

COLLABORATIVE DIALOGUE WRITING THROUGH PICTURE PROMPTS TO INCREASE THE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS

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ABSTRACT: Writing skills are predictors of academic success and are required for being able to participate in the global community and economy. Even so, the frequency of writing activities for students in secondary schools and even in higher education is still low. This is reflected in the students' inability to express their thoughts into writing. This paper discusses the method of writing collaborative dialogue as one of the efforts to improve students' writing skills. It aims to prove whether the learning model of writing collaborative dialogue activities through images can improve students' writing skills and whether through this activity they are able to produce more writing ideas. The quasi-experimental method design was used in this study. The data was collected by means of *writing test*. The results of the test were analyzed by the experienced rater in the teaching of writing. To calculate and compare means and standard deviations from both groups of students, SPSS was used.

Keywords: method of writing collaborative dialogue, images, writing skills

Having the ability to write well is not only a choice but a need for students. Like reading skills, writing skills are also predictors of academic success and are required for being able to participate in global social and economic life (Graham and Perin: 2007). Even so, the frequency of writing activities for students in secondary schools and even in higher education is still low. This is reflected in the students' inability to express their thoughts into writing. Some findings indicate that students are not even able to write cohesive and coherent paragraphs. This certainly will greatly affect their educational process at the university, where they are required to be able to write scientific papers. In addition, the definition of literacy skills also includes reading and writing skills, the level of writing skills that are still low must also be concerned as an effort to alleviate the nation's literacy problems.

Due to the above, a number of special teaching techniques raise, which are expected to be useful to improve students' writing skills. One of them is through the use of images in teaching writing.

Pictures have proven effective in stimulating students to get ideas for writing. There are several findings about how the use of images helps students in reading and writing. Carney & Levin (2002) state that images or illustrations enable students to go beyond the information provided and assist them in carrying out higher cognitive and creative activities such as writing collaborative dialogue.

Collaborative writing activities have been a trend in writing and pedagogical research since the 1970s. Collaborative writing encourages social interaction among authors through responding to peer writing (Ferris and Hedgcock, 1998). Social interaction and dialogue with others are considered important by social interactionist theorists such as Vygotsky (2000). He, furthermore, state that learning involves internalizing the process of social interaction that can help students develop conceptual thinking skills.

For students, collaborative writing activities encourage them to brainstorm ideas in pairs or groups, to provide input to each other, and to correct and edit their writing. However, although collaborative writing activities have been widely used in classroom learning, Topping (2001) states that this learning model requires innovation and development so that the results are maximized.

The research on collaborative dialogue writing activities was then conducted in order to prove whether this learning model is able to improve students' writing skills, and to find out if they were able to produce more writing ideas through the activity.

This research is expected to produce one of the learning model innovations of writing, namely the Collaborative Dialogue Writing Learning Model with image prompts to improve students' writing skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing Collaborative Dialogue

Dialogue is a conversation between two people or more reciprocally. This can also mean a writing in the form of a conversation. Dialogue is done to exchange views and ideas between different parties. It can be defined as the activity of speaking, chatting, discourse, conversation, negotiation etc., while its antonym includes monologues and soliloquy. Furthermore, Teo (2007) says that collaborative writing is a process in which two or more individuals work together to produce written composition. The dominant paradigm today is a single author theory, many models describe collaboration in several different conceptualizations.

Farkas (2010) offers four collaborative writing definitions, namely:

- Two or more people together compile the full text of the document;
- Two or more people contribute to completing a document;
- One or more people modify, by editing and / or reviewing, documents from one or more people or more;

- One person who works interactively with one or more people and compilation of documents based on ideas from others.

In this study, the term writing collaborative dialogue refers to collaborative conversations written by a pair of students preceded by picture prompts. The reason for choosing picture as a guide for this activity is that the image has a strong influence in gaining attention. An image can be worth a thousand words. It is hoped that through pictures, students will be emotionally interested and will then be able to develop their ideas in writing.

Key Benefits and Benefits of Collaborative Writing

Collaborative writing most likely gives benefits to ideas production in writing activities. According to Levefre (2010), there are five benefits of collaborative writing. They are:

- Empirical collaborative writing activities can produce better and more quantitative work compared to writing by a single author. This activity also encourages the development of social interaction through the exchange of ideas between writers.
- Through this activity creativity in writing can be grown because the opportunity to develop the direction of writing is very flexible. We can add ideas to dialogue here and there and are free to determine the theme and context as desired.
- This activity can also develop the students' ability to argue, because to produce dialogue they will have to discuss determining the direction of the conversation itself.
- It encourages students to consider their audience. When students write dialogues collaboratively, they must be able to consider whether the audience reading the dialogue understand the context they build in the conversation / dialogue they write.

