COLLABORATIVE WRITING
Strengths and Weaknesses to Teach EFL Students and Its Relation to Students' Self-esteem in Writing

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Abstract

As the objectives of learning English is always changing time to time, the way of teaching English should be adjusted to the changeable learning objectives. Recently, the idea of working collaboratively has given so much influence towards the development of methodology in language teaching and learning. Collaborative writing has been broadly discussed as one of the best methods to teach writing. This study aims to describe the strengths and weaknesses of collaborative writing to teach writing for EFL students and how it links to their self-esteem. The method of this study is qualitative while the design of this study is case study. The data collecting techniques were observation, interview, and document analysis. The results showed that collaborative writing gives opportunity for EFL students to experience the better writing process where students can share and discuss in exploring ideas, developing ideas, expressing ideas, and evaluating the writing product. In terms of their self-esteem, students with low self-esteem were discouraged and tended depending on their writing work on the higher level students. In contrast, students with high self-esteem were encouraged in writing when they were responsible to lead their friends during writing process.

Keywords: collaborative writing, self-esteem, teaching writing, case study

Introduction

Writing as one of the four language skill to master for all EFL students leads researchers and TEFL developer to develop methods in teaching writing. Recently, the idea of working collaboratively that has given successful improvement in teaching learning process has resulted on the implementation of collaborative work in EFL writing class (Hawkey in Rostampour, et al., 2015, p. 46). By involving in collaborative learning, students can experience the better learning process in a student-centered learning. Besides, students have the same chance to participate actively in a collaborative learning context and construct their linguistic knowledge through interacting with other learners (Rostampur, 2015, p. 46).

Considering the development of teaching writing method, collaborative writing has been one of considered methods to be implemented in any levels of education. Although writing is still considered as individual work, collaborative writing, which is maximizing learners'

engagement and involvement in language learning practices, has turned into a value-laden, purposeful, and communicative objective. This collaboration provides the students with opportunities to interact and challenge their language knowledge in a more effective learning environment. Nelson and Murphy (in Widodo, 2013, p. 200) propose that in collaborative writing, the writing process that students must follow are finding idea and arranging ideas into written form, developing ideas by giving some data and information supporting their idea, evaluating their peer's writing. By passing the stages above collaboratively, the students will be easier to find and develop the idea of their writing. Besides, peer-review done in the last stage of the writing process enables students to improve their grammar mastery and critical thinking (Widodo, 2013, p. 200).

Many studies have been conducted to investigate the effectiveness of collaborative writing to teach writing and it reveals the fact that collaborative writing is one effective way not only to teach writing but

also to improve students' writing skill (Li & Zhu, 2017, Shahgoli and Farrokhi, 2016, Mehrdad et al., 2016). However, the study which describes how well collaborative writing implemented in writing class is merely found. In particular, research on students' perceptions of collaborative writing projects, "the nature of the [collaborative] writing process and of the written text produced" has received "scant attention" (Storch, 2005, p. 155). In fact, most of the research on collaborative writing is focused on texts produced for preparatory writing assignments and not on more extensive texts meant to stand on their own (Storch, 2005, p. 169). As Storch (2005, p. 169) notes, "To truly prepare students for collaborative writing it may require a re-conceptualization of classroom teaching". In terms of English Language Teaching for EFL students, there are any no sufficient studies exploring about the strengths and weaknesses of collaborative writing to teach EFL learners. To fill these practical and contextual gaps, this article attempts to review the strengths and weaknesses of collaborative writing to teach EFL students.

Meanwhile, writing is not only about the final written product but also it has a process. The writing process consists of a set of stages in writing. Writing has a complicated process in which both students' language competence and psychological condition are involved together (Al-Shourafa, 2015, p. 236). This means that beside of their language competence, their mental condition is very important to determine whether they can pass the writing process successfully or not. Shirvani and Tajadini (2014, p. 234) break the stages down into six stages namely brainstorming, planning, outlining, organizing, drafting, and revising. While working in these stages, students' cognitive and psychological aspects are involved together at the same time which determines the quality of the product. Some studies prove that by implementing collaborative writing in teaching writing, students are facilitated to

have better writing process in which they are supposed to be involved actively in sharing their knowledge of linguistics resources, discussing with others related to the topic and idea arrangement, and taking part in writing production (Widodo, 2013, p. 198, Rostampour, et.al. 2015, p. 53, Kessler, et al., 2012, p. 106). However, there is no sufficient study exploring how collaborative writing gives beneficial effect to the students' psychological condition which is viewed as the important factor in writing process. Therefore, this article will also review about how collaborative writing give effect in relation to students' self-esteem.

