

COLLABORATIVE WRITING: PRODUCT AND STUDENTS' REFLECTIONS

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Abstract

Producing a jointly written text becomes popular investigation in some studies. The main concern of the study was to investigate the students' writing product and students' reflection in collaborative writing. The study was mixed-method research with the exploratory design. 49 third year students at English Education Department in the academic year of 2016-2017 of STKIP Muhammadiyah Pringsewu Lampung attended the study. The study compared texts produced by pairs with those produced by individual learners as the sources of quantitative data and the students' reflection as qualitative data. The study also elicited the learners' reflections on the experience of collaborative writing. The study found that the students' writing score that work in pairs/collaboratively was higher than individual work product. Writing collaboratively also give positive impact on the students' social aspect. They learned to work in team and reduced their feeling of under pressure.

Keywords: Collaborative writing, product, students' reflection.

1. INTRODUCTION

Conducting writing activity with large number of students in a class is not easy because it needs appropriate approach to assist the process. Thus, Storch (2005: 2) says that from a social constructivist perspective, learners should be encouraged to participate in activities which foster interaction and co-construction of knowledge. From a pedagogical perspective, the use of small

group and pair work is further supported by the communicative approach to L2 instruction and its emphasis on providing learners with opportunities to use the L2. Nowadays, the use of small group/pair in writing classes seems to be more popular but it tends to be limited to the final stages of writing, the peer review stage. Learning in collaborative setting is a social interaction involving a community of learners and teachers, where members

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acquire and share experience or knowledge (Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014: 1). Moreover, Barkley, Cross & Major (2005) state that in collaborative writing, student pairs triads write a formal paper together. Each student contributes at each stage of writing process: brainstorming ideas; gathering and organizing information; and drafting, revising, and editing the writing. Furthermore, they also says working together can help students to learn and perform the stages of writing more effectively.

The collaboration method, special feature of Google Docs which motivated students to learn more efficiently, and more contribution to work. As for the collaboration method, students were provided with opportunities to read, review, and correct other members' writing (Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014: 154). Collaborative writing also afforded students the opportunity to give and receive immediate feedback on language, an opportunity missing when students write individually. This may explain why pairs tended to produce texts with greater grammatical accuracy and complexity than individual writers (Storch, 2005: 16). I have found that wikis are useful for promoting collaborative writing for ESL learners

(Sze, 2008: 2, Mcgaugh: 2009). Collaborative tools are easy-to-use, effective, enhance motivation, and increase collaboration, but they provide an overall picture of the students' subjective perceptions within a particular educational setting (Brodahl, Hadjerrouit, and Hansen, 2011: 18). The most important finding of this study was that the written scripts of students who engaged in collaboration throughout the semester were superior to those produced by students who wrote independently on most aspects of writing. The other finding was that the students found the experience of collaborative writing enjoyable and felt that it contributed to their L2 learning (Shehadeh, 2011: 14). The Northwestern CLR faculty had become comfortable with in-class group work, graded collaborative writing seemed a natural, complementary step in our pedagogical development (Inglehart, Narko, and Zimmerman, 2003: 41). The using of collaborative writing also shifted the students' perception in writing.

Thus, the study set out to investigate the product, process, and students' reflections on collaborative writing. Specifically, the study set out to compare the essay produced by learners individually with those produced by learners working in pairs. For learners

working in pairs, the study also investigated the nature of the composing process. Finally, the study attempted to elicit the learners' reflections on the activity of collaborative writing.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Participants

The participants of this study were 49 (42 females and 7 males) third year students of English Education Department of STKIP Muhammadiyah Pringsewu Lampung. The study was conducted in writing class. In this level the students were asked to produce some types of essays. They experienced in producing text in the previous writing class at the first and second year.

Instruments and data collection

The task used in the study was a data commentary text. Students were given an instruction and asked to compose two essays in pairs in two meetings and two more essays individually in the two next meetings with different topics. The research conducted in the middle of the semester, so the students had got comprehension about essay organization and experienced in producing an essay in the teaching and learning process. The task was not graded, but it was collected at the end of the class and subsequently returned with feedback comments. All completed compositions were collected.

Then, after the students worked in pairs, they were asked to write their reflection about the experience of writing collaboratively.

Data Analysis

Pair dialogues were transcribed verbatim. Thus, the data set included the completed compositions and the students' reflections. Each data source was analyzed separately.

Analysis of the compositions

The texts completed by the students were analyzed using quantitative measures. Quantitative measures included measures of formatting, organization, content, and grammar. All products of paper-based essay writings were scored by two different raters using specific rubric scoring of opinion essay. The rubric scoring targeted four 14 different aspects in essay with certain formatting; structure or skeleton of the essay; content, and grammar of the essay. Each macro target was elaborated in several detail indicators with which the score could be judged (Dedi: 2015).

Students' reflections

In the end of the section, the students were asked to write their reflections of the experience in producing writing collaboratively in a piece of paper and then submitted it.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Before presenting the result, it should be noted that the students were asked to produce individual and collaborative writing in different day; two meetings were for individual assignments and the two other meetings were for collaborative assignments. All the assignment was different in topic and the researcher had informed the topic to the students before the class to give the students opportunity in gaining the sources when they were entering the class. All writing product was in the form of hand writing, so the students' mastery in grammar and mechanical aspect were reflected originally.

