Writing Skill Using Learning Log and Conferencing Technique: Collaborating Principles of Constructivism Philosophy for Non-English Department Student

Retma Sari[1]*, Teguh Setiawan[2]
[1,2]Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta
Jl. Colombo Yogyakarta No.1, Karang Malang, Caturtunggal, Kec.
Depok, Kabupaten Sleman, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, Indonesia
55281
retmasari.2021@student.uny.ac.id[1]*
*Corresponding author

Abstract

Based on constructivism philosophy, this study investigates to find the learning technique of writing, in order to substitute the conventional technique of writing to improve writing skill. Log and conferencing technique has many advantages to reach the needs. In English syllabus of Animal Science program at Universitas Tidar, it is emphasized to apply writing in scientific form, so the use of grammar, diction and idea must be done appropriately. The major discussion is what learning log and conferencing is and how to apply it also how effective the learning model with this technique in improving writing skills for non-English Department students.

Specific study has been given to make comfortable the relation and communication between teacher and student gradually and regularly. To get this aim, this study concerns with log and conferences techniques to animals science and using the new steps on writing learning style. The data from students and lecturers were collected and analyzed. Data analysis shows that the conferences appeared by variety of topics such as writing aspect, learning habits and English writing ability of each student. Second, the lecturer used varieties of approaches to communicate with each student in writing learning using learning log. Finally, the conferences contribute to a deliberative process critical to the process of learning to write. The students found conversations with the instructor helpful in their subsequent revisions whereas the instructor gained a better understanding of students' difficulties in writing.

Keywords: Constructivism philosophy, Learning Log and Conferencing Techniques, writing skill, Non-English Department students

Introduction

Basically writing is communication by written to inform, explain, tell, describe in order to readers understand the activities or events (Karsana, 2002:5). Writing is a reflection which comes from the process. Fortunately, there are many problems in

146

Sari & Setiawan

**Writing Skill Using Learning Log and Conferencing Technique:
Collaborating Principles of Constructivism Philosophy
for Non-English Department Student**

writing especially academic writing that needs deeper understanding. In informal writing, learners rarely find difficulties in its application, because what is needed is only mutual understanding of the meaning expressed by ignoring the standard rules in writing, but it will be the opposite if using a formal form. Not only vocabulary, understanding context/ situation to assemble ideas but also the use of writing rules that will influence the meaning of a sentence spoken or written.

The usual problems of writing occur in non-English department learners is to form sentences with the correct rules, namely to build or organize an idea and choose vocabulary into the right structure and concept. They have several ideas but they have difficulty expressing them into paragraphs and it is not easy to translate concepts in our brain into written language. So it takes an imagination and creativity in thinking and processing it in written form. So it can be said that learners need a creative imagination to pour out their ideas in the form of written English. In addition to the above problems, students are already scared because writing English requires a high degree of accuracy in the use of grammar, punctuation, choice of words, and writing style etc.

In connection with the statements above, several phenomena can be underlined such as the lack of writing culture, especially in English. Writing activity does not emphasize the real essence, which is to train students to express ideas creatively through writing. Another factor that influences the value of writing is the instructional media used by teachers who are less attractive, outdated and monotonous. In addition, teachers are often reluctant to utilize the environment as a source of inspiration for students in choosing creative writing topics or themes. If this dissolves late, it will cause discomfort for the learner. They will not be honed by their imagination, the potential for writing is not explored to the fullest, even a crisis of motivation to write.

Firstly, writing is a systematic and regularly knowledge, while the traditional writing only aimed to the results. Secondly, the traditional English writing is centered on the teachers, the students learn to compete independently. The use and study of teacher-student writing conferences began in first language (L1) writing pedagogy and were gradually introduced into second/foreign language (L2/FL) writing instruction contexts (Carnicelli, 1980; Zamel, 1985). The conferences are individual, face-to-face teacher-student conversations about written products, writing processes, or future projects. Researchers and educators indicate that, compared with teacher written feedback and peer feedback, one-on-one teacher–student conferences can provide students an opportunity for individualized instruction and allow students to express their opinions and needs and clarify teachers' comments, setting learning goals, and increase their motivation, writing skills, and critical thinking. Also, writing conferences in combination with direct written feedback had a greater effect than direct written feedback alone on improved accuracy over time (Bitchener et al., 2005). On the other hand, conferences allow teachers to have a better understanding of students' ideas and problems (Maliborska & You, 2016; Yu, 2020). Compared with the growing body of research on teacher written feedback, relatively limited amount of research has investigated teacher–student interactions during writing conferences longitudinally.

