

COLLABORATIVE WRITING: AN EFFECTIVE TEACHING STRATEGY TO TEACH WRITING PARAGRAPHS

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Abstract

The students' writing ability was low because they were reluctant to cooperate with their friends when writing. Therefore, the researchers were interested in investigating the effectiveness of collaborative writing for teaching writing paragraphs in this post-pandemic. This study used a pre-experimental design, a one group pre-test post-test research design. Twenty-five students of an English department in a private university in East Java became the population as well as the sample. Pre-test and post-test of writing a paragraph were used to collect the data. The researchers used a descriptive statistics and a paired-sample test to analyze the data. The results show that the students' writing average score increased from 68.6 to 81.2. Meanwhile, the result of a paired-sample test tells that sig. (2-tailed) was 0.000. It means that the implementation of collaborative writing was effective to teach writing paragraphs. Hopefully, the EFL teachers use collaborative writing in their writing classes.

Keywords: collaborative writing, paragraphs, writing ability.

Abstrak

Kemampuan menulis mahasiswa rendah karena mereka enggan bekerjasama dengan teman-temannya saat menulis. Oleh karena itu, peneliti tertarik untuk menginvestigasi efektifitas collaborative writing untuk mengajar menulis paragraf di era pasca pandemi ini. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain pre-eksperimen, yakni desain satu grup pre-tes pos-tes. Dua puluh lima mahasiswa jurusan pendidikan bahasa Inggris di sebuah universitas swasta di Jawa Timur merupakan populasi sekaligus sampel dalam penelitian ini. Soal pre-tes dan pos-tes menulis sebuah paragraf digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data. Peneliti menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan uji paired-sample untuk menganalisa data. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa skor rata-rata mahasiswa dalam menulis meningkat dari 68.6 menjadi 81.2. Sedangkan, nilai sig. (2-tailed) dari uji paired-sample adalah 0.000. Ini berarti bahwa collaborative writing efektif untuk mengajar menulis paragraf. Diharapkan, para guru bahasa Inggris menggunakan collaborative writing di kelas menulis mereka.

Kata Kunci: collaborative writing, paragraf, kemampuan menulis.

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INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the English skills that must be studied by the English learners. It is because writing is one of the ways for people in this world to communicate. There will be a situation in which the people cannot say what they want orally. So that they must use writing to tell their ideas or feeling or willingness to others. Zuhriyah & Agustina (2020) support this by stating that writing is as a way of the people to express their thought, feelings, ideas or opinions in the form of texts in their communication. Therefore, writing is very important to be studied.

However, writing is often assumed as the most difficult skill of English. It happens because the learners must consider some aspects in their writing such as grammar, vocabulary, content, organization, and mechanics when they produce writing (Sianna & Syawal, 2017). Those writing aspects will help the readers to understand the texts produced by the writers. Those aspects also determine their writing quality.

Unfortunately, based on the data in the pre-liminary held in an English language department of a private university in Jombang, it is known that the students' writing ability is still less. They still find difficulty to write in a good grammatical structure. Then, they are still lack of the appropriate vocabulary to express their ideas in their writing. Besides, they also often misspell the words in their writing. In addition, they also get difficulty in exploring their ideas about the topics that they will write. Yulianti (2018) states that there are some causes of the students' writing difficulties, such as lack of vocabulary, understanding of grammar, motivation and confidence.

Furthermore, based on the data of observation, it is said that the students of the second semester of that English language department are also lack of collaboration or cooperation in their writing class. They like to do their writing individually. It is because they get used to doing that when they held online learning from home because of Covid-19 pandemic. So that the researchers are interested to activate their collaboration or their cooperation among others again in their writing class by implementing collaborative writing. Collaborative writing is a process of collaborating ideas and thoughts of every member of the groups in each stage of writing (Veramuthu & Shah, 2020).

