In or Out of a Classroom? An Ecological Understanding of Foreign Language Creative Writing

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The present study examined the extent to which poetry writing from an ecological perspective based on nested ecosystems model can create an expressive and creative English language learning environment. Six intermediate level students with average age of 13 and 14 were recruited voluntary and participated in this study. Data were collected via photovoice, interview, and students' poetry. The data were qualitatively analyzed based on the ecology human development nested ecosystem model, and the emergence of learners' creativity was categorized first at the level of microsystem. Second, at the level of mesosystem, photovoice was used to analyze students' activity. This study showed that poetry writing in two nested ecosystem could create an expressive and creative English learning which provide the students with extended learning environment. These two diverse ecosystem levels brought different critical creativity and self-expression. The findings contributed as the evidence of the ecological understanding of the pattern and variables involved in poetry writing as a platform for learning and writing creatively.

Keywords: creative writing, ecological approach, nested ecosystem model, poetry writing

Penelitian ini menguji sejauh mana penulisan puisi dari perspektif ekologi didasarkan pada nested ecosystems model *yang dapat menciptakan lingkungan belajar bahasa Inggris yang ekspresif dan kreatif. Enam siswa tingkat menengah dengan usia rata-rata*

13 dan 14 berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Data dikumpulkan melalui photovoice, wawancara serta puisi peserta didik. Data dianalisis berdasarkan analisis konten kualitatif mengacu pada model nested ecosystem the ecology human development. Kemunculan kreatifitas peserta didik dikategorikan menjadi dua diantaranya pada tingkat microsystem dan pada tingkat mesosystem dan untuk menganalisis aktivitas peserta didik digunakan photovoice SHOWeD. *Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa menulis puisi pada dua* nested ecosystem level *menciptakan pembelajaran bahasa Inggris yang ekspresif dan kreatif serta menyediakan tambahan lingkungan belajar untuk peserta didik. Dua level ekosistem ini membawa perbedaan pada kreativitas yang kritis dan ekspresi diri setiap siswa. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap pemahaman tentang pola dan variabel ekologis yang terlibat dalam penulisan puisi sebagai tempat untuk belajar dan menulis secara kreatif.*

INTRODUCTION

During the last ten years, creative writing studies have grown and developed internationally to such an extent that it has become recognized as a major subfield of English language teaching (Mayers, 2016). The students have the opportunity to use English for expressing their own feeling, opinions, and stories as lived experience. But in Asia, Widodo (2015) found that most of the English language teaching emphasize to the acquisition of lexical and grammatical knowledge of English in which students are exposed to practice based language activities. English teachers focus on present grammatical rules and check whether students construct the sentences correctly and appropriately without connecting these grammatical tasks to students' lived experiences (Widodo, Budi, & Wijayanti, 2016).

Maley (2012) emphasizes creative writing as an aesthetically motivated, highly disciplined and a personal activity that deals with imaginative representation of emotions, thought, events, characters, experiences, and feeling that encourages the students for playing creatively with the language. Poetry writing as a genre of creative writing, involving both affection and intention, integrates with the personal history and future action that communicates thought, perceptions, affection, and experiences in playful creativity (Hanauer, 2012). Once students explore poetic language, they will gain useful ideas of creative writing. Thus, writing poetry can be potential stimulation for students' linguistics creativity.

Poetry writing as expressive and creative pedagogy has been encouraged in the language classroom, in particular. For example, Maley (2016) investigated a shared writing through poetry for 16-year old students that never wrote poetry, and the study showed that students could develop their confidence in poetry writing. In addition, Widodo, Budi, and Wijayanti (2016) found that the students in junior high school were engaged in blended learning poetry writing as creative and expressive learning to write creatively in language classroom. In U.S classroom, Chung and Miller (2016) showed that to face the increasing of linguistic and cultural diversity, poetry writing as teaching method provides a meaningful way of teaching English. In this poetry writing tasks, students may express their own voices, develop their own perspective, construct their knowledge, exchange reflective critical thoughts on identities and culture through a poetry. For this reason, this could be one of the potential ways to hone students' creativity acquisition device (CAD) because poem is viewed as creative work which symbolized literary values such as narrative as lived experience, imagination as cognitive realization, and the use of language as social semiotic (Widodo, Budi, & Wijayanti,

2016). Thus, in crafting poetry, students are engaged with what they think and imagine as well as to deploy the language to articulate their feeling, ideas, stories and lived experience.