Recently, writing becomes a social artifact and primary means to communicate in human daily lives to exchange information across countries (Xin & Liming,

147

2005:1). It is shown in how people are getting more connected in building written communication via digital platforms mostly in English to ensure that messages can be understood globally (Shaul, 2015:1). Consequently, it changes work places into physical office spaces where employees deliver messages textually via technologies which can be about product innovation targeted in global level. Considering the fact, Indonesia certainly faces the crucial needs of producing high qualified employees with English writing capabilities. Therefore, universities in Indonesia should apply writing strategies through classroom activities focusing on content maturity. It is believed that the strategies will promote meaning-making skill on content area to develop the competence of providing critical information (Liao & Wong, 2017:155-156). The strategies should be adjusted with a writing piece which inclines to coherence rather than cohesion to give comprehensive content cognition (Karadeniz, 2017:94). However, the problem is that most English writing classroom activities unfortunately focus more on cohesion or grammar maturation (Liao & Wong, 2007:140, and Monaghan, 2007:6). As a result, the learners find hardships in building knowledge on content area. Studies about students' perception on writing showed concerns on it (Ismail, 2011 and Husni, 2017).

The study is to apply writing technique based on the theory of constructivism philosophy. This study analyze to show a set of teaching model which allow to the development of the times, fulfill the students' needs by using *'learning log and conferencing'* technique which are expected to answer all problems so that learners can eliminate all doubts in writing English, develop ideas in the form of creative work as possible and can build atmosphere for always motivated in writing. The research questions are as the followings: (1) "What writing technique can be classified applicable in a writing class with the benefits of enhancing higher education EFL learners' writing skills?" and (2) "How did the teacher and students interact during writing conferences over a semester?" The limitations of this study is the major of the discussion is about writing skills, and the log and conferencing technique is used to improve it and also using qualitative research to analyze it, like Sukmadinata (2013) in Kameswara (2017:37) explains that this type of qualitative research which discussed such kind of activities should be done through conducting in-depth data collection, organizing the data, integrating the data and classifying the writing strategies into the table of the writing technique.

Writing Skill and Its Problems in Higher Education

Writing is defined as a way of delivering a message (something to be said) through a code or sign written on paper (Spratt et al., 2005: 26). To be able to produce a work in the form of good writing, it requires the ability to convey information or messages effectively by using meaningful sentences (Spratt et al., 2005: 26). According to them (2005: 27), these steps include: brainstorming, making notes, planning, writing a draft, editing, producing another draft and proof reading.

The creative understanding according to Silberman (1996: 9) means having creativity and the ability to be creative. In order to create a creative generation in the sense of being able to produce something for the benefit of himself and others, the teacher needs to create diverse learning activities so as to meet various levels of

student ability. According to Semiawan (1999: 66), creative power grows in a person and is the most profound and unique experience for someone. To grow the creative power needed a conducive atmosphere that describes the possibility of the growth of that power.

There are some problems that affect the learning process of writing, especially for non-English students who don't have the habit of learning or using English. Writing is a critical thinking process in producing text. This activity is not merely the process of producing texts that involve linguistic features but also involves the cultural and social context and background where the text is as a discourse and conventions where the text is produced in a particular discourse community (Zeng in Gao, 2007). So, in writing students must have competence about the context in which the text occurs, competence about social and cultural background as well as competence about linguistic features. Student attitude and personality factors play a role in accelerating the achievement of writing skills. Furthermore, the learning atmosphere including the choice of techniques and the behavior of the instructor or lecturer also influences the learning of writing mentioned four problems in writing classes at university. First, a very big emphasis on aspects of grammar (grammar); Second, excessive emphasis on the final result; third, lack of emphasis on genre-specific writing across the curriculum; fourth, lack of feedback diversification. It does not mean that grammar is not important, of course it is not possible for an idea to be expressed properly without using accurate grammar. But this grammar teaching should be done with a context and integrated in the text. Excessive orientation or a rush to pursue a product can make someone skip the important stages in the learning process of writing. Diverse feedback, for example not focused on the grammar aspect alone, can make students think more broadly about authorship.