Through this collaborative writing activity, students are expected to produce better works than when they work alone. Collaborative writing effectiveness in the classroom has been repeatedly confirmed in what has become a large collaborative writing and collaborative discourse of learning.

Steps of the Learning Model of Collaborative Writing Dialogue through Images

The steps of the learning model of Collaborative Dialogue Writing through Images are as follows.

Step 1: Preparation

- a. Explain the following things to students about how to write good dialogues:
 - Dialogue is a conversation between two or more people.

- Dialogue is very important in fiction writing.
 - Dialogue can turn on characters.
 - Dialogue must be more than just speech
 - Dialogue should contain interesting, emotional, and dramatic words.
- b. Do a brainstorming activities about people who might have a dialogue and what they might talk about. Example: dialogue between parents and teachers: (parents who want to bribe the teacher to pass the child) or dialogue between students about who is having a date in class.

Step 2: Finding Ideas

Display images of people talking in available situations. Instruct students to think about the situations from conversation / dialogue. Questions can be asked to do what?

- Who did what and to whom?
- What happened?
- Where did that happen?
- When did it happen?
- Who are the important people (main characters) in the picture?
- Why did he / she / they do that?
- What is the problem?
- How did he / she / they solve the problem?
- What happens next?
- So what?

Step 3: Dialogue Writing Preparation

- After each pair of students get their ideas that have been changed and reorganized, ask them to write a dialogue of at least 10 lines.
- Encourage them to include explanatory material and write more than just "*He said ... He said.*"
- The dialogue they produce must be able to meet at least three to four of the following:
 - Information about the dialogue situation
 - Information of place and characters
 - There is a storyline
 - There is a conflict
 - Thinking of characters
 - Summary of what happened

Step 4: Correction of Dialog Scripts

- One student of each pair reads the dialogue. If the word is read incorrectly, others will provide corrections.

Step 5: Editing

- Students pair up to see the draft together, and consider what improvements might be made to words, sentence structures, or components that the dialogue must possess.

Step 6: Writing Dialogue Revisions

- Students revise their dialogue according to the dialogue function mentioned in step 3.

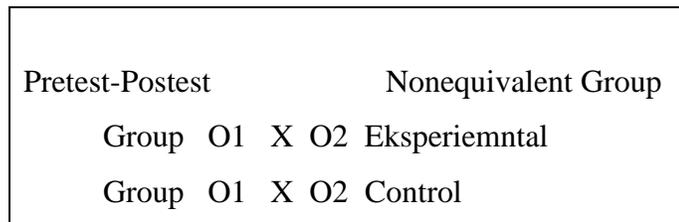
Step 7: Evaluation

- In this final step, lecturers / teaching staff come to students, check their work, give explicit instructions regarding the writing and grammar or providing other corrective feedback related to the dialogue component in steps 2. Students and lecture then together review lecturer’s comments or corrections and make possible corrections on their writing.

RESEARCH METHOD

The experimental method was applied in this study. The samples of this study was placed into two groups. The first is the experimental group and the second is the control group. Richards et al. (1993, p.100) states that the experimental method is an approach to educational research in which ideas or hypotheses are tested or verified by establishing situations in which the relationship between subjects or different variables can be determined.

In this study, the researchers applied the quasi-experimental method design as shown in the following diagram:



- O1 : Pre Test
- O2 : Post test
- X : *treatment*

The design was implemented in the form of teaching. Both groups of students were placed in two different classes. In this case, the researchers applied the teaching method defined as Collaborative Dialogue Writing Learning with Image Prompts in the experimental group (group I) and applied another teaching method defined as conventional method (paragraph writing exercises) to students of the control group (group II). The teaching was done for 16 meetings, 110 minutes for each meeting.

Population and Research Sample

The population of this study was all students of the English Language Study Program of Universitas Bina Darma. The population was drawn into the samples of the study. The samples were determined through purposive cluster sampling. In this case, the samples were the sixth semester students of the English Language Study Program at Universitas Bina Darma.

Validity and Reliability Test of Instrument

To test the validity of the tests, the criterion-related validity was used to determine whether the test was appropriate for checking the writing ability test. As for reliability of the test, the researchers used the inter-rater reliability.

The Techniques of Collecting Data

The data in this study was collected by means of *writing test*.

The Techniques of Analyzing Data

The results of the writing test were analyzed by the experienced rater in the teaching of writing. Researchers also will use SPSS to calculate and compare means and standard deviations from both groups of students.

FINDINGS

Test

The data was obtained in the form of the pretest and the posttest scores, before and after the teaching of writing collaborative dialogue with picture prompts (treatment). The data were analyzed using the t-test, namely Paired Sample Test, and Independent Sample Test. Both of these t-tests were used to compare differences in achievement of the two groups.