Language learning does not always take a place in the classroom as a physical site of learning, but it can also occur through out of classroom (Cabot, 2016). This couple of platform might enable to extend opportunities for language learning. The differences between places may bring the different factor of language learning. In addition, Kashbi and Shivan (2017) found the individual interaction inside and outside classroom (Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development, 1979), and also environmental factors can affect the students' level of anxiety differently. This ecology system is viewed as a platform to imply pedagogical practices.

There are four systems in the nested ecosystem model such as microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. The inner layer setting is called microsystem of which the language classroom, where individual and contextual factors cooperate to make developments take place (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The mesosystem is regarding with the developing person dealing with the situations outside of the language classroom covering school environment. It could be described as a net of microsystem. Related to this ecological perspective, language is viewed as patterns of patterns and systems of systems (Capra, 1996). Therefore, in exploring learners' writing creatively, we explore the unpredictable patterns of creativity within a Bronfenbrenner's nested ecosystem model.

Figure 1. Nested Ecosystem Model (derived from Bronfenbrenner, 1979)
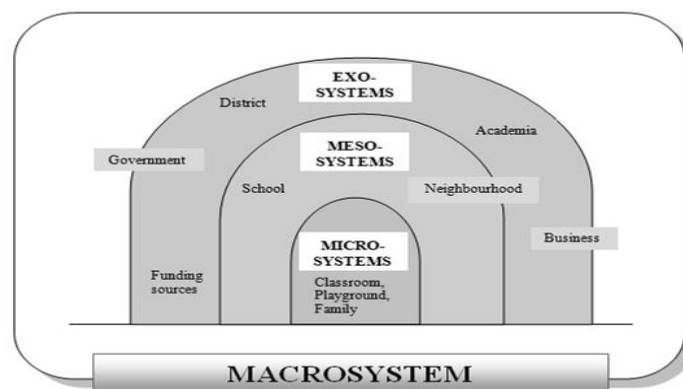
The emergence of creativity in poetry writing is also emphasized because learning happens when simple elements are gathered together (Van Lier, 2004). In the case of the classroom ecology, the components are not only the agents, that is, the teacher and the students (and all of their accompanying thoughts, embodied actions, emotions, behaviors, dispositions, identities, social capital, etc.), but they also include properties of the physical and temporal environment as well. For instance, the configuration of the desks, the size of the room, its orientation, its temperature, the time of the day/week/year at which the lesson is conducted, all potentially influence in teaching and learning (Larsen- Freeman, 2016). Then, Language learning in different nested ecosystems is unconsciously significant because the existences of integrated individual, linguistics and environmental factors, interactions between these

involved factors play the role in shaping situation (Cao, 2011). Therefore, the students can share their experiences and write poetry without handcuffs and space constraints.

This current research investigated how poetry as creative writing genre could be a catalyst for expressive and meaningful language learning from an ecological understanding (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) nested ecosystems model. Afterwards, in exploring learner's creative writing, the aim of this study is to explore the unpredictable patterns, factors, and variables of learner's writing creatively within two nested interaction of ecosystems including microsystem and mesosystem. Many questions exist on the rare discussed about poetry writing in or out of classroom by using ecological understanding. The current research is formulated the question: how poetry writing in two nested ecosystems could create an expressive and creative English learning?

METHODS

Framed in a qualitative approach, the present study aimed to examine naturally occurring phenomena situated in the classroom (Kusumaningputri & Widodo, 2018). A classroom observation design was applied for this research because the researchers attempt to observe students' behaviors, language, social processes and the ecosystem factors that bring about learning to write creatively from the point of view of nested ecosystems theories including microsystem and mesosystem in the creative writing class. "This research design, classroom research tries to look at classroom phenomena (e.g., teacher's talks, students' talks, teacher-student interactions, seating arrangements and classroom activity) without providing any pedagogical treatments in the classroom" (Widodo, 2013, p. 16). Thus, classroom based study helps explained this phenomenon.

