

The Implementation of “Writing in Pairs” Based on Students’ Perception

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Abstract:

Writing skill is one of four skills that a student learns in language. It is a language skill with the last sequence studied by the learner. Writing in pairs is a strategy which is applied in writing. The aims of writing in pairs in learning is students and their partners can work together to get unite ideas owned by each student. This study was conducted to see how the use of writing in pairs strategy in learning writing viewed from students’ perception whose results can be used as a reference for improvement in learning writing skills. The data were taken from the Essay Writing class in the English Language Education Study Program of FKIP Bung Hatta University by giving questionnaires to the students after they have studied three times of writing using learning experience with writing in pairs strategy or pair work. The results showed that students were happy with the pair work technique in learning their writing activities. By working in pair, learners finds that it is easier and enjoyfull to come up with an idea. As a result, the boring writing activity is turning into a more fun activity.

Key words: Implementation, writing in pairs, students’ perception

1. Introduction

As the medium of communication, English teaching on higher education should be matched to the demand of globalization. Teaching writing in higher education needs more effort and attempt to develop students’ motivation. The wants of students related to the improvement of their ability in writing skill should become attention. Therefore, a set of effective techniques is very essential to inspire students in learning writing skill.

Writing skill is a skill of combining and arranging words become sentence that aims to inform something to help the writer communicate with the reader. It is the special way for communication because it makes people able to communicate each other in unlimited time and distance. In education, mastering writing skill is requirement. It should be taught to students since it can improve their ability in using language.

The elementary students up to university are required to have this ability. By writing, the students can express their thought, ideas, and feelings. They need to be able in writing paragraphs, essays, paper, thesis and report. In getting a job, people also need to acquire it since they need to write report and application letter. Because of that, a writer should have good knowledge and skill about how to write effectively and fluently. Being a good writer, he can consider the choice of words in order to avoid misunderstanding and miscommunicating in written communication.

The ability to write effectively and fluently in English is becoming increasingly important in today’s modern world, since communication through language has become more and more essential (Biria and Jafari, 2013). Then, they say that writing is known as an important skill for multi various reasons in education and business and it plays a significant

role in personal and professional life. Furthermore, they state that, it has become one of the major requirements in English for General Purposes (EGP) as well as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) syllabi.

Writing skill is not just a language skill. Moreover, it is considered as a role in the academic achievement of learners. Graham and Perin (in Wulyani, 2009) state that writing skills are predictors for academic success. Writing skills have an important role in one's academic world. Therefore, writing skills should be owned, especially by those who are educated in college.

Furthermore, Ghoorchaei, Tavakoli, & Nejad Ansari in Jafari and Anssari (2012) state that the ability to write effectively is becoming more significant in today's communication and academic settings and improving the writing ability of the learners which is assuming an important part in L2 language education. A research dealing with individual writing skills has been done by many researchers. In general, they found that students had problems in writing EFL. In other words, their writing is not satisfactory. Kasman (2004) and Irawati (2008) found that many university students and graduates in Indonesia have low writing competence, especially in writing academic texts.

Writing as one of the productive skills, counts as the most difficult skill, to be mastered among the other skills. According to Richards and Renandya (2002), there is no doubt in that writing is the most difficult skill for students to master. The difficulty lies not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating these ideas into readable text. Writing becomes the most complicated and difficult subject because in

writing there are some rules that have to be mastered by the students such as the choice of words, spellings, grammar, and punctuations. The skill involved in writing are highly complex. The students have to pay attention to higher level skills of planning and organizing as well as lower level skills of spelling, punctuation, word choice, and so on.

Furthermore, Olshtain (2001) states writing in addition to being a communicative skill of vital importance; it is a skill which enables the student to plan and rethink the communication process. It therefore provides the student with the opportunity to focus on both linguistic accuracy and content organization. We have to form priorities and weight the elements according to students' needs and teachers' own philosophy.