The paired sample test was used to analyze the pretest and posttest data from both groups (experimental and control), whereas the independent sample tests was used to analyze the differences in score averages and standard deviations from the two groups. In this study, the research hypothesis are:

H0: There is no significant difference in the ability to write narrative essays among groups of students taught through the activities of writing collaborative dialogues with recommended pictures and of that taught by the conventional methods.

H1: There is a significant difference in the ability to write narrative essays among groups of students taught through the activities of writing collaborative dialogues with recommended images and of those taught by the conventional methods.

Statistical Results of Tests of the Experimental Group

The following tables show the statistical results of paired samples test of the ability of the students in the experimental group to write narrative essays.

Table 1

Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	12.20	10	2.150	.680
	Posttest	16.90	10	1.595	.504

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest - Posttest	-4.700	.675	.213	-5.183	-4.217	-22.021	9	.000

The statistical results above demonstrates that the average value of the pre-test is 12,20 and the standard deviation is 2,150, whereas in the posttest it is known that the average value is 16.90 with a standard deviation of 1,595 which indicates a difference in value of 4.7. This shows an increase in the writing test value (see the attachment).

From the results of the paired sample test, it can be seen that the calculated t value is -22,021 with a significance level of .000.

Statistical Results of Tests of the Control Group

The following tables show the statistical results of paired sample test of the ability of students in the control group to write narrative essays.

Table 2

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	12.80	10	2.300	.727
	Posttest	12.60	10	1.955	.618

Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Pretest & Posttest	10	.722	.018

Table 3

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
Pair 1	Pretest - Posttest	.200	1.619	.512	-.958	1.358	.391	9	.705

The statistical results above show that the average value of the pretest is 12, 80 and the standard deviation is 2,300, whereas in the posttest it is known that the average value is 12.60 with a standard deviation of 1.955 which shows a difference in value of 0.2. This actually shows a decrease in the writing test value.

From the results of paired sample test, it can be seen that the calculated t value is 0.391 with a significance level of .000.

The Statistical Results of Independent Sample Test

To analyze the differences of the pretest and posttest results from the two groups, researchers calculated the independent sample test. The following table shows the results of statistical calculations.

Table 4

Group Statistics					
	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Value	Experimental Group	10	16.9000	1.59513	.50442
	Control Group	10	12.6000	1.95505	.61824

Tabel 5
Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Nilai	Equal variances assumed	.494	.491	5.389	18	.000	4.30000	.79791	2.62365	5.97635
	Equal variances not assumed			5.389	17.303	.000	4.30000	.79791	2.61879	5.98121

INTERPRETATIONS

Based on the above results, it can be seen that compared with the control group, the experimental group makes an increase in the results of writing test. The increase is shown by the increase in scores between the pretest score and the posttest score. The average score obtained by the experimental group in the writing test after treatment increases by 4.7, while the control group actually shows a decrease in score by 0.2.

The findings confirm that the activities of writing collaborative dialogues with picture prompts enable the experimental group raise achievement in writing compared to those taught by conventional method in the control class.

During the learning process, researchers observed that the activity of writing collaborative dialogues with picture prompts was able to attract students' attention and motivate them to produce more ideas when writing. Though they still made mistakes when doing (for example, when discussing with a partner in their group when formulating what will be written in the dialogue), but at least this collaborative dialogue writing activity is able to make writing lesson a pleasant time for students and of course help them explore more potential in terms of pouring ideas into writing.

Although the results of this study provide several benefits for the development of students' writing ability, it is acknowledged that this research is far from perfect. This is mainly due to the limited time that researchers had. Therefore, if further research of the same type is carried out in the future, it is suggested that future researchers conduct a study with larger samples and longer periods.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

Based on the research findings and interpretations above, it can be concluded that the activities of writing collaborative dialogues with picture prompts seem to have benefited the development of writing skills of English language students at

Universitas Bina Darma. Interesting pictures, as well as paired discussion activities in formulating a dialogue about images positively make them get more ideas in writing which results in improvement of the students' writing skill.

Suggestions

The results of the study may still be far from satisfying, but it could be a useful input for English teachers/lecturers who need to improve the writing skills of students. However, there are several things that need to be considered in the activities of writing collaborative dialogues with picture prompts : (1) the selected images must be very interesting and deliver a strong message, and (2) groups that seem unable to discuss, or appear to be passive, can be re-paired after initial meetings. In addition, because the results of this study may not answer all the problems that occur in teaching writing, further studies with larger samples and longer periods can contribute more and provide better insight for teaching writing.

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