

COLLABORATIVE WRITING: WHAT DO EFL STUDENTS SAY?

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Abstract:

Writing is not an easy process; thus, many techniques are offered such as collaborative writing. The research is about the elaboration of EFL students' perspective who have experienced collaborative writing in accomplishing article as the final task in Writing IV course.

This research was conducted at Universitas Islam Malang with four high achievers in English Department. The data is analyzed qualitatively with open-ended interview which is divided into two sessions. The interview which conducted once has fourteen questions. The data is taken in eight days. To make the data valid, the researcher does triangulation.

Collaborative writing in accomplishing article has positivity in helping the participants to exchange the ideas that they had, also learning the way to work in group. However, the participants' experience said that collaborative writing is complicated. It related to the irresponsibility and passive group members. In addition, the consultation time is the thing that hinder the participants.

From this study, there are things which must be improved from several aspects. For future researcher, it was suggested to have the instructor's point of view about collaborative writing to understand the implementation of the technique from the instructor view point.

Keywords: writing, collaborative writing, EFL students

INTRODUCTION

Writing has many aspects that can be a problem by English learners. As proposed by Jacobs et al. (1981), the aspects of writing are content, organization, the use of vocabulary, the use of grammar and mechanical consideration. Thus, writing is not an easy process so there are some problems that may be faced by the learners. According to Fareed, Ashraf, and Bilal (2016) the main trouble of language in the learners writing are grammar and syntax. These faults belong to inappropriateness of

the use of prepositions, articles, tenses, singular/plural, verbs, sentence structures, also the use of informal and oral expression.

The same problem in writing was found by Casanave & Hubbard (1992) that Non-Native Speakers have difficulty on most features of writing. The correct punctuation/spelling, grammar accurateness, grammar appropriateness, and vocabulary appropriateness were the difficulties which felt by the students in writing. Another problem in writing were found by Adas and Bakir (2013) that run-on sentence, Arabish, punctuation and writing organization are the problems in writing. In terms of English as Second Language (ESL) students, the problem of writing was the confusion between spoken and written style (Fadda, 2012).

Thus, many techniques are offered to overcome this. Collaborative writing can be the solution to those problems. Soraya (2016) pointed out that an option to work together is given by collaborative writing. Numerous positive things are offered by collaborative writing. The evidence of the positivity which given by collaborative writing was proven by Ghufon (2018). He found that the appropriateness of argumentative content increase. The students also improved in good organization, the word diction, the use of grammar and the mechanics. It also made teaching and learning more effective.

Another beneficial thing was found by Utami (2012), it was examined that collaborative writing increased students' motivation since they could share their knowledge with their friends. The higher motivation was found because feedback from their mistakes could be corrected by their friends. The improvement of the students on recount text genre was seen by applying this technique.

Sipayung (2016) also conducted the study about collaborative writing. It was found that the students' descriptive text had improved for every student since the first to the last test. It was also explained that most of the students enjoy, enthusiast, and

be active the process of collaborative writing. The students also gave their good response in the teaching learning process while using collaborative writing.

In this research, the researcher focuses on the experience of the students who have experienced collaborative writing in accomplishing final assignment. The final task of the students which must be done was article, while in previous research was descriptive and argumentative texts (Ghufron 2018; Sipayung 2016; Utami 2012). The research was conducted to four third-year students at Universitas Islam Malang since they have experienced in collaborative writing. Another thing that distinguished this research with several previous research is the level of the participants. While the previous researches were done to high school students and fourth semester students, this research was conducted with four high achievers of sixth semester students at Universitas Islam Malang who have experience about collaborative writing in their final task. The aim of the study is to know the EFL students' experience about collaborative writing in accomplishing writing article task in Writing IV course.

PREVIOUS STUDY

Some studies about collaborative writing were conducted by some researchers. The research which was done by Aminloo (2013) showed that team work on collaborative writing promoted the students' writing ability in English. The study also proved that the writing accurateness was much more noticeable.

Another study was conducted by Ghufron (2018) resulted some benefits by applying this technique. The good things about implementing collaborative writing was it increased appropriate context of argumentative text, nice organization of students' writing skill, diction using, correct grammar using, and correct mechanics.

The next study about collaborative writing was done by Vega (2016). It was investigated that the students who work collaboratively in pairs tended to organize

their text much better. The next result was the collaborative writing produced more balanced text in terms of fluency. Then, working collaboratively did not present special positive effects in complexity as measured in terms of degree of subordination and analysis of lexical variety and lexical density. The last, about the quality of the text by using collaborative writing, the texts that were done by the students who worked collaboratively more than it produced by the students who work by themselves. This study revealed the students' observed engagement in collaborative writing. It was shown that collaborative writing made the students more focus on the writing task, promote peer feedback, and increase EFL students' observed engagement when writing text.