Additionally, Veramuthu & Shah, (2020) also explain that there are some advantages of collaborative writing. It can promote the students' understanding to value among members' contribution. Then, it can provide writing feedback naturally. Next, it can create the interaction among the students in their groups in exploring their ideas related to the topics of writing. Afterwards, it can also stimulate the students' motivation in learning. Besides, it also promotes the students to have high critical thinking.

Besides, many researchers have investigated the implementation of collaborative writing in EFL writing classes. One of them was a study conducted by Bikowski & Vithanage (2016). They found that collaborative writing could improve the students' individual written products. Meanwhile, Villarreal & Gil-Sarratea (2019) found that the collaborative written papers' content, structure, and organization were much better after the students conducted collaborative writing. Then, Veramuthu & Shah (2020) investigated students' attitudes towards improving writing skills of ESL students via collaborative writing. The results of their study indicated that

the students gave their positive attitude while writing collaboratively. It was followed by Pham (2021) finding that collaborative writing had great effects on students' writing fluency in both collaboratively written papers and individually written papers.

However, all the previous studies above did not investigate the use of collaborative writing for teaching a paragraph in the post-pandemic era. Then, this present study is also intended to know the effectiveness of collaborative writing for teaching writing paragraphs in the post-pandemic of Covid-19.

METHOD

Because this study focused on exploring whether or not collaborative writing was effective for teaching paragraphs in the post-pandemic era, therefore, the researchers employed a pre-experimental study, especially using a one-group pretest-posttest research design. One class of the second semester of an English language department of a private university in East Java that comprised of twenty five students became the population as well as the sample of this study. It is because there is only one class of the second semester of that English language department.

According to Gall et al. (2003), a one-group pretest-posttest research design covers three steps, namely pre-test, treatment, and post-test. So the students of the class that became the sample were given pre-test of writing a good paragraph that minimally consisted of one topic sentence, three supporting sentences, and one concluding sentence. In the next meeting, the students are, then, taught writing paragraphs by using collaborative writing. This teaching and learning process was carried out in three meetings. After that, the students got the post-test of writing a paragraph. The questions of pre-test and post-test in this case were still the same questions in order to know their difference before and after being taught writing paragraphs using collaborative writing. Before being administered to the students, the pre-test and post-test questions had been validated by two doctors of an English department.

The next step after gathering the data from the pre-test and post-test of writing a paragraph was to analyze the data by using descriptive statistics (Sugiyono, 2013). It was to find out the mean score of pre-test and post-test scores. After finding the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test scores, the researchers calculated the normality of the data. When the data was in the normal distribution, the hypothesis was tested using a paired sample t-test. It was to know whether there was significant difference or not between the pre-test and post-test results.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Students' writing ability before the implementation of collaborative writing

Before implementing collaborative writing, the pre-test of writing a paragraph was conducted. The students' writing was scored by two scorers, then, the scores from the two scorers were added and divided by two. The following table presents the result of the descriptive statistics of the pre-test score.

Table 1. Results of descriptive statistics of pre-test

Pre-test Scores	Statistic	Std. Error
Mean	68.6	1.38
Median	67	
Std. Deviation	6.6	
Minimum	52	
Maximum	82	

The pre-test results show that the average score of the students' writing ability to write a paragraph was 68.6. It means that their ability to write a paragraph was still low. Their paragraph was long and did not focus to tell one topic. They often jumped from one topic to another topic and, then, came back to the previous topic. It seemed that they did not understand how to focus to one topic in their paragraph. Their understanding about one topic to be discussed in their writing was basically still less so their writing involved other topics. It resulted in their bad content. It is supported by Purnamasari, Hidayat, & Kurniawati (2021), who argued that one of the students' difficulties in writing was to determine the appropriate content for their writing. As a result of it, their writing score became poor.

Next, their sentences in their writing were often confusing. It was caused by their grammatical structure that was not good enough. Dealing with this, Alostath (2021) stated that the students often had weak grammar competence. They often wrote sentences as they used when they spoke with their friends. They produced more ungrammatical sentences. This made their sentences become meaningless so their score of writing was bad.

