

AN ANALYSIS OF EFL TEACHERS' BELIEFS ABOUT TEACHING WRITING AND THEIR PRACTICES IN VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

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Abstract

This research aimed to investigate the EFL teachers' beliefs about teaching writing and their practices in Vocational School and to reveal problems and solutions in teaching writing. The research design used a case study. The subjects were four writing teachers who have been teaching in Vocational School. The data collecting technique used semi-structured interview, observation, and document analysis. Then, the data were analyzed using Flow Model Analysis. To ensure the credibility of data, it used data triangulation and methodological triangulation. The findings showed that the EFL teachers had positive beliefs which covered the nature of teaching writing and its objectives, teachers' roles, teaching approaches, and writing assessment. There was a relationship between teachers' belief and practices in teaching writing. The teachers also concerned about the problems: vocabulary, language use, organization, and students' motivation in teaching writing.

Keywords: teacher's belief, teacher's practices, teaching writing, vocational school.

Introduction

In Indonesia, there is a stage of education, namely Vocational School after Junior High School based on Act No.20 of 2003 on National Educational System. The vision of Vocational School is to develop a student's ability to do certain types of work. Moreover, the existence of Vocational School has an important role for the Indonesian government in which it can help to prepare students who are ready to work in both home and foreign countries with their skills, so that's why English is an important subject that should be taught to students. Teaching English subject to the students in Vocational School aims to support their skills and help their careers in the future related to workplaces that they choose and take [1]. Besides that, the role of teaching English is to encourage students who learn one of those skills and to give the contribution to learn English as language related to their specific skills [2].

As EFL teachers, teaching writing is an extremely challenging task to do for them especially when they respond to student's writing in which it needs a reflection, experience, and commitment to accomplish it successfully. And, being a teacher will take principles and steps that every teacher has

his/her own way [3]. The use of teaching writing especially for vocational school is to make students write practical reports, application letters, curriculum vitae, etc. Furthermore, teaching writing in Vocational School can take students studying English for advancement in their occupation. For example, students can study to write real letters and for genuine directions for some operation and fill out the actual forms. Those activities are called 'English in the Workplace' [4].

The nature writing is defined as generating, organizing ideas coherently using discourse markers and rhetorical conventions to put those ideas cohesively in written text, revising to get a clearer meaning, editing for appropriate grammar, and producing a final text [4]. To be a good writer, students need to follow various stages in writing such as planning, drafting, and editing [5]. After that, students can publish and share their final writing to others. There are five components which can be found in writing skill including content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics [6]. Meanwhile, the definition of teaching writing is all activities in which a teacher helps students to produce

the whole piece of communication and develop information ideas in a written text [7]. There are three approaches in teaching writing, namely the product approach, the process approach, and the genre-based approach. First, the product approach is a teacher-centered approach in which a teacher encourages students to imitate, copy, and transform a similar text provided by a teacher [8]. Second, the process approach is an approach to teaching writing to help students can plan and write independently [7]. The last, the genre-based approach refers to teaching writing related to genres [9]. Teachers also have to play multiple roles to encourage students to become a good writer such as a demonstrator, motivator or supporter, responder, and evaluator.

In teaching writing, teachers also use the English textbooks given by the Indonesian government. It provides materials and exercises of writing to support students' needs. In addition, it is found that teachers made a summary and modified writing materials from many sources such as books, material from the internet to support students' needs. The way teachers thought about teaching writing based on students' needs, use English textbooks and adopt many books, and also perform in the classroom are known as the application of teachers' beliefs. Teacher's belief can influence what a teacher will do in his/her classroom. The notion of belief is as the portion in which it may be consciously or even unconsciously held, is an evaluative that is accepted by teacher truly, and is imbued with commitment emotively [10]. Furthermore, a belief serves as a guide to thought and behavior [11]. Then, the definition of belief is "unquestioned presumptions and personal truths which are built on memorable episodes in personal's life" [12].