Comparing individually and jointly written text

The following tables summarize the result of quantitative analysis for sixteen pairs and the result for 49 individual writings.

Table 1 The quantitative analysis of pairs & individual works

Aspects	Actual score			
	pairs work		individual work	
	total score	mean score	total score	mean score
<i>formatting</i>	19	3.2	12	2
<i>Structure of the essay</i>	41	2.2	32	1.7
<i>content</i>	15	2.9	10	2
<i>grammar</i>	16	3.2	8	1.6
total	91	11.5	62	7.3

Based on the table above, pairs work tended to show higher score than individual score. The total score of 16 pair works were 91 at the highest scale score of 100 and the average score was 11.5. On the other hand, the total score of individual work was 62 and the average score was 7.3.

In terms of formatting which covers the aspects of paragraphing and mechanical aspects, the pairs work also showed higher score than individual work. The total score of pairs work was 19 and the average score was 3.2 in the scale of 2-7. Meanwhile, the total score of individual work was 12 and the average score was 2.

Moreover, the total and the mean score of pairs work tend to be higher in the term of structure of the essay which covers the aspects of organization of the ideas in every paragraph. The total score of pairs work was 41 and individual score was 32. Furthermore, the average score of pairs work was 2.2 and individual score was 1.7 in the scale of 2-4.

In term of content which covers the aspects of the appropriateness of the topic with the assignment, unity, and coherency of the ideas in every paragraph, pairs work also tended to show higher score compared with individual score. The total score of pairs was 15 and individual work

was 10. The average score of pairs work was 2.9 and the individual score was 2 in the scale of 1-3.

However, in the term of grammar which covers the aspects of the using of tense, pronoun, preposition, and meaning, the pairs work also showed higher score than individual work. The total score of pairs work was 16 and the individual work was 8. Furthermore, the average score of pairs work was 11.5 and individual work was 7.3.

Students' reflection

The result of students' reflection indicated that almost most of the students inclined to be more comfortable and loved to work in pairs or collaborative writing activity than work individually. 34 of 49 students or about 69% of the students were positive about work in pairs or group. Although there were 15 students or about 31% of the students were doubt about the affectivity of pairs work and inclined to work individually.

Of those that found the experience positive, the predominant reason given (by 34 students) was that it provided them with an opportunity to compare ideas and to learn from each other different ways of expressing their ideas. For example, Astri, Rinawati, bunga, et.al. said:

“ I think doing pairs writing is more effective because when I am doing

collaborative writing, I can get more ideas from my friends...”

Doing pairs writing also really helped students in generating and developing ideas. For example, Indri and Klara said:

“...by doing pairs writing I can brainstorm the ideas together and develop the ideas easily...”

Furthermore, doing pairs writing activity also impacted the social aspect of the students. They were enjoyable in the process and felt free. For example, Tanti, Diah, and Tri anis said:

“...I think doing writing together in group is more enjoyable and interesting because I am not feeling underpressure...”

The students needed less time in producing outline. For example, Mutmainah said:

“...the material to produce an essay in not easy for me, but by doing pairs writing; I can produce the outline more quickly with my friends...”

Discussion

Getting students to compose in pairs is a fairly novel strategy. Investigating the students' text produce in pairs and their reflections toward the collaborative writing is sexy subject to be discussed.

A comparison of the products (completed texts) of pairs and individuals showed that in all aspects of writing (formatting,

structure of the essay, content, and grammar) pairs writing showed higher score. It means that collaborative writing helped the students in generating, organizing, developing the ideas, and reducing the level of error in grammar more effectively than individual writing.

It is in line with Barkley, Cross, and Major in their book *Collaborative Learning Techniques* (2005: 256). They states that working together can help students to learn and perform the stages of writing more effectively. Additionally, students typically write better and take more pride in their writing when they are writing for an audience; the collaborative element of this CoLT gives them such an audience.

In term of students' reflection, most of the students said that doing pairs writing really helpful for their writing process when they generate and developing the ideas. They also be more easily in expressing their ideas because the they could share the idea together with their friends. They also felt free in the process of writing. And the time spent to produce the outline was less than in individual work. It means that collaborative writing is not only positive for the students writing skill but also the students' social aspect because they get new spirit and joy in the process of

writing that can influence their ability in producing essay in better ways. This finding is in line with Shehadeh (2011: 13) in his research finding. He states that findings of the study, both the statistical and the survey dimensions, might be accounted for in terms of the social constructivist view of learning introduced earlier. According to the social constructivist perspective of learning, external activities in which the learner participates are the main source of mental/cognitive activities. When individuals interact, their cognitive processes awaken. These processes, which occur on the inter-psychological (or social) plane, include both cognitive development and language development. Language development moves from the inter-mental plane to the intra-mental plane on the assumption that what originates in the social (interpsychological) sphere will eventually be represented intra-psychologically, that is, within the individual. In other words, external activities are transformed into mental ones through the processes of approximation and internalization.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, collaborative writing helped the students in generating,

organizing, developing the ideas, and reducing the level of error in grammar more effectively than individual writing because the students can share the ideas together and revise the draft of writing together. Writing collaboratively also give positive impact on the students' social aspect because they can learn to work in team, get new spirit, and reduce their feeling under pressure in the process of writing.

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