Besides, their paragraph organization was not good. According to Toba, Noor, & Sanu (2019), some of the students often encountered writing problems, one of which was organization. That was why they seemed not to understand how to organize a good paragraph. Many of them wrote the paragraph without a concluding sentence. Meanwhile, some of them composed their paragraph without a topic sentence. Their writing was like a kind of free writing. They just wrote what they had in their mind without organizing it. So their writing could not be categorized as a good writing.

In addition, their spelling was also not good enough. Many of words that they wrote were misspelled. They did not focus on the spelling of the words that they used in their writing. They forgot that some words have the same sounds but different spellings. They did not pay attention much to the words that they meant in their writing. Furthermore, Altamimi & Rashid (2019) argued that the mistakes in spelling could change the meaning and understanding of written texts and made the texts become unclear. It made the readers of their writing confused. Then, they got poor writing score.

All phenomenons above were caused by their habit to only copy and paste the writing from Google. Since the online learning because of COVID-19 pandemic, they used to searching everything in Google, including the answers for their writing assignment. They brought their habit into offline learning in this post-pandemic. They were lazy to do deeper thinking about their writing assignment. They had depended on Google so that they could not create a good paragraph without getting it from Google. Salik, Safitri, Satyaputri, & Ningsih (2020) stated that the students became dishonest because the evolution of internet and the technology that could not be stopped so the students were free to download the online sources from internet. The result was their writing ability was low.

They did not struggle much for their writing. Their effort to have a good writing without looking at Google was low. They did not realize that they were already addicted to Google so they could not write anything without Google. They did not remember that writing needed a long process. It was not as fast as what they usually got from Google. They needed to go through many ways to have a good paragraph. However, they were lazy to have more effort. Moreover, they did not want to collaborate with their friends during their teaching and learning process of writing. Then, their writing became not good.

2. Students' writing ability after the implementation of collaborative writing

Knowing that the students' writing ability in the pre-test was still low, the lecturer implemented collaborative writing for her class of paragraph writing. This collaborative writing strategy was implemented in three meetings. The first meeting was for understanding the concept of a paragraph. The lecturer invited the students to count from "one" to "five". Then, the students who said number "one" were asked to gather in a place that was directed by the lecturer. After that, the students who said "two" had to gather in another place. The students who said "three", "four", and "five" also got the same treatment. After all of them had gathered in their groups of five, the lecturer ordered them to understand an example of a paragraph that was displayed on PPT in front of the class. They were requested to define what is called as a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence as they read in the paragraph

presented by the lecturer. They were instructed to discuss with their group members. After that, the lecturer asked every group to read their understanding of what a paragraph was. After all the groups presented their ideas about what a paragraph was, the lecturer gave some corrections to their understanding of a paragraph. When all the groups had understood what was meant by a paragraph, the lecturer gave them a big topic and ordered them to write a paragraph containing a topic provided by the lecturer. All the members had to be involved in their group discussion and writing. When the time to write a paragraph was over, every group presented their writing in front of the class. When the first group presented their writing, the other four groups gave their comments and suggestions. It was also applied to group two, group three, group four, and group five. This meeting was ended with the corrections and suggestions from the lecturer.

The second meeting was little different from the first meeting. The students were asked to sit down in the same groups as the previous meeting. They had to be in the groups of five. Then, the lecturer delivered a big topic to be written into their paragraph without being given an example of a paragraph as they got in the first meeting. They had to decide their topic sentence first. After every group had a topic sentence, the three members of every group were asked to write one sentence that could become a supporting sentence. Meanwhile, the last member had to write a concluding sentence. They were given five minutes to write the sentences. After all the members had written the sentences that were instructed, the group had to compile the five sentences into one paragraph. Next, those groups were to analyze their paragraphs from their compilation based on the organization of the paragraph, content, and, diction, as well as the grammatical structure of their paragraph. They conducted this stage for twenty minutes. When the twenty minutes was over, all the five groups were asked to present their paragraphs in front of the class. Afterward, they got feedback from the other groups and the lecturer.