The participants of this research were EFL students at the junior high school located in West Java, Indonesia. The researchers observed a group of the class that was interested and serious in poetry writing activity as the primary selection of the participants' criterion. In addition, a group was a mixture of EFL students with regard to their writing ability level; they were two male students and four female students with the average age of 13 to 14 years old. Most of them were bilingual (e.g., Bahasa Indonesia and Sundanese). They came from families with different socio-economic backgrounds (e.g., teachers, entrepreneurs, government employees, casual workers). The students had learned English since they were in the elementary school. The recruitment of the students followed the school's ethical clearance. Before conducting the research, the participants were asked to fill out the consent form verifying that they participated in this research, and their participation was voluntary. We also informed the participants that any information on the observation data would be kept confidential.

Table 1. Participants' profile

Participants' name	Student details	General characteristics
P1F (participant 1 female)	Gender : female Age : 14 years old	Serious in learning English, highly creative, and smart
P2M (participant 2 male)	Gender : male Age : 14 years old	One of the smart students in the class.

P3F (participant 3 female)	Gender : female Age : 13 years old	Serious about learning, very creative but not really good in writing
P4F (participant 4 female)	Gender : female Age : 13 years old	Likes learning English, quite creative but good enough in writing
P5M (participant 5 male)	Gender : male Age : 13 years old	Not really good in English, easily distracted, good enough in writing
P6F (participant 6 female)	Gender : female Age : 13 years old	Put much effort in English, creative, low in writing.

During 80 minutes English creative writing class, all students went through three steps writing activities: pre-writing, while-writing, and post-writing (Widodo, 2013). In the pre-writing phase, the students decided the theme of the poem and brainstorm the theme based on three keys of poetry writing; they were (1) what they see (2) what they thought and (3) what they feel. They joined in a group of six students and worked with their peers to create a poem. Next, in the while writing stage the students discussed and wrote a poem together. Then, in the post-writing stage, the students reworked and revised their poem based on their peers' feedback in a group.

The English creative writing class was observed in two meetings. Every meeting the students moved from inside to outside of the classroom, and the movement of this environment was needed to know the ecosystem factors that brought about learning to write creatively in two nested ecosystems models. The first meeting was conducted inside a classroom (microsystem) and the second meeting was held in school environment (mesosystem). As the observers, the researchers told the students that every activity they did would be documented and analyzed.

Table 2. Participants' writing activities

Week	Place	Poem Theme
1	At microsystem level	What's in a head? (a young girl's head, an old woman's head, a mother's head, a father's head, a baby's head, a cat's head, the head of someone who is about to have an operation, the head of someone who has broken heart, etc.)
2	At mesosystem level	A school equipment that I would like to get rid of (e.g. my old shoes, the school uniform that doesn't fit me anymore, the bag I got as a present but which I don't like, my messy class, etc.).

Video recording was taken in two sessions of creative writing class which run for 80 minutes in one session. Creative writing class is recorded by using camera in every session. It looks towards a group, so whole the situation in microsystem and mesosystem could be captured. For display their activity while writing the poetry, two moments was captured and put it into photos. By using these photos the participants analyze their activities while writing poetry in two different places. These photos were analyzed by framing stories in terms of SHOWeD questions (Wang, Yi, Tao & Carvano, 1998). SHOWeD is an acronym that consists of six questions there are what is Seen here?, what is really Happening?, how does this relates

to Our lives?, why are things this way?, how could this image educate people?, what can I Do about it? These six questions are purposed to reflect the participants' experience while writing poem in two different places.

The poems that the students have made in microsystem and mesosystem were analyzed to know the poem's creativity in every system. To assess the creativity of their poem the rubric of creativity adapted by Brookhart (2013) was used. It comprised a set of criteria that describe level of performance quality of four levels of creativity ranging from very creative, creative, ordinary/routine and imitative. The rubric assesses creativity in five areas; variety of ideas, variety of sources, novelty of idea combination, and novelty of communication.