Writing is not merely about grammar but other aspects such as the structure of the text, logic wrangling, acceptance and so on. Burn (2010) categorizes three problems that make writing skills difficult to master, namely linguistic, cognitive, and content problems. Linguistic relates to the ability to write the ideas into great contents comprehensively and accurately grammar. The cognitive problems related with how forming and connecting language and grammar in great writing and the last knowing and analyzing the idea and the content that related about developing the idea.

Guided by Vygotskian sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), this study viewed writing conference as a mediating tool of facilitating the writing process of learners. He stated that learning and thinking are influenced to each other's. In making good writing, lecturer needs to have an understanding of the learner's background and make some steps in accompanying the students for finishing the writing accurately.

Learning Logs and Conferencing from the Perspective of Constructivism

Constructivism perspective leads the learners to think about the developing of ideology, arranging the idea, and processing of writing based on the background, knowledge and the process of knowledge. Learning Logs is based on the noting where students write their experiences inside and outside of school or record

149

responses and reactions to learning and learning activities (Richards and Schmidt, 2002). It provides an opportunity for students to reflect on their learning process and share the results of these reflections with friends and lecturers on a regular basis. However, this writing is not assessed, so students can feel freely in expression as well as practicing writing skills. On the other hand lecturers can monitor the development of students' writing abilities. In the writing class, this learning log is used in prewriting activities and is also used as a way to encourage students to develop fluency in writing. It can also function as a dialogue journal if there is a dialogue between lecturer and student. It can also help students in conducting autonomous learning. Thus the learning log can be used to improve student independence in learning. Learning independence requires one's ability to be responsible in planning and managing his learning process.

Writing Conferencing is an activity where lecturers and students meet in a short period of time to discuss student writing and various aspects of the writing process. Through routines like this, both classroom or wherever, the lecturer has the role to teach awareness about writing strategies, to individualize the writing process and to make students more confident about their writing. Face-to-face writing conferences in teaching writing English as a foreign language are recommended (Kazuo and Kumiko, 2006). As part of the revision stage which is done in pairs, small groups or with lecturers. Bayraktar (2012) calls this a professional discussion between writers about student writing, so that students can become better writers, besides improving attitudes and habits towards learning and revising as well as independence and skills to talk, ask, describe, clarify and summarize.

According to Brown (2001) the principles of developing Writing activities are: involving of various exercises to become a good or efficient writer (such as determining writing goals, brainstorming, planning, to revising the writing that has been made), balancing the process and results, considering the setting behind student culture, linking writing activities with reading, providing as much authentic material as possible, involving writing steps namely prewriting, drafting, and revising, providing the broadest opportunities for students to interact, applying methods to respond to and correct student papers and explain and give instructions clearly. In this case, students do self-study. Students are asked to make a study plan and make the first draft, then reconfirm the study plan at the beginning of each lecture, then complete / work on the exercise book, consult with the tutor, self-correction, review each learning process and make plans for the following week, and finally revised the writing he made.

Learning Logs are tools for 'writing to learn concepts' to improve students' writing skills and at the same time provide opportunities for them to reflect on their learning (Brown 2004). Learning log has an important interactive role in the teaching-learning process in improving aspects needed in writing, such as grammar and idea development. For the method used in learning to write, it uses learning log and conferencing techniques. The advantages of this technique can be applied not only in the classroom but also outside of classroom interaction, so that learners have no restrictions on learning and applying it. In this journal learners write all of their experiences inside and outside of school or record their responses and reactions to learning and learning activities (Richards and Schmidt, 2002). This technique

150

provides an opportunity for students to reflect on their learning process and share the results of these reflections with friends and lecturers on a regular basis. The results of the work discussed are not assessed, so students can feel more freely in expressing in practicing writing skills and on the other hand lecturers can monitor the development of students' writing abilities.