In addition, Nunan (2003) states that writing is the physical, mental, impress, express, process, and product of the writer. He explained that writing is the physical act of committing words or ideas and the mental work of inventing ideas or felling into statements and paragraph that will be understood by the reader. Then, he explained that writing is the process of the writer imagines, organizes, drafts, edits, reads, and rereads it. Ultimately, what the audience reads is the product such as essay, text, story, letter, research report, etc.

Furthermore, other researchers (Sabarun: 2006, Attamim: 2007, Ulfiati: 2010, and Isnawati: 2010) also stated the same findings with the two previous researchers related to the performance of individual students' writing. In general, they find that most students have problems in writing. The students have low motivation, poor writing skills, and lack of confidence and the worst than those is paradigm

among the students that writing is very difficult to be mastered. Referring to low motivation, students do not exercise seriously and do not bring dictionaries into the classroom to assist them in writing. Their low writing ability is reflected in the fact that they often do not know what is written, how to organize ideas well, cannot explore ideas, and make many mistakes related to grammar (grammatical sentences) and vocabulary (wrong choice of words). If, they can complete their writing assignments, the results are far from what is expected.

The findings of the above researchers were also found by Ahmed (2010), Barrett and Chen (2011), Zakaria and Mogaddam (2013), Hammad (2014), Al Seyabi and Tuzlukova (2014), and Javid and Umer (2014). Their findings all indirectly lead to a conclusion that writing individually is a relatively difficult task to do. Therefore, there needs to be an effort to facilitate learners to make it easier for them to develop writing skills. In this case, there are some factors need to be considered by a teacher that can influence the students' success in writing such as teaching technique chosen, teaching media used, and teaching materials given to the students. Directly or indirectly, the technique that is chosen by the teacher will determine the students' achievement. If the teacher can choose an appropriate technique, the learner will be interested in learning and following the lesson well. This condition will increase their motivation to write. One technique that can be used is to apply pair writing technique in teaching writing. Writing with friends in collaboration (writing in pairs) is an alternative learning strategy intended to facilitate students to produce writing. In this activity, students not only share ideas with friends to form

writing, but also can think critically about the ideas raised. This strategy has been the concern of English teaching researchers. They found several advantages from applying writing in pair strategy in learning writing skills.

The first advantage of pair work in writing is to have a positive impact on students' grammar, precision, and more focus (Storch, 1999; Storch, 2005, Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009, Meiharni, et al, 2013). The second advantage of applying pair work in writing skill is the significant impact on student's writing (Shehadeh, 2011; Storch, 2005). The next advantage is students become more active and because of the formation and development of student's ideas (Storch, 2005, and Storch, 2007). Another advantage of working in pairs is that students feel more enjoy and can improve their language competence (Dobao, 2012; and Shehadeh, 2011).

Raines (2003) says that writing skill can impose the grammatical structure, idiom, and vocabulary of the students. By doing writing in pair working, the students can help each other to write the sentences in correct grammatical structure, good idiom, and appropriate vocabulary. Through writing in pairs, learners work with peers to produce writing or essay well. They should collaborate with partners from planning, drafting, revising / editing, to the publication or finalization of their duties. This strategy is actually done by many English teachers as a foreign language (EFL). Research on this strategy has also been done by many people. Bruffee in Jafari and Anshari (2012) states that by making students writing compositions and fictions in pairs, students produced better texts in comparison to the times they wrote alone. Then,

Bruffee also says that the feedback that the learners receive from this new model of writing can be extremely positive since collaborative writing is reflective both of the business world and the academic field in which students study. Thus, collaborative writing in the learners' writing achievement in the classroom setting can positively improve in paired writing environment (Bruffee, 1981; Gebhardt, 1980, 1981 in Jafari and Anshari (2012)).

There were also evidences of positive effects of interaction during writing task, especially at college level (O'Donnell, Dansereau, Rocklin, Lambiotte, Hythecker & Larson, 1985 in Jafari and Anshari (2012)). For instance, Clifford (1981) in Jafari and Anshari (2012) studied college freshman performance in collaborative writing environment contended that students who wrote in groups learned more from each other than those students working individually. Daiute's research (1986, p. 389) in Jafari and Anshari (2012) confirmed earlier studies that "students who collaborated made significant improvement over students who wrote individually".