Interview was carried out immediately after creative writing class in order to know each participant's insider view regarding their creativity and provide evidence to clarify what was observed in the microsystem and mesosystem. All participants were interviewed together and audio-recorded. The interview was conducted in *Bahasa,* then it was transcribed and translated. This interview was provided fifteen open-ended questions about their experiences while writing poem in two nested ecosystems. The data sorted and labeled were analyzed using qualitatively content analyzed based on (Bronfenbrenner, The ecology human development, 1979). The first parts of the data analysis included reading, coding and revising. The reading process was started by careful reading of the data in order to identify the themes. Every word, sentence or paragraph is coded as one instance of integrative meaning. The categorization of the data and theme is based on Bronfenbrenner's (1993) ecosystem model. The microsystem and mesosystem were the main focus of this study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
At Microsystem Level
At microsystem level or inside the classroom, the students wrote a poem with title A students' thought. Writing inside a classroom is a common activity for the students; most of the English language learning is held in the classroom. For this reason, the students were brought for learning in order to write creatively in two different ecosystems including microsystem (inside a classroom) and mesosystem (outside a classroom). We encouraged them to think and write creatively, particularly in poetry writing as one of the creative writing genres. Truthfully, it was a new experience for junior high school students. Joining in a creative class made the students capable to write a poem so as to express their feeling, thought, and imagination. The students reported that they had the opportunity to work together and help each other while they were discussing in poetry writing task as depicted in figure 2.

Figure 2. Poetry writing discussion inside the classroom

(This photograph is published with permission of all the signed parties.)

Figure 2 showed that the students looked serious while discussing poetry writing task in the classroom. They also learned to be more receptive to criticism and suggestion from other members of their group because all of the students had their own roles in this task. P1F wrote poem on a book, while P3F helped her to combine word by word to become a sublime sentence. Then, P2M and P5M helped to write and to think about appropriate words. Finally, P4F and P6F found the meaning and translated the words into English. This is fitted in the following students' photovoice:

Figure 3. Students' photovoice

| H — "What is really HAPPENING?" (The unseen "story" behind the photo) | Translated:
(December, 4th 2017)

H-"what is really Happening?" (the unseen "story" behind the photo)
We are discussing poetry writing in a classroom
P1F is writing poem on a book, P3F is helping her to combine word by word being a beautiful sentence. Then, P2M and P5M are helping to write and to think about an appropriate word and P4F and P6F are finding meaning and translate it into English.
In second photo
P2f is giving opinion about poetry that we make |

This evidence also indicated that each of the group members could contribute to the group. More importantly, this poetry writing activity provided the students with meaningful English learning experience and allowed them to share and to discuss of ideas and problem. While the students were crafting a poem inside the classroom, the classroom ecology factors appeared in this creative writing lesson, as shown in the following the students' photovoice:

Figure 4– Students' photovoice

| W — "WHY are things this way?"

D — "What can I DO about it?" (What WILL I or WE do about it?) | Translated:
(December 4th 2017)

W-"Why are things this ways?)
Writing poetry inside a classroom we feel that the place is narrow, uncomfortable because our movement is restricted

D-"what can I do about it?" (What will I or we do about it?)
Writing inside the classroom make us feel so hot, bored, and little bit hard to imagine for create some beautiful words.
After writing poem together we have desirability for writing own poetry. |

The findings revealed that the ecosystem factors in microsystem made the students find the learning obstacle to grow up their imagination and to generate their ideas in poetry writing task, in particular. As Larsen- Freeman (2016) asserted that in the case components of classroom ecology are not just agent and their emotion but properties of the physical and temporal environment is included. The ill-conditioned classroom atmosphere might be contribution to stimulate the students' ideas because the ideas will be developed on enjoyable condition. From the provided data, the narrow condition brought a weary situation, and it was impacted to the production of an artistic work. It was in line with Maley (2016) in which teachers need to create favorable conditions for make creativity. Although they gave negative response to learning inside the classroom, learning inside a classroom is very common activity for them with the aim to make them focus on solving and finishing the task. As shown in the following student interview:

"P1F: Inside of the classroom I can focus but out of the classroom is much more ideas."

