentally for the types of problems they will have to solve in the real world, or at their place of employment (Cited from Dixon, 2012). Similar situation also appears in Taiwan that some entrepreneurs indicated (Liberty Times Net, 2009) that they would not hire college graduates because what they had learned from college was not what the enterprise real needs. Likewise,

Kormos, Kontra and Cso'lle (2002) investigated the language wants of English majors in Hungary. The results suggest that students use English mainly for academic purposes during their university studies. The most important functions for English majors in their future occupation seem to be expressing their opinion, reading texts on the Internet, conversing with non-native speakers, writing e-mail messages, and translating oral and written English in a variety of occupations. The findings concerning the needs of English majors in Hungary might also be relevant for other countries with a similar educational system. Paul and Liu's (2013) also conducted a study which presented an English needs analysis of process integration engineers (PIEs) at a leading semiconductor manufacturing company. Results show that engineers face numerous English communicative events similar to other Asia-Pacific nations. They appealed that ESP instructors and course designers should endeavor to include authentic training in specific areas. Similarly, Bremner (2010) argues the need for business communication textbooks to narrow the gap between the classroom and the workplace, and discusses ways in which more authentic collaborative activities can be set up in the classroom. In addition to integrating genuine activities, Wozniak (2010) emphasized the importance of language needs analysis while being concerning about the ESP course design. In the study, it gave a detailed account of an analysis carried out at the French National Skiing and Mountaineering School to assess the language needs of French mountain guides. It concluded that mountain guiding is a constantly evolving occupation, and some guides think that the main issue today is no longer about improving technical but communication skills. Reacting to Wozniak' findings, Wu (2012) pointed out that college business English course should mainly focus on enhancing learners' business English listening and speaking.

Many studies(Coskun, 2009; Luka, 2009; Laborda, 2010; Bohemia and Ghassan, 2011; Bohemia and Davison, 2012; Huang, 2012) examine the effects of integrating the coursework to reality and result in positive performance. For example, in the study of helping students to improve their ESP competence, Luka (2009) indicated that while students were developing a skill to use a language in different socio-cultural contexts; at the same time the educator is learning from the students acquiring knowledge in a specific professional field. The same situation also reflected on Chen's study (2013) that, "the teacher/researcher could gain specific knowledge which she might not have opportunities to get involved before and after by means of face-to-face conference and final oral presentation supplemented by reading the texts composed by English program students"(104). Furthermore, a number of studies were conducted by means of employing the technical devices and had satisfactory results. For instance, Laborda (2010) conducted a study at a polytechnic university used WebQuests with sophomore students of Travel and Tourism. Its findings suggest that WebQuests are well accepted by students and benefits for professional development and language achievement.

Sevilla-Pavón, Serra-Cámara, and Gimeno-Sanz (2012) explored a project, "Digital Storytelling for Aerospace Engineering" for ESP carried out at a university in Spain. The overall results were very positive, as students were highly satisfied with their progress in learning and developing different skills, such as linguistic, writing, organization, digital, presentation, interpersonal, problem-solving and critical-thinking skills.

It is the age of mobility, traditional teaching style that the teacher gives lectures and students sit and take notes are not enough to 'fill up' students' intellectual curiosity. Both the teacher and students may need to integrate real life subject matters to classroom learning. For example, Lytovchenko (2009) employed task-based teaching and linked pair and group work with relevant activities to make language lessons more interactive, thus increasing student engagement and comprehension. And, Huang (2012) developed an ESP course of art and design with picture books and to explore how picture books could be implemented to meet design majors' learning needs. The findings confirm that it is applicable to use picture books in ESP course of design when two critical points, comprehensible stories and extending activities, were included in terms of teaching materials and teaching process. Based on project-based learning, Chen (2015) investigated students' comprehension on subject course and indicated that students had learned some English for specific purposes and became aware of the new knowledge which might be helpful for their future career. In this study, students would work in pairs or groups to conduct their projects on Taiwanese food exploration; hopefully, they not only could improve their English writing competency, they also might acquire specialized terminology and the ability to demonstrate their experiences in their future potential careers. The research questions addressed are:

1. What writing performance will students reveal in their written report?
2. What extent will they become aware of their traditional Taiwanese food?
3. What will they learn by conducting the project and what difficulties will they encounter?