Regarding individual versus collaborative pair work, Shi (1998) in Jafari and Anshari (2012) was concerned with comparing a written text produced collaboratively with another text produced individually by ESL students from three different pre-university writing classes under different conditions including peer-talk previewing discussion, teacher-led previewing discussion, and no discussion. The findings suggest that there was no significance difference among the peer-talk discussion, teacher-led discussion, and no discussion group, the participants in Shi's study produced a wider

range of verbs after peer discussion. Moreover, the findings of Shi's study indicated that the teacher-led as well as peer-talk discussions provided scaffolded help for learners to generate varying degrees of vocabulary, to conceptualize their thinking, and to explore their ideas within the given context. Thus, it would be possible to obtain

more comparable results about writing performance across different task conditions. In one of the earliest studies by Storch (1999) in Jafari and Anshari (2012), which was in the form of small-scale, triad ESL learners from intermediate to advanced L2 proficiency completed three different kinds of grammar-focused exercises including a cloze, a text reconstruction and a short composition. Each type of exercise had also an isomorphic version which was done individually or collaboratively. A comparison between these two kinds of isomorphic versions suggested that collaboration improves the degree of accuracy and has a positive effect on it, but it is subject to change within specific grammatical items. In particular, the findings suggested that cloze and text reconstructions which had been completed collaboratively were more accurate than those completed individually. Furthermore, composition produced collaboratively not only gained lower scores in terms of complexity but also had a small number of errors and greater amount of error-free clauses.

Vega (2016) says that the pedagogical arguments that support collaborative working in the L2 classroom, pair and group work allow the teacher to leave some responsibility for the students themselves, which may help them to increase their autonomy under the security that working with others in small groups provides,

since students (especially those with a lower level of English) may feel more comfortable and may participate more during small group discussions than during whole-class discussions (McDonough, 2004).

The teaching of writing as a foreign language does not mean teaching how to transfer sentences in the mother tongue of the student into English sentences. An English teacher should consider many things in teaching writing as a foreign language. Related to this, some experts, (such as Sokolik and Kroll), who are interested in teaching English suggest some ideas related to teach writing.

Kroll (2001) mentions several points to consider for teaching writing skills in the EFL. The first is the syllabus. A syllabus should be designed to consider the objectives of the curriculum objectives, especially those that will be faced by students and teachers. The syllabus should reflect the teaching-writing philosophy that the teacher has adopted for a particular course.

Secondly, the teacher should have good technique to help the students start the writing activity. Sometimes, it is difficult to write something and need an outside stimulus in order to write. To do this, the teacher can do some activities; a) brainstorming. This is a group exercise in which all students in the class are encouraged to participate on a particular subject. It aims to produce much material; b) list. It is a quiet and individual activity. In this step, students are encouraged to think as many ideas as possible about the topics to be discussed; c) clustering. This activity is done by noting all matters relating to the material or problem; d) write free.

Third, there should be a design task. In designing the task, the teacher should pay attention to some points; a) writing assignments should be presented in a clear context so that students understand the reasons for doing the task; b) the content of the task / topic should be accessible to the students; c) the language used to write a task / topic should be clear and easy to understand; d) the task should be focused and possible to be completed within a certain time and must be in accordance with the student's knowledge; e) clear rhetoric and task form including reference use (if any); f) evaluation criteria should be identified so that students will know in advanced how their work will be assessed.

II. Research Method

This research is intended to see the students' perception about pair work in learning writing skill. Before obtaining students' perception, the researcher gives pair work experience in learning writing skill to the students. Students can feel how the pair work experience impact in their learning writing skills. As a result, they can give perceptions according to the real experience that they have got.

Treatment Procedure

This study was carried out to one class of English students who took Essay Writing course at the English Department of FKIP of Bung Hatta university. The first meeting was used to discuss the concept of introductory paragraph and complete the task on introductory paragraph, the second meeting was used for body paragraph, and the third one was used for studying concluding paragraph. Discussion about the students' mastery of each paragraph was done

after the students finished studying the material about it, exactly at the next meeting before continuing the material to the next paragraph. This activity was done until three times of meeting.