Method

In learning media the researcher used Learning Log and Conferencing technique. It can be applied both in the class and out of class. The students may use internet facilities to obtain some references then put them in their writing in "Learning Log" part. If the students have some difficulties, they can write and ask in a piece of paper and later it will be discussed in a form of "Conferencing". The research uses descriptive study. Data will be obtained from instruments and analyzed numerically and analytically descriptive. Data obtained from the instrument is coded and interpreted based on a checklist and scale. Numbers are also used to describe the progress made by students. Descriptive research analysis is very important to describe the progress of learners (students). In addition, a simple quantitative analysis is also needed as supporting data.

This study adopted a qualitative case study design (Creswell, 2007). It was situated in a one-semester academic writing course for first-year in Animal Science program. The primary purpose of this course was to enable students to write academic writing in English.

The population in this study are first semester students of Animal Science Program semester 2, Faculty of Agriculture of Universitas Tidar, in academic year of 2021/2022, while purposive random sampling technique is used to choose the sample of four classes. It is taken only a class that has average mark with different characteristics.

There were some activities in this study, included classroom guidance, writing activities, partner review, teacher feedback, writing log and writing conferences. In the class, the lecturer used a series of instruction, developed activities, found the cases and their solutions also avoided logical fallacies. The lecturer also discussed common problems across student writings in class. After the meeting is over, students submitted the result of writing. After that, the lecturer wrote the feedback and used reflective journal on the writing process.

To carry out this research, the data collection method was carried out in several ways, namely interviews, focused group discussions, observations and survey, questionary, recording, reporting / noting and literature studies. The data collection technique used is a writing skill test. The test is used to capture data about students' creative writing abilities. To test the validity of the data is done by triangulation. Triangulation is done with sources, which compares what informants do with the opinions of others. Analysis of the research data was carried out using analysis as stated by Miles and Huberman (2010), namely through stages: (1) data reduction, (2) data display, and (3) conclusions, verification, and reflection. At the data reduction stage, the data that has been collected is described, sorted based on predetermined criteria, selecting relevant data and irrelevant data. This observation is done collaboratively. The researcher is an English MKU lecturer who collaborates with other English lecturers who have the same expertise in this area.

They were also interviewed to verify the researcher's interpretation of the previous two interviews and learn whether the participants had some different views on writing conferences. The questions are about the topics discussed, the types of feedback and participation in the conferences.

Findings and Discussion

The procedure in conducting this research as follows: (1) Students present material with character and idea development including their own strategies, (2) Researchers analyze the results, (3) The researcher introduces and explains the Learning Log and Conferencing learning model and how to use it, (3) Students make a paragraph draft using the Learning Log and Conferencing learning model and adapt it to their needs, (4) Researchers analyze the results and (5) Students fill in the questioner

From the results obtained can be described as follows: (1) Initially the results of the assessment indicate if the student still does not meet the expected standards, (2) Some problems occur such as (a) lack of vocabulary, (b) loss of ideas (c) not understanding the proper structure or grammar, (c) not completing writing (writing) in the specified time limit due to the above problems , and (d) in developing context in writing or writing, students get out of the given context because they do not focus on the given theme, and (4) When students discuss to correct each other in the form of partners or in their groups it is sometimes difficult to respond or they respond and sometimes use 2 languages, Indonesian and English students tend to be passive because they do not know what needs to be corrected and discussed.

After these problems occurred, the researcher then performed various stages of the class action procedure such as
1. The lecturer / researcher provides sufficient explanation regarding the definition and usefulness of the *Learning Log and Conferencing* learning model
2. Researcher provides samples of *Learning Log and Conferencing* models
3. Researcher asks students to interpret the *Learning Log and Conferencing* model
4. Researcher asks to make a mind mapping of vocabulary / words - words obtained
5. Researcher gives a theme
6. Researcher asks students to write (make paragraphs) within 15 minutes and conduct dialogue for 15 minutes
7. After the presentation is finished, other students are asked to ask questions and hold discussions on the topics discussed. provide the concept of mind mapping and then explain to students.
8. Researcher asks students to fill some questioners.