METHODOLOGY

Settings and Participants

The research site was located in the center of Taiwan. 46 English major junior students participated in this study while they were taking required course, entitled English Writing, offered by the English program. The course was offered four continuous semesters in the English program and it was the last semester for participants to take when the study was

implemented. Indeed, all participants were in the same class since they entered the program and they had known each other and worked together on designated projects many times.

The study was conducted by the group project basis and students were freely to form their group by themselves. The numbers of group members originally were limited from 3 to 5 members. However, one group had an unhappy cooperative experience in their prior group project and had their task failed. In this, they had no choice but reduced their group members from four to two persons and two of them were excluded from this research project. Therefore, the numbers of participants became 46 instead of 48 members. There were 12 groups set in total.

In addition to discussing their project in the classroom, dormitory, and home, they spent a lot of time on searching for the special food. They were asked to research two different dishes offered by two different eating places. Therefore, they had to visit at least two places to hunt for food. Once they targeted the specific food, they not only had to eat it, they also needed to know what it was about so that they could introduce it via the written reports and video demonstration. For that reason, the research site had contained the classroom, school library, eating places, and home.

The Clear Instruction Note

A month before starting the project, the instructor uploaded a clear instruction note on the e-platform which was established by the college and verbally explained to the participants how to conduct the project in detail. Participants could access to the Internet to read it whenever they forgot the requirements for their projects. In the note, it mainly covered four points: 2 Nos, the required items of the written report, due date, and the format of the report. The topic for the group project was, What can we do with coins to 'fill up' our stomach?. They were asked that the price range of the food they selected needed to be from NT\$30~80 dollars. 2 Nos indicated: 1) they were restricted to do the research about the famous food which had been introduced on the Internet, magazines, or TV, and 2) food given by each group was not allowed to be repetitive. Thus, there were twenty four different dishes presented in the guidelines.

Although participants had taken the writing class for nearly four semesters, the instructor still emphasized on the format of the essay and the contents of the reports so that participants could have directions to follow. The contents of the reports included the name of the eating places, the name of the food, its cooking way, its taste, and the reasons of the recommendation. In addition, in the note, it also reminded participants of making power point (PPT) slides and videos.

Instruments

Before and after conducting their group project, participants were given pre and post survey questionnaires to give feedback. Also, the teacher/researcher would provide feedback based on submitted written reports and answered participants' questions.

Pre survey

Prior to conducting the project, five open ended questions were asked to realize students' perspectives of conducting the project about food, help students predict how they would conduct their project, and what kinds of difficulties they might encounter in the process of implementing the project. In addition, one question was to confirm if students had understood how to conduct the project after listening to the teacher/researcher's instructions. The questions included:

1. What do you think about this project of searching for special food?
2. Did the instructor give you clear instructions about how to do this project?
3. Is it helpful for you to better know the specific food by doing the research?
4. How will you conduct this project?
5. What difficulties do you think you may have?

Most students gave positive responses for the first three questions. That is, they indicated, "it is a very good idea to conduct this project because we can have good food while doing the assignment and realize what kinds of food are people's favorite.", "we can learn how to describe food in English and it is happy to work with our group members.", and "we can explore special food by ourselves instead of having it via the word of mouth." They all agreed that the instructor gave a clear instruction about how to conduct the project except one student. He indicated that he could not understand what it was about and thought that doing the group project about Taiwanese food introduction was not related to the goal of the course that students could earn the English writing skills. In this, another student also complained that the project was irrelevant to English writing. The instructor told them that they could pretend to be a guide to introduce Taiwanese food to the foreign visitors as the purpose of conducting the project. The student claimed that it should be Tourism instead of Applied English program's assignment. At this point, this student was confused and might not know that in the Applied English program, one goal is to train students to be tour guides, and another goal is to train them as being children's English teachers. Although almost all students indicated that they received clear instructions before starting their project, they still made mistakes in their submitted

written reports. That is, nine groups did not follow the requested format to write their papers. And, one group submitted their report in Chinese version. Under the instructor's feedback, they revised and resubmitted them again. The reason for the fifth question intends to help students learn to predict the potential problems and difficulties occurred on their project so that they might avoid encountering the problems in advance or learn the problem solving skills. Main difficulties proposed frequently were to find unfamed but special and delicious food and make videos. Other difficulties might be to compose English written reports, schedule mutual meeting time, and travel to the eating places.

