

# Narrative Inquiry Study in Fostering Teachers' Knowledge of Collaborative EFL Writing.pdf

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## Narrative Inquiry Study in Fostering Teachers' Knowledge of Collaborative EFL Writing

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**Abstract.** This study explored teachers knowledge needed in teaching CW for high school English teachers especially in teaching CW. Narrative inquiry is used to capture teachers knowledge based on their experiences in teaching CW told in narrative frame. Their experiences show their potential in teaching CW. This study gives an understanding of teachers knowledge to improve their ability in mastering CW and to make writing innovations more successful. There are six English teachers from three senior high schools in Cirebon, West Java, Indonesia who became the participants in this study. The schools are chosen based on the average results of the national exam scores 2018/2019 academic years, they categorize as high, moderate and low level of school. Their narratives told that they have been still at the initial stage of applying CW. It can be seen from the unavailability on the fixed guidelines of CW. However teachers have tried to make some changes to find better CW class. The teachers' main reason of applying CW is to fulfill students' need to interact with and learn from others. In applying CW, teachers find that CW gives them opportunity to make their teaching more effective and efficient. However, they still do not have sufficient support for a rubric to assess collaborative work, a model of CW, and a monitoring system.

**Keywords:** collaborative writing, EFL writing context, narrative inquiry, teachers knowledge,

### 1 Introduction

Teachers are the largest single source of influence which contributes significantly to variance in student achievement and academic success [1]. According to teacher cognition theory, it is teacher education, the teacher's personal experiences as a language learner and the teacher's classroom experiences that are the constructs that together form the mental dimension of the teacher's cognition (knowledge, attitudes and beliefs). These constructs in turn manifest themselves in the teacher's decisions about classroom practices and the choice of materials [2]. Educational research has acknowledged a conception of teachers as active, thinking, decision-makers whose instructional decisions are powerfully influenced by their beliefs about teaching and learning. Research on teaching has thus focused increasingly on describing what teachers actually do in classrooms.

Throughout the past 20 years, researchers have used pedagogical content knowledge to refer to a wide range of aspects of subject matter knowledge and the teaching of subject matter

and, indeed, have used it differently across—and even within—subject areas [3]. Teacher knowledge is strongly related to individual experiences and contexts, there are elements of teacher knowledge that are shared by all teachers or large groups of teachers, for instance, all teachers who teach students of a certain age level [4].

Writing is the most essential skill to acquire by students, especially by EFL students in Indonesia. In fact, many EFL students still face some difficulties to master such skill since there are some differences between *Bahasa* and English such as structural and grammatical terms as well as styles. In addition, EFL students also should work hard on transferring the meaning from *Bahasa* to English context in order to make the result of writing understandable and make sense when it is read by people especially native speakers [5]. In this case, teachers use some strategies to solve this problem. One of the strategies is through the use of collaborative writing.

In order to be able to produce a good written text, teachers should require procedures to teach writing in order to be achieved the objectives of teaching writing itself. Writing requires collaboration in order to be easier, better, and more successful when doing a writing process in talking, drafting, revising, reading and editing [6]. The common practice of ELT writing pedagogy holds that writing is seen as individual activity in which the main practice in EFL writing formal setting was teachers of writing assign the students to find a topic to develop individually and hand it to the teacher after finishing the draft [7]. In this study, collaborative writing (CW) is a technique in teaching writing applying in English subject at senior high school students in the context of EFL classroom. In the implementation of CW includes generating the idea, researching, planning, drafting, editing, and revising, and writing collaborative final draft.

Using CW is a fairly novel strategy [8]. When EFL teachers decided to use CW, it means that they are adding different taste in their mainstream pedagogical practice of EFL writing. Issues such as how to build sense of students' participation, how to grade collaborative work, and how to form the group has been conflicting situation for teachers. Moreover, some other issues related to CW such as which types of collaboration, and which part of writing process, and which aspects to develop depending on the EFL classroom context [4]. All aspects of CW will serve its own benefits for writing improvement. In this case, CW should be prepared and handled properly to achieve the optimal benefits. Teachers must have considerable knowledge of language structure, and how to assist students into a collaborative work in order to do CW in EFL classroom.