Teacher's belief is linked to 'teacher cognition that teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge thoughts, and beliefs' [13]. Because of that, a belief can play an

important role in the aspects of teaching. In line with it, Shavelson & Stern (1981) states that the way language teachers make instructional decisions, choose materials, select certain methods or instructional practices can be influenced by the beliefs that teachers hold [14]. Moreover, what teachers do reflects their beliefs and it can be in the form of classroom practices such as the methods, procedures, materials, interactions, instruction, etc. [15]. Teachers' beliefs can influence 'their goals, procedures, materials, classroom interaction patterns, their roles, their students, and the schools they work in'. So, teachers should work with their professionals [16]. Teacher's belief into five categories including belief about English, belief about learning, belief about teaching, belief about the program and the curriculum, and belief about language teaching as a profession [15]. Thus, they mention that there are six sources which contribute to shape teacher's belief as follows: (1) teacher's experience as language learners, (2) teacher's experience of what works best, (3) established practice, (4) personality factors, (5) educationally based or research-based principles, and (6) principles derived from an approach or method.

There have been a number of researchers conducted some studies related to EFL teachers' belief about teaching writing and their practices. Firstly, the previous research investigated 'EFL writing teacher training, belief, and practices in Romania' [17]. There were forty-one EFL teachers who participated in the research. The data were collected through interview, classroom observation. Besides that, teachers contributed to complete the survey. This research showed that when teachers taught EFL writing, they should focus on students' needs such as tasks and topics that could motivate them. Additionally, teachers taught that their students as EFL writers should be able to present content and structures from basic to complex. In this case, teachers believed that functional writing (paragraph types, job application documents, and business letters) was paid attention to teach to students. In this case, the textbooks

given by the Ministry of Education in Romania also provided those materials. Besides that, teachers felt that the current textbooks targeted students were able to master the skills in order to pass nationally mandated test. As a result, teachers could succeed in their academic and professional goals. It showed that the importance of government policy in shaping teacher's belief. In their practices teaching EFL writing, teachers most focused on grammatical correctness and gave comments about the text structure to students' writing.

Secondly, the research explored teacher's pedagogical belief and its reflection on the practice of teaching writing as EFL [18]. The finding of the study was teachers emphasized their students to write sentences with grammatical correctness. Then, students were asked to understand and practice different genres. In their practice, teachers didn't reflect their beliefs in the classroom. For instance, they had a lack of orientation to use different approaches in teaching writing. Thirdly, the research was about the teacher's pedagogical beliefs in English as foreign language writing instruction [19]. The result of the study showed that teachers strongly believed that language accuracy and text structure were the main concerns in writing. In their practice, the teachers helped students by giving some input before asking students to write. Therefore, a teacher became the main facilitator in the writing class.

Based on the explanation above, this research entitled "*An Analysis of EFL Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching Writing and Their Practices in Vocational School*". Thus, the goals of this research were to investigate EFL teachers' beliefs about writing to the students in Vocational School, to reveal the extent of teachers' beliefs can be reflected in their classroom practices and to find out the teachers' problems and solutions in teaching writing. Hereby, the research questions could be seen as follows:

1. What are EFL teachers' beliefs about teaching writing in Vocational School?
2. To what extent can EFL teachers' beliefs be reflected in their practices?

3. What are teachers' problems and solutions in teaching writing?

Methodology

The method of this research is a case study. A case study as an in-depth exploration of the bounded systems such as activity, event, process, individual, group, etc. based on extensive data collection [20]. In addition, a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident [21]. There were four teachers who participated in this research. They have been teaching more than 15 years in Vocational School, Central Java in the academic year of 2018/2019. Also, they actively joined international seminar, trainings of education, etc. and wrote articles in which their articles successfully had been published. The data were collected through interview, observation, and document analysis. This research used semi-structured interview and open-ended questions to investigate the teachers' beliefs about teaching writing and their practices. In conducting observation, the researcher being a non-participant observer who watched, listened, recorded, and wrote what it was going on. Then, the documents that were analyzed including textbooks, journals, notes, lesson plans or reports and minutes of meetings [22]. In conducting a case study, triangulation is needed to confirm the results to show how the findings are based on the information acquired from multiple sources [23]. This research used data triangulation (using multiple data sources), and methodological data (using multiples methods). Thus, the data were analyzed by using Flow Model Analysis that consists of three flows of action including data reduction, data displays, and conclusion drawing/verification [24].