Post survey

In the post survey, nine questions were categorized into three aspects that were about writing skills performance, familiarity of Taiwanese food, and difficulties encountering and team work effects. The questions are illustrated below.

1. Do you think you know better about how to introduce food to foreign friends in written and oral languages after conducting this project?
2. How do you like the writing class conducted? By ☐the teacher's lecturing, or ☐putting the writing into real practice. And why?
3. Do you better know the specific food you researched? Please describe how well you know it.
4. Do you think you can be a good guide to introduce Taiwanese food to foreigners in English after conducting this project?
5. Do you think you know better about how to introduce food to foreign friends in written languages after conducting this project?
6. What difficulties did you have while conducting the project? Please list them in detail. And, how did you deal with those problems?
7. What have you learned after completing this project?
8. Did you have a good time with your group members in the process of conducting this project?
9. Which do you like better? ☐group or ☐individual project.

After completing their project, twelve participants indicated in their feedback that they did not make progress on introducing Taiwanese food in both written and oral language; however, thirty four participants indicated that they became aware of doing it When they were asked how

they liked the writing class conducted, by the teacher's lecturing or putting the writing into real practice, participants were split into two even groups, twenty two for the former, twenty two the latter, and two for both. The repetitive reasons are quoted in the following.

"It's easier to understand via the teacher's instruction."

"It's up to the instructor's attitudes to the lecturing. The instructor needs to be enthusiastic to bring students to the writing world."

"Writing is hard and boring. It's important that the teacher should be active and positive so that he/she can affect students to be interested in learning."

"I like teacher's lecturing because I don't need to use my mind but sit there to listen."

The reasons for being fond of putting the writing into real practice are:

"It becomes more genuine to write real things."

"More writing more fluency."

"It's boring to sit and listen to teacher's talk."

"It's good to have writing become part of my life."

"We may not totally comprehend teacher's lecturing. However, by practicing, it can give us impressive learning experiences."

Regard to the familiarity of Taiwanese food, surprisingly, participants could well describe how the food was cooked, what it better went with, how it tasted, and what its special history was. For example, one group indicated the features of the beef noodles they researched were that, "beef noodles are special at its soup, beef quality, and the noodles." They were like gourmets who specialize in appreciating fine foods.

Although they became more familiar with Taiwanese food, only thirty participants were competent to be good guides to introduce food to foreigners in English. It seems that being food writers may be a little bit easier than being tour guides based on the statistics revealed on their feedback. Despite the less confidence in being competent food guides, one student said, "Although it is really difficult to introduce our food in English, I would like to try so that I can promote our delicacies to the world."

Although participants had predicted difficulties they might have before physically conducting the project, many unexpected situations occurred. Thankfully, they resolved all problems and

achieved their projects. The difficulties were quoted as follows.

“It was so hot while we were having the food because there were no air conditioners in the eating place. We could not do anything but kept swiping the sweat from our face.”

“We found it was very hard to describe our feelings with the expressions usually used in our daily life. We tried to use other ways to present what we had.”

“It was really hard to do delicacies in English because many dishes were from tradition and hard to find its counterpart terms in English.”

“It was very embarrassing to make the video in the public because it was so crowded and many people were watching me. At any rate, we still need courage to complete our video at the end.”

While participants were asked about what they had learned from the writing task, it can be concluded with four categories: specific English terms for food, delicious food hiding on unassuming streets, technical skills learning, and team work building. They also indicated that being the food host on TV was not an easy job. They said, “They not only have to hold their hunger to realize the specific food in the TV program, they also have to describe how it tastes to the audience.” Some feedback expressions were quoted in the following:

“I have learned how to collect and organize data and put them into an article.”