Teaching CW comprises of complex activities which starts from generating the idea, researching, planning, drafting, editing, and revising, and writing collaborative final draft.. Consequently, the teachers must consider each step of CW processes in order to professionally improve their teaching quality especially in teaching writing in an EFL classroom. One of the ways to improve their teaching quality is through reflection and they will reflect their knowledge of CW teaching through their experiences narrated in narrative frame.

By fostering teachers' knowledge of CW, narrative inquiry is used to capture to capture teachers knowledge based on their experiences in teaching collaborative writing in EFL context. Narrative inquiry provides the researcher with a way of inquiring teachers' experiences. Their experiences show their potential in teaching CW. Another reason for using narrative inquiry is that it provides a tool for doing self-reflection and self-criticism about the challenges and the complexities of teaching and learning English using CW [9]. This study gives an understanding of teachers' knowledge to improve their ability in mastering CW and to make writing innovations more successful and helps teachers to find the reasons behind successes and failures in the classroom.

There are six English teachers from three senior high schools in Cirebon, West Java, Indonesia who became the participants in this study. They have been interviewed before this study is conducted, it is to know that they have already used collaborative strategy in teaching writing. The schools are chosen based on the average results of the national exam scores 2018/2019 academic years, they categorize as high, moderate and low level of school. This study seeks to find answers of the following two questions: (1) How are teachers' knowledge in teaching collaborative writing in an EFL writing context?, and (2) How do they apply collaborative writing in their classroom?

## 2 Method

This study was narrative inquiry research under case study design of qualitative approach. Narrative inquiry could be seen as a particular subtype of qualitative inquiry [10]. It was a way of thinking about, and studying, experience. Narrative inquirers thought narratively about experience throughout inquiry. Meanwhile Creswell proposed narrative research' as the term representing a design which focuses on studying a single person, gathering data through the collection of stories, reporting individual experiences, and discussing the meaning of those experiences for the individual [11]. This study explored teachers' knowledge in teaching CW for senior high school students in the context of EFL.

### 2.1 Participants

This study conducted at three senior high schools in Cirebon, West Java, Indonesia, in 2018/2019 academic years. The schools are chosen based on the average results of the national exam scores of 2017/2018 academic years, they categorize as high, moderate and low level of school. There were six English teachers participated in this study. Two teachers were from each school. The teachers had been interviewed before this study conducted. It was aimed to know that they already used collaborative strategy in teaching writing in their classroom.

**Table 1.** List of participants

Teachers	Age	Gender	Teaching Experience	Education Background	Certification
T1	42	Female	18 years	Bachelor Degree, English Language Education	Certified
T2	50	Female	27 years	Master Degree, English Language Education	Certified
T3	48	Female	27 years	Master Degree, English Language Education	Certified
T4	45	Male	20 years	Bachelor Degree, English Language Education	Certified
T5	37	Female	13 years	Master Degree, English Language Education	Certified
T6	44	Male	18 years	Bachelor Degree, English Language Education	Certified

Table 1 showed the list of participant participated in this study. There were four female teachers and two male teachers with different teaching experience and education background, but all of them have been certified.

### 2.2 Data Sources

Data for this study came from: (1) Teachers' narrative frame, (2) interview, and (3) classroom observation checklist. The teachers' narrative frames represented their experience in applying and managing CW class. Narrative frame was defined by Barkhuizen et al. (2014)

it was as a written story template consists of series of incomplete sentences and blank spaces [12]. Narrative frame helped the researchers to catch the expected experiences to be written since it provides insightful and fuller picture of the teachers' experiences [13] and provide teachers with guidance and support in both the structure and content of narrative [14]. The teaching practice was asked and focuses on CW and its aspects to know how they knowledge in managing CW class. Classroom observation plays a central role in practice teaching on such things as how the teachers create a positive atmosphere in implementing CW, on the strategies, and procedures used by the teachers in setting up the activities of CW, on the way they gave the instructions and explanations to the students, and how the students responded and interacted with the teachers and among themselves. The interviews were held to obtain the information from the teachers about their teaching writing experience in managing CW, and their knowledge of CW. The interview guide for the teachers covered about their introduction to CW, knowledge about CW, and their practices in managing CW.

