Making Sense of Collaborative Writing: A Student-Experience-Based Perspective

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Abstract Code: ABS-ICOLLITE-20071
Introduction

- Writing is difficult for many EFL students (Lee, Bernstein & Georgieva, 2019).
- In Indonesian context, writing often taught only with a set of rules and rarely focus on genre-based approach (Hyland, 2008).
- There is/are gap or gaps in the body literature which look at collaborative writing (CW) for university students that done their creative writing assignments in Indonesian context.
- The question to address in our research is “Why did some students succeed in paired writing, but others failed to do so”?
- We want to look at the students’ experiences while they did their assignments collaboratively.
Methods

- **Qualitative Case Study:**
  - Describing the participant experiences with words instead of numerical data.

- **Research Participants:**
  - Eight students or four pairs (coded as A1, B1, C1 and D1). They worked in a group of two.

- **Data Collection:**
  - Open-ended questionnaire.
  - In-depth interview (between 30-45 mins).

- **Techniques of data analysis:**
  - We “immersed” ourselves in the data (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Silverman, 2014) to look for recurring themes and critical points from the respondents’ words.
Fung proposed five defining features of *Creative Writing* (CW) as follows: “(1) Mutual Interaction; (2) Negotiation; (3) Cognitive Conflict; (4) Shared Expertise; and (5) Affective Factors” (2010, pp.19-25).

- The first feature, mutual interaction means how the writers or pairs engaged in the process of writing their assignments. In this stage, students work together to generate ideas, contest the ideas, think about what they should do with their ideas later on.
- The second feature, negotiation is the stage when both students should discuss the differences and problems they faced and try to find a solution.
- The third feature, cognitive conflict is when they are compelled to decide on something. Both students should negotiate their views and reach consensus.
- The fourth feature, shared expertise, is related to how each student negotiates job descriptions in their assignment.
- The fifth feature, affective features, is closely related to emotive factors such as trust, reliability, commitment, and respect, which underlie the collaboration within the pairs.
Findings and Discussion

Why they succeeded and failed

Student A1 and Partner
(Successful Collaborators)
- They both are cooperative.
- They open themselves for criticism and suggestion.
- They can negotiate and reach consensus.
- They divide jobs fairly.
- They trust and respect one another.
- They show enthusiasm to work in a group.

Student B1 and Partner
(Not Successful Collaborators)
- They are not cooperative.
- They do not want to talk openly at the beginning of their collaboration.
- One or both of them are reserved person.
- They cannot negotiate their differences for a consensus.
- They tend to keep each other ‘face’.
- They do not divide the jobs fairly.
- They do not trust and respect one another.
- They do not show enthusiasm for working together.
**Student C1 and Partner**  
(Failed Collaborators)

- They do not want to work in a group.
- They are not open themselves for collaboration.
- They do not respect and trust one another.
- They do not divide the jobs fairly.
- They cannot negotiate as a team.
- They do not show enthusiasm for working in a team.

**Student D1 and Partner**  
(Successful Collaborators)

- They can open themselves for collaboration.
- They can negotiate things on dispute.
- They grow the sense of respect and trust as their works progress.
- They can share responsibility equally.
- They grow the spirit of teamwork as they progress in their work.
- They can learn from one another as they work together.
Conclusion

- Student A1 and her partner manage to do successful collaboration because they open themselves for criticism and suggestion. All the defining features of CW found in their experiences.

- Student B1 and her partner may need to learn the objectives of CW and open themselves for criticism and suggestion. They also need to put aside their ego when they work together.

- Student C1 and her partner must learn the concepts of CW to be able to work as a team successfully.

- Student D1 and her partner should learn how to develop good chemistry in collaboration. They also need to open themselves for criticism: accepting strengths and weaknesses.
References