This excerpt showed that poetry writing in a classroom made them focus on doing a task because all the teaching learning process mostly is held inside the classroom. Furthermore, to know the ecosystem factor bringing the students' creatively in poetry writing, here is the students' poem in
microsystem:

Figure 5. Students' poem
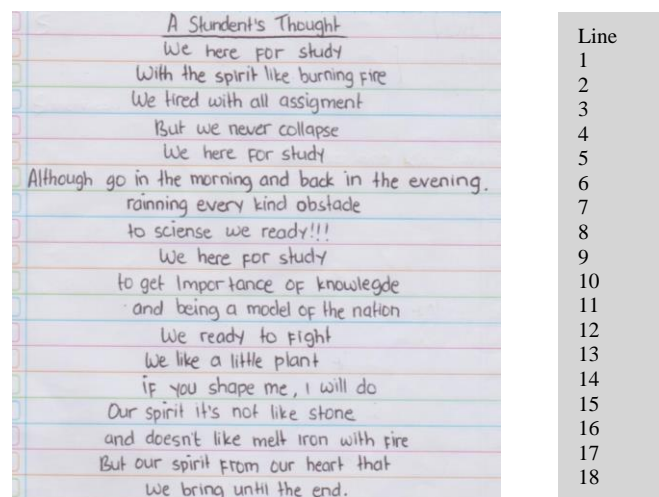
The rubric of creativity was used to assess the poem creativity (Brookhart, 2013), ranging from very creative, creative, ordinary and imitative. After assessed this poem (figure 5), it can be represented as creative. This rubric assesses creativity in four areas; the first are depth and quality of ideas. The students represented important concepts from different contexts which can be seen by: *We ready to fight*

Here they tried to express new and unfamiliar context in the original theme's poem. In line 12 the students did not really want to fight with their enemy, but they were ready to face

all the school lessons. The second is variety of sources, this component assesses the extent to which created poem draws on a variety of sources, including student's personal experience. This poem was inspired by their personal experience, so the voices came from their point of view as a learner. The third is analyzed by organization and combination of ideas; the ideas of a poem are combined in original ways to express something new. See line 17 and 18

But our spirit form our heart that we bring until the end

They used *our spirit from our heart* it means that the students gathered each member's idea in this poem, and it is combined to address the issue of solving school challenge by their spirit. The fourth is originality of contribution whether the students have expressed something interesting or surprising at this poem. These elements of poetry included words, rhyme, pattern and figurative language that were used contribute significantly to convey meaning of the poem.

The classroom ecology gave them opportunity to do this poetry writing project because a classroom is the primary platform to do the pedagogical practice allowing students crafting their creative work such as a poem. This finding indicated that a classroom was still being their ecosystem to learn English expressively. Considering the ecological factors that bring about learning to write creatively, based on the current findings, the role of classroom environment is important at the microsystem level. Kasbi and Shivan (2017) found that the classroom atmosphere influencing learners' mood or emotion should be attractive. The unpredictable pattern happened inside creative writing class, utilizing Bronfenbrenner's ecosystems framework, the interconnection between classroom and other settings showed that students' past experiences while learning English inside the classroom make them give negative cogitation because the task become achievable and there's an element of challenge, but looking at their poem we found that the students used the words *study*, *assignment*, *science*, and *knowledge* it is implied that classroom ecology factors potentially influential as sources for their written work because they are displayed class components as poetic words in a poem. Overall the students were competent to write a dazzling poem inside the classroom.