### **3 Findings and Discussions**

#### **3.1 Teachers' Knowledge of Collaborative Writing**

This section explores teachers' knowledge in teaching CW. Identifying their potential and knowledge of CW were based on the nature of narrative inquiry. The data is from teachers narrative frame and the interview.

Most of teachers' difficulties in skill of writings are strongly related to the ineffective techniques to teach writing making students bored and therefore, they have a negative attitudes towards learning writing. EFL teachers consider a lot of issues when implementing collaborative writing work, in the teaching and learning process. These issues are included in making students know the importance of writing group assignments, the sufficient time of efficient methods are selected to team work, the members, teacher intervention and assessing the collaborative work [15]. Based on their narrative frame, 66% of the teachers form the group heterogenous, combine the group between high and low students. 44% form the group by asking them to choose the member freely. Their consideration in forming the group is about students' relationship. They expect that students will feel enjoy with whom s/he worked with. It can be concluded that teachers does not have a specific rules in forming the group. It is in line with the statement of Mulligan and Garafallo (2011) the opportunity is given to his learners to choose the members in order to have an easy contact outside the classroom [16]. Only 22% of teachers ask the students to brainstorm the information and knowledge about the task, and then they try to manage these ideas in a coherent way.

In drafting, 83% of teachers ask the students to outline, plan, and craft their written task. It is by asking a person revising the outline of the work, and gives his comment on it. After revising the outline, the group work did on the first draft. But only 33% of teachers ask one of the students to proofread and highlight what have to be revised in a form of a checklist. This checklist has the benefits of making the learners check all the mistakes and errors related to their writing such as form and content [15]. In this case, the teachers play a big role in the classroom, they act as facilitator, guide and time to time as controller. The teachers have the responsibility in structuring students in groups and providing activities which is suitable to the students in order to motivate them to write and changing ideas. 66% of teachers do not apply a techniques in writing activities collaboratively, so that the students prefer to write individually, in addition the teachers do not give enough time to do peer- assessments., but they directly write the answers. Teachers have to pay attention to the level of the students and to consider that certain groups may need orientation and guidance, and make students realize



all the points in the task. The teacher moves around the groups, in that way the members will look for the guidance and direction.

The teacher should show to students to write a final draft, but before they have to outline and organize all written task papers together. Then, the students are informed to select two drafters in order to write final documents. Revising and editing determine what is needed in this final document. It gives an opportunity to students to make adjustments to the final draft [14]. Finally, his learners are allowed to read their written work loudly and make a discussion between them, around the topic that has been tackled [17].

### **3.2 The Implementation of Collaborative Writing in the classroom**

This section describes the implementation of CW in the classroom. The data is from the observation checklist when researcher observed their CW class and it strengthen with the interview and teachers narrative frame. There are four stages in the checklist such as pre writing stage, the while-writing stage, the post-writing stage and teacher evaluation.

#### *Pre-Writing Stage*

In the pre-writing stages 89% teacher supplies a set of techniques to help the students to write activates collaboratively. They motivates the students to work in group. They divided the students into several group, each group consist of five or six. 4 teachers combine the group between high and low students, while the 2 teachers rely on students' level of writing proficiency in deciding the group. The teacher provides different kinds of materials such as textbook, magazines and books and sometime they provide innovation by using audio visual aids int the classroom. 100% of teachers explain the activity if there is a misunderstanding and ask them to exchange information.

#### *While-Writing Stage*

While-writing stage is divided into three sub stage, they are idea generation, drafting, and reading sub stage. The findings of this stage and sub stage are described as follows.