In the process of developing the introductory paragraph, they were asked to employ writing stages (planning, drafting/writing, and editing). In the stage of planning, everyone in each pair was asked to produce at least two or three sentences individually that would be used to be general statements and thesis statement. This means that each group had at least 4-6 sentences. Then, each pair discussed the sentences produced to be an introductory paragraph. In this step, they could add necessary sentence/s and eliminate improperly sentence/s in order that their introductory paragraph was acceptable properly. While they were discussing the sentences in order to be introductory paragraph, they were reminded that their introductory paragraph had to consist of some general statements and a thesis statement that had to be put as the final sentence of introductory paragraph.

On the 2nd meeting, the researcher first discussed some points related to the introductory paragraph developed by the subjects after studying in the previous meeting for 10-15 minutes. After that, the researcher presented and discussed the concept of body paragraph and how to develop the body paragraph. Then, the subjects were asked to develop body paragraph. In this phase, they were reminded that their body paragraph had to develop the thesis statement formulated at the end of introductory paragraph. In the process of developing the body paragraph, the subjects were also asked to employ writing stages (planning, drafting/writing, and editing).

In the stage of planning, everyone in each pair was asked to produce at least three sentences individually. In drafting/writing and editing stages, each pair discussed sentences produced (at least 6) to be body paragraph. Here, they were also reminded that their body paragraph should consist of a topic sentence and several supporting sentences.

On the 3rd meeting, the researcher first discussed some points related to the body paragraphs developed by the subjects after studying in the previous meeting for 10-15 minutes. As soon as the discussion was completed, the researcher presented and discussed the concept of concluding paragraph and how to develop the concluding paragraph. Here, they were informed that they could use a conclusion transition signal such as in conclusion, in summary, or to summarize. Next, they could either summarize the main points of the essay or rewrite the thesis statement in different words. After that, the researcher had the subjects develop concluding paragraph. In the process of developing the concluding paragraph, the subjects were asked to make the concluding paragraph individually based on the thesis statement and body paragraph. Then, everybody brought the concluding paragraph developed to the group and compared with one developed by their partner. The comparison was carried out in order that they could produce a proper concluding paragraph.

When the subjects were developing introductory, body, and concluding paragraphs, the researcher had to walk around the classroom, moving from one group to another. This activity was carried out to make sure that the subjects really worked in pairs as intended. In addition, this was conducted to minimize the member of

each pair to dominate his/her partner work in pairs.

The focus of this research is pair work in learning writing, then the subject of this study is a student who have taken the courses of Writing I and Writing II. The reason researcher chose students who take the course of Essay Writing as the subject of research is that they already have basic writing skills. So, in this research activity the researcher only adds pair work experience again.

Because the data needed in this study is the students' perception about the application of pair work technique in learning writing, the researcher used a questionnaire (Table 1) to collect the data. In answering the questionnaire, students are asked to give a closed and opened answer. That is, there are two types of questions of the questionnaire; the first eight questions called closed questions ask the students to provide answers based on the options provided (yes/no answers for nos. 1-7, and fixed and changed answer for no. 8) and the second two ones called opened questions ask the students to give their explanation about the use of pair work technique in learning writing based on the experience they get.

Table 1. Questionnaire about Students' Perception on Using Pair Work in Learning Writing

N O	Questions	Answer	
		Yes	No
1	Are you happy if you are asked to write in pair while writing an essay?	Yes	No
2	Do you like to share your ideas with your partner while writing in pair of an essay?	Yes	No
3	Are you happy in receiving your partner's feedback/comments while	Yes	No

writing in pair of an essay?			
4	Can writing in pair minimize your Nervousness in writing an essay?	Yes	No
5	Does writing in pair increase your self confidence to write an essay?	Yes	No
6	Does writing in pair improve your motivation to write an essay?	Yes	No
7	Can writing in pair increase your sight about writing skill?	Yes	No
8	What is your opinion about your partner in writing in pair; Do you like your partner to be fixed or changed when to move to the other topic of writing?	Fixed	Changed
9	What advantages do you get while writing in pair in writing an essay related to sharing ideas with your partner?	Free Answer	
10	What difficulties do you have related to the item of "sharing idea?"	Free Answer	