The third meeting was the day to collaborate with partners. In this meeting the students were asked to choose partners by themselves. Then, the lecturer gave a big topic for their paragraph writing. The lecturer had the students to write a paragraph that consisted of five sentences minimally based on the big topic given. The students got thirty minutes to write a good paragraph as well as to discuss and analyze the paragraphs that they created. After thirty minutes were over, the lecturer requested all couples to present their writing results. As usual, the writing that they presented in front of the class got comments and suggestions from their friends. Finally, the lecturer reviewed and commented their writing. The lecturer gave her suggestions to make their writing better.

The next meeting was for post-test of writing. The lecturer administered the post-test question about writing a good paragraph to the students. Their paragraph had to consist of five sentences minimally. Those five sentences comprised of one sentence as a topic sentence, three sentences as supporting sentences, and one sentence as a concluding sentence. Meanwhile the time for writing a good paragraph that was provided was forty minutes. They were also told that their writing would be scored based on content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics (spelling and punctuation). Besides that, they were suggested to proofread their paragraph before they submitted their writing to the lecturer.

After the post-test had finished, the lecturer scored their students' writing. She also asked one of her friends to give score to the students' writing. It was done to have an interrater for their students' writing score. Then, the scores from the lecturer and the interrater were added and divided by two. The results from the division became the students' final score. After the lecturer got the final score of students' writing, she collected this score as the data for this study.

When all the data from post-test were complete, then, the data was calculated using statistical descriptive to know the mean score of the post-test. The results can be seen in the table 2.

Table 2. Results of descriptive statistics of post-test

Pre-test Scores	Statistic	Std. Error
Mean	81.2	1.38
Median	82	
Std. Deviation	5.6	
Minimum	72	
Maximum	92	

Table 2 shows that the post-test average score was 81.2. It means that the students' writing ability to write a paragraph was better than that of the pre-test one. Their ability in writing a paragraph got an improvement. Their writing ability became good after learning writing paragraphs using collaborative writing. One of the causes was that they did not write their paragraph with many topics anymore. They seemed to have already understood that a paragraph had to have one topic only. In addition, collaborative writing had trained them to delete the ideas that were not appropriate with the topic to be discussed in their writing. When they had a discussion in their collaboration, all of the members of the group gave their ideas about whether or not the sentences that they wrote in their writing were in line with the topic sentence that they created. They became used to selecting the appropriate supporting sentences for their

paragraph. So that their writing was focused on one topic as they stated in their topic sentence. It made the content of their paragraph also focused on their topic sentence only. Therefore, their content became good. Next, their writing score became better than the pre-test score. It has been known that content is one of scoring writing components. Heaton (1988) argued that there are some writing components to be considered when scoring writing, such as content, organization, language use, vocabulary, and mechanics.

When collaborating with their friends to write a paragraph, they also discussed about how to link every sentence in their paragraph. They added their knowledge how to use the correct conjunction for the sentences in their paragraph from their discussion. They could reach the coherence of their paragraph. According to Oshima & Hogue (2006), one of the ways to get the coherent writing is by using transition signals or conjunctions to connect one sentence to another sentence. So the flow of their sentences in their paragraph became better. Every sentence had connection with the topic sentence and the concluding sentence. It made their paragraph organization become good.

Then, the grammatical structure of their paragraph was also criticized when having peer discussion both in their group and in their whole class presentation. This process added their knowledge about grammar. They knew how to arrange the good sentence with the correct grammar. So that they could know what was the right pattern of grammar to be used in their paragraph. Therefore, their mistakes in grammar got less. Their sentence became not meaningless anymore. Their grammar also became better after carrying out collaborative writing. Additionally, Murtiningsih, Kurniawati, & Putri (2022) said that someone's grammar mastery could represent their ability in writing. That was why they could achieve the better writing score in the post-test.