In ideaa generation sub stage, all of the teachers explain to students the generic structure as well as the language features of genre that will be discussed. T2, T3 and T4 introduce to students the concept of the use of collaborative writing strategy. While T1, T5 and T6 directly explain to students how to utilize collaborative writing strategy. T2 raises students' prior knowledge about what they know from the discussed topic, while T1, T3, T4, T5 and T6 asks some questions to stimulate the students' ideas. They explain and give an understanding of structure of the text. All teachers explains and gives an understanding kind of tenses. T3 asks the students to make lists to answer the questions. T1, T2, T3 and T4 review the students' key words to develop the ideas into paragraph and to organize the ideas in order and negotiate it together.

In drafting sub stage, all teachers ask the students to arrange their ideas into paragraph and they are allowed to use a dictionary. T2 asks the students to give comments and feedback to their peers from the drafts and they discuss ideas to each other. During the activity, all teachers monitor around the class to provide assistance, guidance, and comments if they need.

reading sub stage, it is found that T2 asks the students to reorganize what have been written in the first rough draft and to refine ideas based on the feedback from the helper. While T1, T3, T4 and T6 ask The students to provide notes and give some corrections to their peers if the draft that sound incorrectly and inappropriately for words or phrases.

#### *Post-Writing Stage*

While-writing stage is divided into three sub stage, they are revising, editing and best copy sub stage. The findings of this stage and sub stage are described as follows.

In revising sub stage, T1 and T6 focus on students' ideas, T3, T4 and T5 focus on students' writing organization. All of teachers focus on students' writing style (word choice, sentence fluency).

In editing sub stage, T2 and T4 always remind the pair to use the checklists so that they may add new ideas. All of teachers delete irrelevant sentences and information and rearrange ideas to improve the organization. While in best copy sub stage, all of the teachers instruct the writer role to write the last version of the writing product. written papers are highly qualified when edited by the teacher, before the team goes to the final production of the drafting [18]. In that way, EFL learners get the opportunity to recognize the structure of their knowledge, and reach suggestions from their teacher concerning grammar rules, spelling, punctuation, and all the errors.

#### *Teacher Evaluation*

In the evaluation all teachers instruct each group to submit their best text. They provide feedback to correct students' writing explicitly. Teacher's comments focus on meaning/idea, order, style, spelling, and punctuation. Based on teachers' narrative, T1, T2, T4, and T6 ask each group to exchange their composition to be proofread by other groups. If the groups still have problems in their work, then the teachers can explain and solve them together at the end of the session. All of the teachers ask the student to revise the composition based on the correction, feedback provided and comments from their friends or their teacher. Finally, the final composition from any teacher's and groups' feedback are revised and submitted to the teacher.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

Writing becomes one of the most important aspects of the language skills because the students are helped to expand the other language skills through the teaching of writing skill by the teacher [19]. Writing skills positioned as the last skill to acquire by foreign language learners, including in the teaching and learning of English language. This is probably because of the complexity of writing process. With disregarding the three other skills, writing may always be the most difficult for learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) [20]. EFL teachers create suitable environment to the students in order to develop their competencies in productive and receptive skills.

Their narratives told that they have been still at the initial stage of applying CW. It can be seen from the unavailability on the fixed guidelines of CW. However teachers have tried to make some changes to find better CW class. Most of the teachers often face a set of obstacles in terms of mixed ability classes, they were unable to select appropriate activities. More than that, they lacked effective techniques in order to teach writing. The teachers' main reason of applying CW is to fulfill students' need to interact with and learn from others. In applying CW, teachers find that CW gives them opportunity to make their teaching more effective and efficient. However, they still do not have sufficient support for a rubric to assess collaborative work, a model of CW, and a monitoring system. It would be interesting if other researchers could make other studies related to this issue, provide some effective strategies, and procedures within the process of collaboration in order to enhance the English language teaching.

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