Findings and Discussion

1. EFL Teacher's Beliefs about Teaching Writing in Vocational School

The findings showed that the EFL teacher's beliefs about teaching writing in Vocational School covered teacher's roles, teaching approach, and writing assessment. The first core was EFL teachers' belief about the nature of teaching writing in Vocational School. One of four participants explained that:

“In Vocational School, teaching English subject is needed in order to students pass TOEIC as the requirement when they apply for jobs in prestigious companies. My school sometimes gets the fully funded given by the government for students to join TOEIC. Then, nowadays teaching writing in Vocational School is not far from Senior High School. It can be seen from the core competence and basic competence. Honestly, for teaching writing, I always concern to students' needs such as writing application letters, reports, etc. Generally, the goal of teaching writing is to make students can communicate in written (productive skill) by organizing their ideas based on topics in the lesson plan” (Teacher 1).

From the explanation above, generally the teacher also stated that one of the goals of teaching English is to prepare students to get a good score in TOEIC. Then, the teacher believed that teaching writing should be appropriate with the competency in the syllabus or lesson plan. Moreover, teaching writing aimed to encourage vocational students to deliver their opinions in written text. Related to teaching writing, the teacher saw that he needed to concern teaching writing about captions, application letter, reports, etc. as a vocational purpose which would be very useful for vocational students. The result of the interview and observation showed the condition of writing class. Before vocational students wrote, the teachers introduced the text that they were discussing. Then, the teachers explained the type and purpose of the text. Students were asked to explore vocabulary and meanings in the text. After that, the teachers explained the generic structure and language features of the text and gave a chance to students in collecting ideas.

There were two conditions in which the EFL teachers asked students to write in pairs (or groups) and individual. In the pairs or groups condition, the vocational students could discuss more with their partners. They shared and decided together such as determining topics, contents, etc. While the students worked individually, they often asked to their teacher. In fact, those students had difficulties when they were writing the text individually. In the observation, the researcher noticed that teachers actually helped students when they got stuck to think the ideas by giving or discussing some ideas related to the topic of text. It is related to the research previous before that teacher's belief about teaching writing is to do many activities such as providing a text, giving a topic, helping students, etc. [18].

Referring to the explanation above, it relates to the teacher's roles in teaching writing. Three teachers had played multiple roles as a facilitator, responder, motivator, and evaluator. As the teacher stated below:

“Yes, all roles. I show a text and explain it in detail from the purpose of the text, generic structure, language feature (facilitator)... I encourage my students to write with their own ideas with their friends and help them when they are confused about the topic (motivator). And, I often correct and give comments on their writing. Put the correct one on their mistakes. After twice revision, their final writing will be collected and graded (responder and evaluator)”.... (Teacher 3)

Teaching writing will demand a teacher to do many activities more than being a teacher. The writing teachers believed that playing multiple roles could help students to become a good writer. Nevertheless, there was one of them who had a lack of attention to motivate students. The researcher observed that the teacher only explained the sample of text, asked students to write the text, and evaluated students' work. Hereby, the teacher hadn't played roles such as responder, and motivator.

The third core is about teaching approach which is used by the EFL teachers in teaching writing. There are three

approaches that support student's writing, namely the product approach, the process approach, and the genre-based approach. Furthermore, In Indonesia, the core writing materials in the syllabus almost provide the types of text (genres) and letters. It affects to the teachers to decide how they teach writing. The result of the interview and observation, the researcher found that the teachers used the process approach and the genre-based approach. Teachers also gave the opinion that using both approaches would need more time because there were many stages in those approaches. Additionally, they expected that the students understand the steps in writing correctly. Then, they were able to write genres, letters, etc. in good structure. It is supported by the teacher in using the genre-based approach in the writing class.