Achievement of learning out comes is analyzed based on the results of writing paragraphs. Based on observations, it was found that all subjects made significant progress in writing. This is based on the achievement and improvement of student scores after writing and developing certain topics which are then analyzed based on context suitability, vocabulary use, accuracy in grammar and the development and creativity of using ideas. All subject scores met the success criteria with a

standardized minimum score of 70. All students numbered 34 students. From the average grade obtained the following results

1. There are 5% students with low grades, 10% students with sufficient grades and the remaining 60% have high grades 85 and above. Actually in conducting the assessment, the researcher did not see how perfect the students were in writing, but was there an improvement in developing the paragraph set forth in the written form because the fact remained that there were still some problems, especially in developing ideas and searching for the right vocabulary. But from research conducted found evidence of a significant increase in creative writing skills.

2. From the questioner it can be seen that students' responses to the application of the *Learning Log and Conferencing* model showed 90% of students stated that they were very happy to use *Learning Log and Conferencing* to support their writing activities because they feel interesting, varied and made it easier to develop writing ideas. Students can explore their ideas, 85% of students stated that they really enjoy the MKU English class especially in writing using *Learning Log and Conferencing* model, about 90% of students stated strongly agree that English class is more interesting when Learning Log and Conferencing learning model is applied. Meanwhile the students' responses to the statement that the Learning Log and Conferencing learning model helped them in writing, because they were greatly helped by foreign words that could be learned through *Learning Log and Conferencing*. 85% students express strongly agree with the statement that during the learning process using *Learning Log and Conferencing* model, students are active in discussions about the topics discussed. Furthermore, 90% of students stated strongly agree with the statement that the Learning Log and Conferencing learning model, is not difficult to make and 95% of students stated strongly agree if during using the *Learning Log and Conferencing* model, students can present their topics better than before . The results of the questionnaire showed that almost all students in the Accounting class said they were very happy to use the Learning Log and Conferencing learning model in writing and discussing. So from this fact, it can be said that the use of the Learning Log and Conferencing learning model is very useful and can be one of the recommended models for improving English creative writing skills for non-English classes.

This study focuses on writing log and conferencing and teacher-student interaction in writing learning. The findings said that there will be the analysis of conference transcripts, supported by students' writings and student's and teacher's interviews. To examine the focus of the conferences, 20 conferences were coded and analyzed, resulting in 115 episodes with some issues. The issues were analyzed by such as content, organization, and language use, whereas the issues such as students' reflection on the course and their writing experiences and the student's need. To analyze teacher-student interaction patterns in the conferences, the length and words of each conference were calculated**.** For the conference transcripts showed that the lecturer used many ways to suggest, assess and revise the activities of students' writing.

153

From the fact, both lecturer and students in this study use the activities to discuss about vocabulary, diction, structures, or coherence in paragraphs, logical fallacies, and how to introduce and develop a topic. The language problems in writing were not focused to be discussed. The findings of this study says that writing log and conferences can give an important writing technique to facilitate students' writing skill.

Finally, in line with Yeh (2017) and Adawiyah (2019) this study concluded that writing log and conference influence the result of writing. This study shows that the use of a common L1 appears to enable the students to discuss with the teacher about these broad issues regarding argumentative writing. The use of L1 appears to offer the students more profound opportunities to voice their problems, negotiate with their teacher, and get their teacher's support in the process of approaching writing. During the conferences, the use of L1 not only facilitates these students' meta talk talk about how to do the task and talk about their thinking, but also creates an affective situation of cultural empathy or and serves to deepen learners' comprehension of the features of argumentative writing in English. Despite the fact that the use of L1 ensures students' free expression, this study noticed the variability of students in participating in the conferences (e.g., being active or passive), some students still consider the writing conferences as an extension of classroom lectures and thus choose to be passive and expect the explicit guidance from the teacher.

Conclusion

To provide this paper put forward a new teaching philosophy, all of which constitute a solid foundation for the construction of the learning model of college English writing based on the constructivist learning theory. The results of observations and treatments indicates that the application of the *Learning Log and Conferencing* technique has effectively and practically improved toward the ability in creative writing, especially students from non-English department program, especially animal science classes. The results of the study are also expected to contribute to the great learning process and it also can be used as a reference in developing other techniques or models so it will be able to achieve the learning targets as expected and inspire other researchers to develop similar research. The study focuses on a small group of students writing activity. The log and conferencing technique in writing offers the activities to open the opportunities of students to improve their writing ability by noting from the log and giving reflecting from the conference to make the better writing.