“I’ve not only learned English terms about food, I also become aware of our delicacies culture.

One student wrote affective feedback quoted as, “After completing this assignment, I found that many delicacies for ordinary people usually hide in unnoticed areas. We may take delicious food as treasure hunting and wander around on the narrow streets. If we are lucky enough, we may find out economic and tasty food to enjoy. In addition, I learned how to use the computer software to edit my report and how to add video to PPT files. Those skills are rarely used in our life. So, it’s great to learn them beforehand.” Another student indicated, “I learned how to describe the Taiwanese food, make the video, and ppt slides. It is a really important skill to us.”

It shows that what they had learned is more than what they had complained about the heavy workload. Moreover and incredibly, they all indicated that they had a good time with their group members in the feedback. They emphasized that they have learned the team work technique so that everybody knew their individual duty and would achieve their goal in time. Some quotes are listed in the following.

“It’s so happy to work with group members together. We went hunting for special food, tasted it, discussed and wrote the reports together.”

“Different from the previous unhappy collaboration, it’s the first time for us to conduct so satisfactory and successful group projects. We had a wonderful time to do it.”

“We seldom eat together. However, by means of conducting this project, we have a chance to eat and work together to build our fellowship.”

“Our fellowship becomes stronger than before after conducting this project.”

Interestingly, although they had a good time to conduct the group project with their team members, nine out of forty six students still preferred conducting projects alone. The main reason was that they were freer at their own time schedule.

Written reports

There were 12 written reports completed. Each report introduced two different dishes so there were 24 dishes altogether. Based on the requirements set in the instruction note, participants had to organize their data and put them into words as an article. In the article, in addition to filling out specific items, students also needed to attach relevant pictures. Before submitting their reports, they gave their project an appropriate title which was demonstrated below. Two of them, entitled ‘Taiwanese cuisine’, copied from the instructor’s and one, entitled ‘Group project’, seems no any creativity. People cannot figure it out by reading its title. At this point, certain students did not grab the importance of the title naming for an article.

- Taiwanese foods
- Traditional foods in Taiwan
- Taiwanese cuisine
- The delicious food with low-price
- Taiwanese delicacy
- The cuisine in market
- Stinky tofu & corner breakfast
- Ancient taste in the alley
- A special food trip
- Taiwan snacks
- Taiwanese cuisine
- Group project

Video Making

A week after submitting the written report, each group had to submit a two minute video which they had to orally introduce their special food in English. At this point, they were like a host on TV to tell the audience their discovery. Video making was also the hardest part for them to conduct. Amazingly, students knew how to resolve their problems and accomplish their required video assignment.

Procedures of This Study

It was the last semester for participants to take the English Writing class. In order to have their writing task accomplished for a real purpose, when the semester was halfway through, they were asked to step outside the classroom to search for special Taiwanese local food and conduct a group project to introduce it. Before starting doing it, the instructor asked students to form their own groups and clearly explained to them how to conduct the project. After that, the instruction note was uploaded to the e-platform so that students could read it by themselves and students were asked to do a pre survey questionnaire. Participants had four weeks to carry out their group project which included work items discussing and sharing, data collecting, written report composing, PPT slides and video making. Each group needed to provide a two minute video to introduce two dishes they discovered. After completing their project, they needed to upload all assignments to the e-platform which included written reports, PPT slides, and video files. And, the instructor would display each project one after another on the computer monitor for the class to enjoy their peer groups' works. Finally, they were asked to do an open-ended post survey questionnaire which included one item of self and peer assessment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students spent a lot of time on searching for their special food and doing the research on it. They were not allowed to select the food reported on the Internet or any media. As a matter of fact, it was one of the hardest tasks for students to carry out their assignment under this strict rule. More and more people are getting used to posting their meals on the web via their smartphones when they were having food at a restaurant. And, many owners of eating places encourage their customers to do it to extend their high profile. Therefore, students repeatedly complained that it was difficult for them to find the food which never appeared on the Internet. Another rule was that the price of the food should be limited to low range from NT\$30~80. The key feature of the selected food should be palatable and affordable. Thus, it seemed that it