“Because of many materials is about types of text. I usually use the genre-based approach....”
(Teacher 3)

The last core is about writing assessment. The teachers used five categories for assessing student's writing including content, organization, vocabulary, language use/ grammar, and mechanic. They had a positive sign in writing assessment. In their lesson plans, it was written that a scoring rubric consisted of five indicators to evaluate students' works. Moreover, the sources of teacher's belief about writing assessment are modules, textbooks, internet, and learning experience as a student. Besides that, to gain knowledge and become a professional teacher, all teachers also had joined and passed in PLPG training.

“...Actually, I use a scoring rubric which includes 5 indicators, namely content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanic... (Teacher 1).

“...I know a scoring rubric and its components for assessing writing from the training modules, textbooks. When I was students in the university, I ever studied language assessment. Sometimes, I searched it on the internet to recall...” (Teacher 4).

2. EFL Teachers' Practices

Based on the findings of the study, it can be analyzed the extent of the EFL teachers' beliefs can be reflected in their practices. Before teaching writing, all subjects of the study have made lesson plans for one semester. It presents core competency, basic competency, materials, teaching methods/approaches, classroom procedures, scoring rubric (for writing assessment), and references. As mentioned before, the teachers thought the goals of teaching writing is to make vocational students have ability to write a text in good structure. In teaching writing, they used many sources materials such as the English textbooks given by the government, modules, books, and internet. Furthermore, the EFL teachers concerned about the writing material related to vocational purpose such as writing reports, application letters, e-mail, captions, etc. In addition, they made additional material for those topics to make sure students could master to write functional writing. That additional materials were printed in the form of modules. As a result, those beliefs are the reflection from the teachers have been teaching more than 10 years in Vocational School. Actually, the materials of writing in Vocational School are the same as the materials in Senior High School.

In teaching writing, the participants used the process approach and the genre-based approach. They believed that those approaches would guide students to have a good writing. In practice, teachers sometimes started to use the process approach. It aimed to build students' knowledge and know students' abilities in writing. After that, teachers knew that students' competency. In the next material, the teacher used the genre-based approach. Actually, it depended on the writing material in which they were discussing. In their opinions, the process approach and the genre-based approach spent more time because there were many stages in both approaches.

Thus, three subjects had played multiple roles in teaching writing successfully. On the other hand, one participant hadn't played a

role as a motivator. Actually, the role of the teacher as a motivator is needed to improve students' confidence in learning and in writing. In his practice, he facilitated students by giving a text and its explanation. Then, he asked students to write a text and their works directly would be graded. He stated that the genre-based approach was an appropriate approach in teaching writing in Vocational School related to genre such as a factual report, descriptive text, application letter, etc. But, there was something missing (stages and roles) from his teaching writing. In this case, he hadn't reflected his beliefs in the class. It was caused by his effort to make effective

learning without spending more time. Related to the writing assessment, all of the teachers used the scoring rubric which included five indicators namely content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics which were found in their lesson plans.

3. Problems and Solutions in Teaching Writing

Based on the data collected, it was found that the EFL teachers had several problems in teaching writing to the vocational students. Then, they presented the solutions related to those problems.

Table 1.
 Problems and Solutions in Teaching Writing

No.	Problems	Solutions
1.	Source of Material	Adopting and developing materials from many books and internet
2.	Indicators of Writing	
	a. Vocabulary	Providing the collection of vocabulary and meanings Asking students to translate words in a text Drilling vocabulary and meanings
	b. Language Use	Explaining kinds of part of speech (noun, noun phrase) and giving examples Giving an explanation of tenses related to a text Correcting students' sentences
	c. Organization	Explaining and showing the generic structure of a text Asking students to identify the generic structure
3.	Student's Motivation	Giving discussion and feedback (in pairs, groups) Giving the appreciation (additional score) to students who don't cheat (plagiarism from the internet)

Referring to the table above, teachers had problems about teaching material for writing skill. As stated by:

“The government gave the English textbooks for us. Honestly, the material in the textbooks is not enough to support students' needs. So, I adopted materials from many books and developed it. This is my module...” (Teacher 1).