References

Adawiyah, R. (2019). The implementation of writing conference in teaching essay writing to the English department students in the university. 7(3), 30–39.

Bayraktara, A. (2012). Teaching Writing Through Teacher-Student Writing Conferences. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 51 (2012) 709-713. http://www.naraedu.ac.jp/CERT/bulletin2006/b2006-H05.pdf

154

Borg, W., R. & Gall., M., D. (1983). *Educational Research: An Introduction.* New York-London: Longman University Press.

Bitchener, J., Young, S., Cameron, D. (2005). The effect of different types of corrective feedback on ESL student writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 14(3), 191–205. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2005.08.001

Burns, A. (2010). *Doing Action Research in English Language Teaching*. New York: Routledge.

Brown, D. H. (2004). *Language Assessment: Principles and Practice*. San Fransisco State University.

Cohen. L. et al. (2007). *Research Method in Education*. Sixth edition. New York: Routledge.

Dornyei.Z and Taguchi. T. (2010). *Questionnaires in second language research*. New York: Routledge.

Ewert, D. E. (2009). L2 writing conferences: Investigating teacher talk. *Journal of Second Language Writing,* 18(4), 251– 269. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2009.06.002

Jahin, Hameed, J., & Wafa, M. (2012). EFL Major Student Teachers' Writing Proficiency and Attitudes Towards Learning English. Umm Al-Qura University. *Journal of Educational & Psychologic Sciences* Vol. 4-N0.1-January retrieved from http://uqu.edu.sa/files2/tiny_mce/plugins/filemanager/files/4280212/TR4-1-10.pdf

Kraft, M. A., & Gilmour, A. F. (2017). Revisiting the widget effect: Teacher evaluation reforms and the distribution of teacher effectiveness. *Educational Researcher,* 46(5), 234-249.

Knapp.P and Watkins. M. (2005). *Genre, Text, Grammar: Technologies for Teaching and Assessing Writing.* Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.

Kirschner P A, Sweller J, Clark R E. (2006) Why minimal guidance during Instruction does not work: An analysis of the failure of constructivist, discovery, problem-based, experiential, and inquiry-based teaching. *Educational psychologist*, 2006, 41(2): 75-86

Larsen dan Freeman. (1989). *Writing English Language Test*. London: Longman Group.

Lv, Fenghua and Chen, Hongxin (2010). A Study of Metacognitive-Strategies-Based Writing Instruction for Vocational College Students. *English Language Teaching.* Vol 3. No 3. Retrieved in http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/elt/article/view/7224.

Maliborska, V., You, Y. (2016). Writing conferences in a second language writing classroom: Instructor and student perspectives. *TESOL Journal*, 7(4), 874–897.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.)

Palincsar A S. (2008) Social Constructivist Perspectives on Teaching and Learning. *Annual review of psychology*, 49(1): 345-375.

Oshima.A. and Hogue. A. (2006). *Writing Academic English*. New York: Longman.

Richards, Jack C. and Farrel, Thomas S.C. (2011). *Practice teaching: a reflective approach.* NewYork: Cambridge University Press.

Watanabe, Kazuo and Yoshida, K Kumiko (2020). *Effects of Conferencing on Revision in EFL Writing: A Case Study of Japanese Junior High School Students.* Department of English Education, Nara University of Education

Wen, P, Jia,G. (2002). *Constructionism Theory & Teaching Reform: a Summary of Constructionism Learning Theory*. New York: Routledge.

Woodard, W. J. (2016). Teaching Techniques: Audiovisual Feedback in EFL/ESL Writing Classes. In English Teaching Forum (Vol. 54, No. 2, pp. 29-32). US Department of State. Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Office of English Language Programs, SA-5, 2200 C Street NW 4th Floor, Washington, DC 20037

Zaim, M., & Ningsih, K. (2019). Coherence and Unity of Students' Writing on Background of the Study of Research Proposal. *1st International Conference on Education Social Sciences and Humanities (ICESSHum* 2019). Atlantis Press.