was a kind of mission impossible. Instead of visiting famous or fancy eating places, students went to unassuming small shops or sidewalk food stalls to taste food. Usually, the places they went were introduced by their family, friends, or stop by. They not only needed to order the food to eat in person, they also had to realize how it was cooked. Therefore, before they went to the targeted place, they had to prepare questions for their projects in advance and needed to find out the answers, such as the history of the shop, the specific food story, and the cooking way.

The purpose of this study attempts to improve EFL learners' English writing skills and inspire them to be competent food guides through exploring and introducing specific Taiwanese food. Based on the research questions proposed, four aspects will discuss in this section.

Writing Skills Performance

According to the written reports, students' writing performance can be disclosed as follows,

Less creative titles

When participants had started taking the writing class a year ago before conducting this project, the instructor kept emphasizing on the importance of naming the title because it was the first step to attract readers' attention. However, many students still got confused to tell the difference between the title and the topic of the essay. The instructor told the students the topic of the project was about Taiwanese cuisine and explained to them how to do it. Although the contents of the reports were related to specific Taiwanese food, they were all different types of dishes. However, titles given for the reports were similar. In addition to one, entitled 'Stinky tofu & corner breakfast', others are hard to guess what they are. And, another, 'Ancient taste in the alley', may imagine how old the history of the food is and where it is. Titles for others, such as 'Taiwanese cuisine,' 'Taiwanese foods,' 'Taiwanese delicacy,' 'Taiwan snacks,' and 'Group project,' may be sounded common and lack for creativity.

Problematic format

In addition to giving impressive title, another important factor for an essay writing is to follow the regulated format. Although all students agreed that the instructor had given clear instructions on how to compose the written report and uploaded the instruction note on the e-platform, nine out of twelve reports did not follow the required format. The problematic format included: no indentation at the beginning of a paragraph, incorrect fonts, missing subheadings, different row spacing, and skipping required sections. It seems that students had ignored the handy instruction note uploaded on the e-platform and did not take the formal writing into serious consideration. Those problematic reports were rejected and had to be revised and

resubmitted again.

The length of the article

There was no strict word count request but the report needed to cover all the items indicated in the instruction note which included the name of the eating place, its address/location, the way of the food served and the price range, the description of the special dish, the recommendation, and photos with caption. Most reports were given very clear description about their food adventure. Their papers displayed clear and systematic description with many pages. It indicated that they were capable of composing readable articles. In contrast, two reports were kind of short and given vague description. Although they had covered all the required items, their writing style was like Q & A. They gave brief answers to respond the requested items.

Content words usage

In the post survey questionnaire, one difficulty students indicated was that some traditional food had no counterpart English names. However, they also claimed that they had learned many contents words related to food after they looked up them in the dictionary. They not only had learned some content words for their project, they also attempted to describe what it was and how it tasted in their reports. Some quoted examples are in the following.

“The squids are chopping into big pieces. It also has shoots, celery and carrot slices in it.”

“The goose is tender. This dish is light flavored like home cooking.”

“The dishes have some carrot, potato, pork, rice and come with soup. Its taste won’t be salty and sweet.”

“It is placed in the plastic bag so you can eat it directly with hands.”

“I recommend arctium lappa chicken soup. A lot of people think arctium lappa is bitter, but this soup can tastes arctium lappa’s sweet not bitter.”