Then, the study that was completed by Dobao (2012) resulted that collaborative writing improved grammar and accuracy, it also had impact on collaborative dialogue. Also, Wahyuni (2017) showed that there was improvement after applying collaborative writing strategy in descriptive text. It was also implied that the instruction was more active, enthusiastic and joyful.

The last study that showed the positivity of using collaborative writing was done by Khodabakhshazadeh and Samadi (2017). The study found that collaborative writing increased motivation, peer feedback, comprehensive view over the topic, changing ineffective writing habits, and learning more vocabulary. However, it was also showed negativity of using this technique. It was about the authority of some peers in the group and the teacher.

There are several differences among the previous studies and this current research. Firstly, the research method that was used by the mentioned previous studies is experimental, classroom action research, and mixed-method. In this study, the researcher used qualitative as the research design with four participants to collect the data. The task that was completed by previous studies is argumentative and

descriptive text. Here, the collaborative writing was used to accomplish article as the task.

METHOD

The objective of the study was to know the EFL students' experience about collaborative writing in accomplishing writing article task in Writing IV course. Thus, the appropriate methodology for this research was qualitative research since it could elaborate the answer of the question of how and also explain the students' experience in collaborative writing. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative was done in natural settings that human behavior and events happen. Also, there would be no theory or hypothesis in this research design. Another consideration of using this methodology was because the researcher did not need statistical analysis.

The data of this research was taken from structured interviews with fourteen open-ended questions that was done to third-year students who have experienced collaborative writing in their Writing IV course. The participants were chosen because they are high achiever. Because of global pandemic of COVID-19, the online interview was conducted once and it was recorded. It needed 15 to 20 minutes for each participant to be interviewed. While conducting the interview, the researcher used Indonesian Language to avoid misunderstanding among the researcher and the participants. In this study, the identity of the participants was coded as anonymous, P₁ as the first participant, P₂ as the second participant, P₃ as the third participant, and P₄ as the last participant.

After collected all the data, several steps which explained by O'Connor and Gibson (2003) were used by the researcher to analyze the data. The first step is organizing data to opt the concepts and themes that was provided in the interview data. The next is finding and organizing ideas and concept to find commonly uttered thing that stated by the participants. The third is building whole themes in the data to understand the related themes which has deeper meaning to the data. Also, ensuring

reliability and validity in the data analysis and in the finding. It was stated by O'Connor and Gibson (2003) that findings can be trustier when they are confirmed from numerous independent sources. The last step is finding possible and plausible explanation of the findings. The summary and considers implications from over-arching themes are made by the researcher. Its related implications to the contexts of participants' experience to compare those implications answering research questions in this study. The implications of finding become a crucial part to compose a final report.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

About collaborative writing preference, these four participants have their own preference. P₂ who prefer collaborative writing told that exchanging ideas and giving feedback to their group mates were good things to do. Collaborative writing was preferred by P₂ because it offered chances to exchange idea and give peer feedback. In the same line, Wahyuni (2017) stated that collaborative writing was an influential method of writing that boosting cooperation, thinking critically, learning in peer also participating actively toward an end product.

In contrast, three from four participants uttered that they prefer writing individually. P₄ stated that he did the process of collaborative writing by himself while it must be done together. As stated by Sukirman (2016) that collaborative writing should be done together, it did not happen to P₄. Another thing that made the participant prefer writing individually was told by P₃. she thought that in collaborative writing the people should be humble, while she could not be like that. Whereas, according to Agawa (2013) promotive interaction, convenient use of social skills, and processing of group may be arranged in a collaborative writing activity.

In its practice, the students were grouped into three or four students. Group size had impact whether the work could be effective or not. It was stated by Barkley et al. (2005) that for effective collaborative work usually ranged from two to six students. When the participants were asked about effective and cooperative group,

they stated different opinion. P₃ and P₄ told that effective group was the group which chosen by themselves, not by lecturer or lottery because they thought it would be easier to discuss the idea with people who had closeness with them. In the same line, Barkley et al. (2005) explained that homogeneous grouping had some benefits such as the students who share mutual characteristics might feel appropriately at ease with each other to discuss or explore highly sensitive or personal problems. Besides, homogeneous group might be good to language learning or other specific content mastery in that group's strengthening of the same knowledge or skills is important.