In addition, the students conducted all of the process of writing a paragraph during collaborative writing. First, they shared their ideas about the topic given by the lecturer in their groups. It was followed by their discussion to arrange their ideas into a paragraph outline. After they outlined their paragraph, they developed their paragraph. This stage continued to the stage of proofreading by all the members of the group. In this proofreading stage, the paragraph got the comments and suggestions from the group members. This stage was called as a peer feedback. After getting feedback, then, they revised their paragraph. Finally, they wrote their final paragraph. This final paragraph was ready to be discussed with the whole class. They also got feedback from their lecturer at last. So their paragraph got better. Furthermore, Nazmillah et al. (2022) mentioned that feedback could enlarge the students' ideas and help them portray their mistakes in their writing.

This also happened when doing collaborative writing with their partners. They also experienced the same process of writing during collaborative writing with their partners. They shared their each other ideas after getting the writing topic from their lecturer. Then, they managed their ideas as well as possible to be written in their outline of their paragraph. After they finished writing their first draft of their paragraph, they read again their paragraph. They discussed what should be and what should not be in their paragraph. Next, they revised their first draft. In the end, they were ready with their final draft. They presented their paragraph with the whole members of the class. They also got some revisions and corrections from their friends and the lecturer. The writing process that they had passed really influenced their writing result. It is strengthened by Kurniasih et al. (2020) stating that the writing process that the students experienced could improve their writing quality.

3. The significant effectiveness of collaborative writing to teach writing paragraphs

The students' ability to write a paragraph based on the average score in the post-test was better than that of in the pretest. The next step that the researchers had to do was to test the hypothesis. Before testing the hypothesis, the researchers had to calculate the normality data of the pre-test and post-test. The results of normality test can be seen in table 3.

Table 3. Normality test results

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Pre-test	0.163	25	0.094	0.940	25	0.136
Post-test	0.171	25	0.066	0.926	25	0.065

Table 3 tells that the Sig. score of both Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk test was higher than 0.05. Those results show that the data was in the normal distribution.

When the data was in the normal distribution, the researchers could continue to calculate whether or not the difference of the students' writing ability in the pre-test and post-test was significant using a paired sample t-test. The result is presented in table 4.

Table 4. Results of a paired sample test

		Paired Differences			t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
Pair 1	Pretest- Posttest	-14.6	5.624	1.097	-13.610	24	0.000

Based on the calculation of a paired sample t-test, the score of sig. (2-tailed) was lower than 0.05. It means that the difference between the students' ability to write a paragraph in the pre-test and post-test is significant. Thus, it can be said that the use of collaborative writing to teach writing paragraphs in the post-pandemic era is effective. It is in line with the result of the study by Syamsuarni, Jufriзал, & Rozimela (2020) also finding that collaborative writing can improve students' ability to write a paragraph in the offline class in the normal situation (not pandemic era). Moreover, the results of this study completed the study result by Anshu & Yesuf (2022) finding that the use of collaborative writing for teaching paragraphs could enhance the students' writing ability, especially in the writing aspects of content and coherence. Meanwhile, this present study found that the implementation of collaborative writing could boost the students' ability to write paragraphs in all aspects of writing.

Next, this present study results strengthen that collaborative writing is also appropriate for stimulating the students' social skills especially collaboration skill in the post-pandemic era. Latifah, Ulfa, & Rachmawati (2020) support this by stating that collaborative writing could grow cooperation among the students in their group of writing. Even though, as it is known that in this era many students like to search the answer of every assignment that they got in Google. Then, they almost never collaborate with their friends to find and share ideas to finish their task. But, collaborative writing could make them collaborate with others to create a good paragraph with their groups or partners.

CONCLUSION

The students' ability to write a paragraph before the use of collaborative writing was significantly different from their writing ability after the use of collaborative writing in their writing class. This proved that the implementation of collaborative writing for teaching writing paragraphs was effective. So it is recommended for EFL teachers to implement collaborative writing in their writing classes.

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