It was the last semester for participants to take the English Writing class in college. Accumulating previous three semesters’ writing experiences, many students were able to compose legible writing papers. Students need to be reminded that they should pay more attention to have their writing demonstrated creativity. It is the age of emphasizing on image packaging, the title of writing papers is the first sight for the readers to catch. Thus, they may need to spend more time thinking of attractive title for their writing works. In addition, students need to be advised to avoid making careless mistakes. Students may expect their instructor to

give them feedback and revise their papers. So, they do not pay more attention on the format composing which they have already known. The group project was put more weight on contents than the grammar accuracy. Thus, students could freely develop their writing skills. Fewer groups completed short reports. They indicated that they were lack of writing skills so that they were not able to compose longer ones. However, they made an amazing description on their food. It was, 'when you taste in the moment, you will feel like in heaven but during you swallow it, the tofu smells like hell.' Apparently, they could do the writing and were able to transfer their imaginary description to written form. Furthermore, about 50 % of students indicated in their post survey feedback that it was not easy to compose the writing project because they were not familiar with many terms related to specific food and a lot of data collected from the field needed to be organized and analyzed. However, they accomplished their project in time. It reveals that students are competent to keep polishing their writing skills.

The Knowledge on Traditional Taiwanese Food

Students spent a lot of time on collecting the data. In order to taste the special food provided by a remote eating place, some groups would ask their friends to give them a ride. Or, they would ride their scooters together to look for the food they liked. All students had positive comments on the food they selected and indicated that they would bring their friends and family to visit the shop again. They indicated in their post survey that they had fun when they were having the food. They said that it was interesting to do their assignment by eating. Two groups visited the same eating places more than once so that they could collect entire data. They not only tasted the food in person, they also interviewed the owners and learned the story about the food. For example, one student said, "I do not know this special dish came from the south of Taiwan originally. Now, people can have it in the whole island." Another student noted, "The stinky *tofu* is smelly; however, when it goes with another dish, it can reduce its extra fat." They sounded like gourmet who can give specific food objective comments. They became more respectful to the traditional food after they knew its story. Although they were familiar with the food after researching it, not all of the students but 65% of them believed that they could become competent tour guides to introduce Taiwanese food to foreigners. They had no confidence on their English ability. After having oral training for two years in the conversation class, some students still doubted they could make conversation about their familiar food with foreigners independently. How to help students build confidence on English competency is worth further exploring.

Team Work Building

It is the technological age and many things including various kinds of foods mostly have been

posted on the Internet. Being in the e-generation, students are getting used to surfing on the web to look for the answers. It was not easy for students to find unexposed but delicious food provided by unfamed eating places. In this study, it also appeared the scene in the classroom that group members would discuss about their potential favorite food. After that, some of them would access to the Internet and others would swipe their smartphones. They intended to confirm that the food they selected had not been posted on the web. Certainly, while they were busy with examining the food, they kept complaining to the instructor that the food they liked was there on the web already. In addition to collaboratively working on their project in the classroom, they would go to visit different eating places to taste the food. Many students indicated in their post survey questionnaire that they felt grateful to work with their peers together. They found that their peers were very nice and helpful and would compromise the different time schedule to complete the field work together. Members from one group claimed that they had been good friends for years but their friendship became even stronger after conducting this project. It was also the unexpected point the teacher/researcher earned. Although students experienced different kinds of difficulties on each work item, they finally achieved the designated project collaboratively. The most valuable experience was that those difficulties helped them achieve their success, build strong team work, and reinforce their interpersonal relationship. In this, a slogan is suitable under this situation; that is, 'together, everyone achieves more'.

Pedagogical Implication

Based on the responses of the survey questionnaire and written reports, two points can provide teachers an insight into students' learning behaviors.

Confidence Building

Students are encouraged to develop their creativity on their academic work. Being the facilitator and bellwether, the instructor is obligated to become more creative as well. In this study, the favorite pedagogic implementation in the writing class was almost even on two selections: the teacher's lecturing and putting the writing into real practice. So, it is worth integrating classroom learning into field work exploring. The two original purposes of conducting this project were to improve students' English writing skills and inspire them to become tour guides or food writers to introduce Taiwanese food. Many students mentioned that this project was similar to the TV program. They enjoyed having delicious food but some of them (35%) thought that they had no competency to introduce the food orally to foreigners in English. In addition, around one third of students denied their competency because they thought that they were lack of the required ability. Theoretically, being English major students, one

commitment they need to possess is to have fluent English skills. When designing the projects for students to conduct, the factor of confidence building may need to be included. In addition to giving students clear and understandable instructions, the instructor may need to provide different level students more opportunities to present their works in progress. Hopefully, students can build their confidence gradually.