At Mesosystem Level
Mesosystem is described as a net of microsystem. It is dealing with the situation outside of the language classroom. In this research, the teacher brought the students to write a poem in school environment. It was essential keeping the students on the enjoyable way while they were writing a poem. In this creative writing class, we tried to break the boundaries of taking the students to write expressively outside the classroom. This expanded space can build a new style and perception for both teachers and students that it might be necessary in teaching learning English which is not isolated inside the classroom. Figure 6 showed while the students writing poetry outside the classroom:

Figure 6 - Poetry writing discussion outside the classroom

Figure 6 implied that the students were more vivid, more enjoyable, more comfortable writing in mesosystem level than in microsystem. It can be seen by the picture all of the students have fun during discussion out of the classroom. This space gave them diverse experience and opportunities to compose a creative work. This also indicated that mesosystem environment supported them getting so much inspiration as depicted in figure 7.

Figure 7 – Students' photovoice

D — "What can I DO about it?" (What WILL I or WE do about it?)

Menulis di luar kelas Membuat kita Merasa nyaman, Senang dan banyak insPirasi yang kita Peroleh di tam. lagi temPatnya membuat kita bebas bergerak tidak sePerti di dalam kelas yang membuat kita kurang nyaman dengan keadaan terSebut. kami Sebagai Siswa Menginginkan belajar di luar kela aPaPun Mata Pelajarannya.

Translated:
December 4th 2017

D-"what can I do about it?" (What will I or we do about it?)
Writing outside the classroom makes us feel so comfortable, happy and so much inspiration that we get in addition a place makes us free to move is not like inside the classroom make us uncomfortable with the condition.
We as the students want to study outside the classroom whatever the lesson.

Figure 7 portrayed they were interested in doing the task outside the classroom, and they gave suggestion for another lesson to take them for learning outside the classroom. The positive judgments came from the students when they were writing outside the classroom as shown in following interview:

What successes did you achieve when writing poetry in two different places? In the classroom and out of the classroom (school environment)? Which one do you prefer?
  P1F   :   *Inside of the classroom I can focus but out of the classroom is much more ideas.*
  P5M   :   *I prefer to write outside because be the one with nature*
  Observer :   *how about P6F? It's a new think?*
  P6F   :   *Yes*
  P3F   :   *I prefer to write out of the classroom my mind is being free, It has a lot of idea.*
  P4F   :   *I prefer to outside I can focus, but in the classroom other group is disturb me.*
  P1M   :   *Inside the classroom is bored*

All of the students voiced the importance of learning outside the classroom as a platform for expressive poetry writing, so most of them prefer to choose learning outside the classroom. They felt so free and got so much idea while they were in meso-level environment. It can be acknowledged that for getting creative ideas some physical environment and nature can be articulated as creative sources. A below figure 8 is a students' poem that is composed in mesosystem level:

Figure 8 – Students' poem

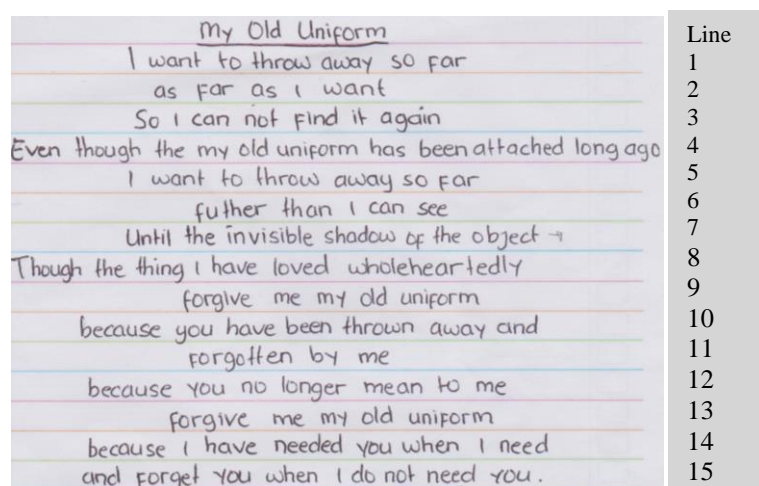|	Line
My Old Uniform	
I want to throw away so far	1
as far as I want	2
So I can not find it again	3
Even though the my old uniform has been attached long ago	4
I want to throw away so far	5
futher than I can see	6
Until the invisible shadow of the object	7
Though the thing I have loved wholeheartedly	8
forgive me my old uniform	9
because you have been thrown away and	10
forgotten by me	11
because you no longer mean to me	12
forgive me my old uniform	13
because i have needed you when i need	14
and forget you when i do not need you.	15