A contrast opinion about effective group was stated by P₂. According to P₂ the effective group is mixed group because when she was grouped by their close friend, she would think that the task was a piece of cake. It means, they would depend on each other thus the task would not finish on time. Barkley, Cross, and Major (2005) mentioned that heterogeneity could offer different ideas, backgrounds and experience. It was also told by P₄ that she was hoped to be grouped with group members who have the same level of intelligence. According to Barkley, Cross, and Major (2005) homogeneous group might be good to language learning or other specific content mastery in that group's strengthening of the same knowledge or skills is important. That kind of group liked by one of participants, she said that the students who had similar level of intelligence should be grouped together because she was anxious to be grouped with smarter people.

While others participants stated their point of view about effective group, P₁ stated that he did not suitable to do the task collaboratively. It was because the comfort of doing the task by himself as he felt that their schedule was not easily arranged, especially when consultation time. However, Smith (as cited in (Barkley et al. 2005) stated different thing about this, it was stated that the schedule of meeting would be easier if it was smaller group.

In addition, it was found that the group members were not really active, creative and responsible enough while doing the task. Also, this present study showed different thing in the matter of attitude while doing the task. The things which must be noticed by the participants is the success of work collaboratively not only relying on the ability of the learners' language, but also on having the right attitude and motivation for successful group (Fung 2010). The issues above were not related to the characteristics of collaborative writing that stated by Soraya (2016), those are positive dependency and individual responsibility. Another problem such as domination in the group could be raised by inactive, irresponsible and uncreative group members. It was proven by Khodabakhshzadeh and Samadi (2017) that the domination of the groupmates was also being the trouble of collaborative writing.

Collaborative writing process showed its benefits since this strategy assists the students to write a certain text with their peers (Sukirman, 2016). P₂ revealed that collaborative writing in accomplishing final task made her learn about how to work collaboratively. The benefit also showed by Coffin (2020) in terms of enhancing students' collaboration and communication skills. It was because the participants were demanded to united ideas as one agreed idea thus it would make the participants trained to deal with disagreement. As found by Fung (2020), collaborative writing enhanced the ability to deal with conflicts and disagreements.

Another benefit was told by P₂ that collaborative writing made the participants learn how to give peer feedback. It was contrast with the study that conducted by Fareed et al (2016) that in collaborative writing did not recognize peer feedback. However, because of peer feedback, the participants learned the way to cite quotations and distinguish direct and indirect quotations.

The study showed that on progress of collaborative writing, the lecturer showed her role as the facilitator. The lecturer also provided the time to consult the task whenever participants want to. Deveci (2018) stated that the role of the teacher in

this instruction was as a facilitator which means the teacher had to provide active engagement of students in all stages of the lesson.

In this present study, the lecturer already told the participants how to group very well. However, there was something that missed by the lecturer at that time. Those were about the insufficient material that taught by the lecturer made misunderstanding. The lecturer did not teach about ellipsis so it could make one of the participants felt bad because she was scolded by the lecturer while practicing ellipsis at that time. Whereas, according to Grief (2007) the materials and the ways to group the students must be thought carefully.

P₃ stated that the lecturer was not really sensitive at that time. She hoped that the lecturer would ask “*which one was your work?*” to the students. Thus, the participants would be afraid to being inactive or irresponsibility. The instructor of collaborative writing, as stated by Grief (2007), must be sensitive to what is happening in the groups.

Then, to minimize the fairness problem in this present study, the participants were required to assign their group mates in the end of the course based on their effort while doing the task. The study was contrast with the previous study’s finding. The participants gave their group mates score and all of the participants got A score as the highest score in the end. Coffin (2020) found that although the collaborative writing process and result are appreciated, the fairness problem of teamwork contribution and assessment continue to be doubtful (Coffin 2020).

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

After doing interview that consist of fourteen questions, the result examined that collaborative writing in Writing IV course with article as the genre was complicated. There were some issues which hinder the participants in doing that

assignment. First, it was about the attitude of the group members. They were irresponsible, passive and unresponsive. Secondly, the time management while doing the assignment. The participants were not be able to set the same schedule to gather easily since they had different schedule. After that, the instructor was not really sensitive to the things that happened in the students.

On the other hand, collaborative writing in article offered several benefits, such as the participants said that they could learn how to work in group together. In addition, they could exchange the idea with their group mates. The thing that made them proud of themselves was they got A score in the end of the course, since the instructor allowed them to give score to their group mates.

From the study that had done by the researcher, it was better for future researcher to add another instrument such as observation and questionnaire. Then, it would be better to have the teacher's point of view about collaborative writing to understand about the implementation of the technique from the instructor view point.

For the instructor, it was suggested to be more sensitive about what the students deal while doing the collaborative writing. The instructor could be more detail in asking what was happening in the group in order to minimize cheating that could be done by the group members.

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