Group project conducting

While students were conducting their food project, they encountered many problems, such as finding the mutual time schedule, searching special food and eating places, and video making. They indicated that it was really hard to look for the 'hidden' delicacies because nothing could avoid exposing on the Internet, especially the delicious food. The way of resolution was that they visited narrow alleys together by scooters. They thought that humble places might not get attention so the food provided there would be unexposed yet. Their strategy of exploring the narrow alleys was successful. They were pleased to note in the post survey that they never noticed that there was so much delicious and inexpensive food really hidden in the alleys. Therefore, conducting group project can help students earn strong problem solving skills. Correspond to Dixon's (2012) claim that it is important to teach students problem-solving skills. In this, they can improve their ability to transfer knowledge, concepts, and skills learned in school to real-life contexts. Furthermore, they also established good friendship. Before conducting this project, students usually went back to their living places or implemented their part-time job after class. They seldom stayed together to work on school assignments or hung out with one another. In order to complete the project, they had tried a lot of different food and selected the one they liked the most. The food price was affordable so they would take the food travel for lunch or dinner. The longer they stayed together, the better they knew each other. Quoted from a student's feedback, "It's the first time for us, group members, to complete the project so peacefully and smoothly. Maybe because we all love the food and have the same taste." Conducting group projects can help students grow and strengthen team work relationship. Although all students indicated they got along well with their group members, nine out of forty six still preferred conducting the project alone. Since they had good relationship with their group members, conducting group project is still one doable technique in the writing class.

CONCLUSION

Many foreign tourists like to visit Taiwan to enjoy its beautiful scenery and sample delicious food. According to the statistics made by the search engine Skyscanner of Go Travel Net, more

Englishmen than Chinese would like to visit Taiwan. Chinese tourists usually take the greatest majority to travel in Taiwan annually. The report intends to point out that tourists not limited from Asian countries but more and more from European countries are drawing their attention to this small island as well. To taste the delicious food is one purpose for foreign visitors to travel around the world. In this study, all participants majored in English and were taking their final English Writing course. They were asked to conduct a group project about Taiwanese food so that they could integrate the writing task into genuine practice. Although they took the familiar food as their project subject, it was not easy for them to describe it in English. They indicated that names of the food and its ingredients might not be found in the dictionary. Also, it was hard to compose the feelings of the taste in their reports. In this, many students indicated that the job for the food host on the TV program was tough. By means of conducting the project, students had discovered the cultural differences when they found no appropriate English words could exactly describe their food. They also showed their understanding for the hardship of jobs behind the screen. Although they encountered difficulties in writing, they finally accomplished their composition. Moreover, in the process of hunting for the food, they usually went to visit different eating places, tried different food, and gave comments and made decision together. In this, they stayed more time with their peers, had more interaction, and knew one another well. It was a brand new experience for them and made them feel delightful. Students appreciated their partners' cooperation and indicated that they had built team work. In the post survey feedback, all participants reflected their satisfaction with the group collaboration. Although they completed their designated assignments, some students (about 30%) did not think that they were capable to introduce Taiwanese food to foreign visitors in English.

Project-based learning may be time consuming and difficult to complete, but students will benefit from it in the long run. Most importantly, the instructor needs to play the role of supporter and consultant to give students encouragement and immediate assistance. In this study, students were glad when the instructor announced that their written reports would be complied into a food guideline after being edited.

Suggestions for Further Research

Based on the reports about Taiwanese food, the teacher/researcher can conduct a survey and ask Taiwanese and international students in Taiwan to evaluate those delicious and inexpensive dishes and do a research about it.

For English major students, writing task needs to become real purpose and become part of their life. Indeed, writing task can be employed in many areas, such as tourism, cross-cultural communication, and exhibition. With this accomplished works, it can be extended to cross-

cultural cuisine exploring. Instructors who are interested in conducting this kind of research project can cooperate with another college from other countries to do deeper food research.

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