III. Discussion

After the data was collected using a questionnaire containing 10 questions consisting of 8 closed questions (questions nos. 1 to 7 with "Yes" and "No" answers and no 8 with "Changed" and "Fixed" options and 2 opened questions, Nos. 9 and 10 asking students' explanation about the impact of using pair working technique in learning writing. There were some answers that can be described below. Of the 8 (eight) closed questions given, 22 people (88%) of the sample members answered "Yes". There were three students (12%) responded with "No" answers to questions nos. 2 and 3 and fifteen (15) respondents (60%) answered "Fixed" answers and 10 (40%) stated "Changed" to no. 8. These perceptions seem to have different percentage compared to the others. Some students like to change their partner

but some others do not like to change them. The perception of the students to this question depends on their like and their dislike to work with their partner. Because of that, it is better for the teacher to change the partner of the students in order they can work in pair collaboratively with all of friends in the classroom. While the 2 items of opened questions asked about the advantages and the disadvantages of sharing ideas with partners in writing; they provided a varied answer. For the advantages of sharing ideas, 25 people (100%) stated that pair work makes them easy to smooth out their idea because there is a provocation of ideas from their partner. While in term of difficulties in sharing ideas with partner, 4 people (16%) stated that they sometimes experience difficulties such as difficulty in determining whose ideas will be developed or there is also difficulty in joining one idea to the others. However, that problem can be overcome by further discussions with the partner. While 21 people (84%) said no difficulty in sharing ideas with their partner. The distribution of the students' answer to the questionnaire can be seen from the table 2 below.

Table 2. The Distribution of the Students' Perception to the Questionnaire

No	Answer	Number of students	Percentage (%)
1	Yes	22	88
2	No	3	12
3	Fixed	15	60
4	Changed	10	40
5	Advantages: pair work in writing makes them easy to smooth out their idea because there	25	100

	is a provocation of ideas from their partner		
6	Difficulties: - to state whose idea will be developed - to join one idea to the other	4	16
7	No Difficulties	21	84

III. Conclusion

The result of this research concluded that there is a good impact of pair work in writing activities based on positive perceptions given by students to the questionnaire about the pair work given (88% answered Yes). This good impact can be seen from observation for three times pairing activities conducted where there is a different scene with the essay writing activities that are usually done. Previous essay writing activities are tedious and unflattering activity has been turned into an activity that looks busy because with pairs many things can be done. By doing pair work in essay writing each partner can share ideas, comment on their partner's idea, reduce anxiety / nervousness, increase confidence, and increase motivation in writing essay. And the very important thing that is necessary in writing an essay is the broad insight of the author. With the pair work in writing an essay, a broad insight of a writer can appear and be written in an essay after they have a deep discussion with the partner.

Based on the above findings, it can be said that pair work is one of the techniques necessary and good to apply because many positive things can be created for writing activities. Activity of sharing ideas with a partner in writing can make a pair who previously could not afford or difficult to remove his idea to write

can be helped by using this technique to issue his idea. By using working in pair technique, it will rarely be found a student who just looks at his paper for so long time and does not write anything because of his inability to issue what ideas will be written. Furthermore, it can be said that by pair working in essay writing make writing activity become more favored by student. Through pair working will be created essay writing which is the result of the thought of two students who previously had a discussion starting from the phase of the introduction paragraph, body paragraphs, and paragraph of conclusion.

From the findings of this study, it is suggested to lecturers who teach writing courses to use the strategy of work in pairs in the process of teaching and learning to write. During the activity, the lecturer is advised to control the pairs of work activities in order to run smoothly, effectively, and efficiently so as to achieve the learning objectives that have been set.

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