In fact, the English textbooks offered by the government seems simply for vocational students. As a result, he developed materials especially for teaching writing such as factual reports, captions, application letters, etc. which would be useful for students in real life.

His module provides the materials, the types of exercises, and the texts per chapter. That module entitled ‘English Module’ which contains of 6 chapters or consists of 68 pages.

In teaching writing, most of the teachers had problems with the student's vocabulary and language use when writing. The problems of students' writing were they were not able to put the appropriate noun, verb, noun phrase and tenses as the quotation below:

“...Students have difficulties to differentiate feed and eat, hot and spice, borrow and lend, beautify and beautiful, eat and have lunch...” (Teacher 2).

“The correct sentence is I want to go to the school. But, they use I am want to go to school....Sometimes I also found they write long sentences but there isn't a subject” (Teacher 3).

“...Yes. Some students used present future tense in writing recount text. It's not appropriate, is it?... So, it needs to give the example of text, explain and give the example of language features in the recount text” (Teacher 1).

“...They (students) sometimes exchange from beautiful girl into girl beautiful...” (Teacher 4).

Based on those problems, the teachers overcame to the students' problems in vocabulary and language use. The researcher found that the teachers had tried to explain the collection vocabulary in the text and meanings before asking students to write. Those activities also were written in their lesson plan. Then, the teachers felt that drilling students about vocabulary could improve students' vocabulary in learning writing. As a solution, they drilled students in the class. Furthermore, the teachers needed to explain the tenses used in the genre of texts, part of speech and its usage in the sentences.

Besides that, the teachers saw that students' writing was not enough good structure and it seemed random. So, the vocational students wrote the text which was not based on the sequence of organization text such as starting to orientation, events, and moving to reorientation for example in recount text. Hence, the teachers explained more to show the generic structure of the text. Then, students were asked to practice and indicate it correctly. As stated in the previous study before, the teachers had a positive sign in teaching writing at high school and they almost focused on grammar, vocabulary, and text structure [19].

The next challenge for the writing teachers was about students' motivation. Based on the observation, they tried to help students in writing by making discussion in pairs or group first. So, the students could discuss to write the topics easier with their friends. Additionally, the teachers also gave a hand when their students had difficulties in

writing process individually. The teachers sometimes asked students to not ask their friends because it avoided students to cheat their friends' works. Eventually, the teachers would give the zero score if they had plagiarism (copy and paste) from the internet. The explanation could be seen below.

“We want students to have creativity. So, students can write their own arguments without cheating.... I always remind them to not cheat and browse from the internet. If they do it, I will give the zero score...I appreciate with my students who write it originally. I will give the plus point for their works...” (Teacher 3).

Conclusion

The teacher's beliefs can determine the teachers' making decisions in their classes. What the teachers believe, it can give the contributions and influences in their practices. Based on the findings, teaching writing in vocational school aims to prepare student are able to generate ideas and write letters and types of text (genres). It is supported that The EFL teachers believed that the whole of writing materials in Vocational School is not far from the writing materials in Senior High School. It can be seen from the syllabus offered the government. So, the teachers believed that teaching writing to the vocational students is to bring out their ideas and write in well structured. Hereby, the syllabus also determines what the teachers do and develop their lesson plans. The government also provided English textbooks for the teachers. In this case, the teachers saw that those books don't enough provide materials based on students' needs. Then, they developed materials based on students' needs such as application letters, e-mail, (practical) reports, etc. as vocational purposes. In teaching writing, the EFL teachers used the process approach and the genre-based approach. Meanwhile, they thought that those approaches consist of many activities or stages and spent more time. Furthermore, the teachers played multiple roles including as facilitator or demonstrator, motivator, and evaluator. In this case, there was one teacher

who had a lack of attention to motivate students in writing. Actually, being a motivator is very important to help students organizing arguments in written. In addition, the EFL teachers also focused on vocabulary, organization, and ‘grammatical correctness’ in teaching writing.

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