Self- esteem is one of psychological aspects giving a huge contribution to writing. Khansir and Abdolahi (2014, p. 156) argue that high self-esteem can help students to improve their language competence. Having high self-esteem can reduce students' anxiety during writing process and improve their motivation and belief that they can pass the writing process smoothly (Salem and Dyiar, 2014, p. 129). Besides, self-esteem functions as a motivation aspect helping them to support their ability in writing (Fahim and Rad, 2012, p. 24). Considering the influential contribution of self-esteem towards writing, it can be concluded that a good and effective writing method should facilitate students to have high self-esteem.

In fact, it is not an easy job to implement collaborative writing in a ideal way. Mrs. AR, a teacher implementing collaborative writing in a school that I observe found it pretty difficult to implement collaborative writing in her class. Though she has understood the principles in implementing collaborative writing in the writing class, she found that collaborative writing can roles as supporting factor or even inhibitor in writing. That some students have a better performance when they work at group and the other are the opposite is one of the problems she found in implementing collaborative writing. Besides, there are some influential aspects in writing that a teacher should consider but it is too difficult

to do so. From the explanation above, the investigation of strengths and weaknesses of collaborative writing to teach EFL students is worth taking into account as one of the measurement to the success of collaborative writing to teach writing for EFL students. This research was conducted at a Senior High School in Surakarta.

1. Research Questions

From the explanation above, the research questions are formulated as (1) What are the strengths and weaknesses of collaboration writing implementation for EFL learners?, (2) In what extent collaborative writing affects students' self-esteem?.

2. Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are (1) to find and describe strengths and weaknesses of collaborative writing to teach writing for EFL students and (2) to describe how collaborative writing relates to self-esteem. Whether or not, collaborative writing can support students to have high self-esteem.

3. Literature Review

Haring-Smith (in Hadjerrouit, 2011, p. 432) states that collaborative writing is a writing activity involving more than one person who gives the same chance and duty to contribute on the creation of a text. Collaborative writing can be implemented in a various techniques, such as by using technology as the media, such as wiki, Google docs, or the conventional techniques tool. "With the development and advancement of computer networks, online collaborative learning becomes possible even if students cannot meet in a classroom" (Macdonald, 2006, p. 234). Meanwhile, collaborative writing implemented in a classroom, can also be encouraged with the use of the World Wide Web. Many institutions have attempted to make use of technology in collaborative activities. Apart from blogs, wikis, chat rooms, forum, learning logs, Google Docs is an online suite

of digital tools that provides teachers with some powerful features to help 21st century students develop writing skills.

Some researches on collaborative writing prove that collaborative writing activities, as done in pairs or small groups, can have numerous affective benefits for the learner. Such activities can enhance student interaction in the EFL classroom, lower the anxiety associated with completing tasks alone and raise students' self-confidence (Johnson & Johnson, 1998; Raimes, 1998; Reid & Powers, 1993; Rollinson, 2005). Collaborative writing requires that students utilize a range of social skills that can help them tofoster a sense of accountability, cooperation and community (Murray, 1992; Savova & Donato, 1991; Villamil & De Guerrero, 1996). In addition, Reid (1993, p. 19) suggests that collaborative writing efforts can increase motivation, risk-taking and tolerance among learners. Foster (1998, p. 43) notes that these activities can maximize student interaction in the target language.

Self-esteem is considered as one of important aspects in writing. Having high self-esteem is one of important factors in writing. According to Khansir and Abdolahi (2014, p. 156), self-esteem can help students to improve their writing. The role of self-esteem is used among students as an aspect of motivation that helps them to show their ability to write. Branden (1992, p. 8) states that self-esteem operates as the immune system of consciousness providing resistance, strength, capacity and believes of being attractive and intelligent to cope any challenges in learning process. Self-esteem has big roles in both writing process and writing product. It has four indicators that determine the level of self-esteem. In writing, each indicator has its own role to support writing skill. Those are competence, worthiness, acceptance, and confidence.

Moreover, writing has two dimensions which are product and process. As stated by Haynes and Zacarian (2010, pp. 89-90), learning to write is a developmental process that involves being able to

communicate meaningfully through writing, write for a range of purposes, use culturally appropriate terms, and use correct form and grammar. It implies that to have good writing product, students must master at least the four requirements above that involve students' cognitive competence in learning English. Meanwhile, in order to pass the writing process successfully, students must control their psychological condition. Many students determine to give up when they got problem in the process of writing. Therefore, in order to help them to solve problems during the writing process, students need to have high self esteem.