Figure 8 – Students' poem

Grading creativity is not easy because creativity is the exceptional use of "familiar mental operations such as remembering, understanding, and recognizing" (Perkins, 1981, P. 274). If we can name the sorts of things that creative students do, we can teach creativity and assess it. The poems were assessed by using the rubric for creativity adapted from Brookhart (2013); and this poem can be represented as creative. First, from the criteria of depth and quality of ideas this poem is included to creative because the students have incorporated ideas to express unfamiliar theme. Second, variety of sources was labeled as very creative. We can see in these lines:

Until the invisible shadow of the object
Though the thing I have loved wholeheartedly

In the middle of the poem the writers created a wide ranging variety of sources. When we read these lines, the readers may think and guess that the writers talk about something alive or something which is really valuable. They may not think that the thing is uniform because we found a poetic language *I have loved wholeheartedly*. Third, organization and combination of ideas were assessed as creative which were the ideas combined in original ways to express how they hate something old, useless and invaluable. Fourth, the originality was defined as creative because this product was interesting, making an original contribution, and addressing hatred feeling as seen in line *because you no longer mean to me*.

This mesosystem poem is simple, but it is full of emotions and unpredictable pattern about the thing that they loved and hated. In the previous poem they brought school setting in

poetic word, but different from this poem, obviously there was not classroom setting ideas appeared. It was seen by whole words of the poem that there is no academic words. Although the topic is *my old uniform,* it does not mean real a student uniform. They illustrated something invaluable with *my old uniform.*

Two poems from microsystem and mesosystem stayed in creative level. The words in microsystems poem were majority using academic word such as *study, assignment, science, and knowledge.* It was given evidences that the school setting build the students conceptualization to apply school component in their poem. In revising stage of the research, we found that there were not academic words in the mesosystem poem, and the content illustrated the students vividly more express their ideas, feeling and thought in the form of a poem than microsystem poem. This brought the student to come out the class and helped them to elicit their creativity.

Overall the students gave a positive judgment about learning in mesosystem level because writing outside the classroom entailed a significant effect on their creativity in poetry writing task. Mesosystem environment supported the students to generate the ideas and fire their imagination. Mesosystem is formed or extended whenever the developing person moves into a new setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), in which this new setting gives them diverse sensation in learning because they never learnt English outside the classroom. This space gave the students fresh impetus for empowering learning experience. Thus, learning in mesosystem level can be a new platform in a language pedagogy.

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the poetry writing project in two different nested ecosystems, there are some success stories and challenges. The first success is that the students were engaged in making sense of poems collaboratively and using English as a tool to communicate their creative thoughts through poem writing. The second success is learning in mesosytem level provided the students with extended engagement on learning English without any space constraints. Despite these successes, there are three main challenges in two different nested ecosystems. The students found that it was not easy to translate sentences into English. Furthermore, stringing the poetic words to be lovable sentences was the hardest work for them. Another challenge is deciding main idea. In a fact writing in microsystem level made them difficult to emerge an idea and imagination.

The present research has reported on how poetry writing in two nested ecosystems could create an expressive and creative English learning which provide students with extended learning environment. Regarding this purpose, using Bronfenbrenner (1979) micro and meso-system model, these two diverse ecosystem levels brought different critical creativity and self-expression. The poem in mesosystem level was more imaginative which was not isolated from the classroom artifact and situation. Pedagogically, it was an urgent for teachers to design couple platforms as a curriculum component at school in order to engage students with environment exploration, emotions, and experiences. Due to the weaknesses for this research, there are two future research agenda dealing with this study. First, it is necessary for more critical investigation into bringing the students to write a poem in exosystem level, to examine how the dynamic of learning environment might affect to the students' level of creativity.

Second, presenting a poem in every level of ecosystem was not documented; for this reason, giving the students opportunity to read a poem in a public place might provide different learning experiences.

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