Methodology

The method of this research is case study. According to Stangor (2011, p. 138), a case study is an investigation of a single individual in which unusual, unexpected, or unexplained behaviors become the focus of the research. Thirty students of English Education Department of Islamic State University of Surakarta were used as the subject of this case study.

This research was started by conducting observation for one month in a writing class in which the collaborative writing was implemented. During the observation, the researcher observes how collaborative writing was implemented including the material, procedure, and the participation of the students. Besides, the researcher also notes the obstacle that the lecturer and students face during the writing process. Interview was used to obtain the data of students' self-esteem towards collaborative writing. The interview is open interview consisting of 9 questions. Seven students were chooses as the representative to be interviewed.

The validation of the data is triangulation. The researcher took triangulation of source concept in which data were collected from participants, event, and the document. The participants consisted of both the teacher and students of the schools. The events being observed are the teaching practice of the teacher and the performance of the students in the classroom. The writer also checked the documents (field notes and interview transcript) as data source. By combining and analyzing the data from different sources, the trustworthiness achieved as well. After obtaining the data, the data were analyzed by using some techniques which are data reduction, data display, drawing conclusion and verification to analyze the data which are data reduction, data display, drawing conclusion and verification.

Findings and Disussion

Based on the pre-research interview, teacher (AR) defines collaborative writing as a method to teach writing whose most activities done collaboratively. In the pre-research interview, teacher AR also confirmed that not all the steps of collaborative writing were done maximally. Sometimes, teacher AR only implements some steps of collaborative writing because of the time allotment. Thus, teacher AR did not take the other steps maximally.

To get the data of the implementation of collaborative writing in teacher AR's teaching, pre-observation was conducted on the teaching-learning activities in the classroom. Based on the observation, teacher AR tried to implement collaborative writing maximally. Teacher AR actively guided the students and give clear instruction in each step of writing. In the first step, teacher AR guided students to find the topic of the writing by giving some choices of topic. After determining the topic of the writing, teacher AR guided students to make outline of their writing and make main sentence for each paragraph. Then, the students developing the main idea of each paragraph collaboratively. During the developing ideas, the students face some problems such as debating each other, getting stuck, and even getting confused with what they want to write. Teacher AR manages this situation by instructing the students to have a good communication with their group in order to

solve problems they face. In the end of writing process, the students did peer-correction. In doing peer correction, some students get difficulties to correct the grammar of their peer's writing because of the lack of grammar mastery.

In term of self-esteem, seven students were interviewed about their self-esteem condition after joining collaborative writing activities. Three of them have high academic achievement, two of them are in medium level and the last are the low academic achievement. From the interviewed, it is found that students having high academic achievement having better self-esteem. They stated that by having collaborative activity in writing, their perception of themselves increases since they compared themselves to their friends who are in the group with them. Besides, feeling that they are the smartest students in their group, they are motivated to help and assist the other member of the group during the writing process. Meanwhile, the medium level students don't have significant effect on their self esteem. In opposite, students with low academic achievement have negative effect on their self-esteem. The dominance of the smart students in their group leads them not to have the same chance in writing as the smart students have. As a result, the low students rely their work on the smart students.

Referring to findings, there are some points taken as the conclusions. The first is that steps of collaborative writing lead to high-quality of learning, as Kirby and Lawson (2012) argue that the core descriptors of high-quality learning are that the learning should be extensive, integrative, and generative. "High-quality learning must be extensive in the sense that it must include and be based on as large an array of relevant information and experience as possible." (Kirby and Lawson, 2012, p. 3) The steps of collaborative writing do support the extensive learning. In building relevant information and experience, the concept of collaborative writing requires students working together to solve problems.

Engagement and motivation are two factors that influence the process and its result (Siang and Santoso, 2016, p. 113). From the finding, it is proved that having high self-esteem and working collaboratively are closely related with motivation and engagement in learning process. Thus, it can be concluded that collaborative writing can improve both students writing skill and self-esteem.

Conclusion

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that collaborative writing is an effective method to teach writing for EFL students. Collaborative writing gives numerous benefits for both students' language competence and their self-esteem. Since collaborative writing focus more on the process, students are granted to have better writing process. It means that they have better skill in developing ideas, making their writing coherence, having better grammar and vocabulary mastery, and etc. In implementing collaborative in teaching learning process, the role of teacher is very crucial because students need to be assisted in doing collaborative tasks. Therefore, teacher should make good preparation dealing with teaching procedure that is going to be implemented in class.

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