ENHANCING STUDENTS’ ABILITY IN COMPOSING A WELL-DEVELOPED PARAGRAPH THROUGH SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVE LEARNING FACILITATED BY PEER-ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT

A social constructive learning refers to a context used to build a collaborative learning atmosphere to have in-depth learning by empowering students’ performances and progress cooperatively. It is needed to upgrade students’ proficiency in delivering an idea through a written expression. Therefore, the students can build up their writing ability constructively. This is a descriptive qualitative study that is used to explore a meaningful learning experience in a paragraph writing class using peer-assessment. This research involved 23 students at the second semester of the English department of State Islamic Study of Ponorogo. The data were gathered from a performance test of all the participants, supported by the data derived from interviews, and documentation was also conducted to support the data of the students’ ability in writing. The data were analyzed interactively through (1) data reduction; (2) data display; and (3) conclusion. The results of the study showed that the students were triggered to rearrange their writing confidently because their peers showed their weaknesses and gave suggestions on their mistakes. It boosted the students to write better, so that, the students could produce the expected paragraph writing outcome after they were actively upgrading performances in writing through ongoing learning. Hence, the students were directed to elaborate their writing ability through interactive, constructive, and reflective activities. This paper was aimed at describing the implementation of social constructive learning in a paragraph writing class mediated by the use of peer-assessment. The implication of this study is to promote the students to learn paragraph writing faster since this learning triggered the students have experiences in learning together by checking, sharing, solving, and formulating a solution.

Keywords: paragraph writing, peer and self-assessment, social-constructive learning
INTRODUCTION

Passive learning in a writing class is a portrait of negative learning climate that may directly prohibit the students’ willingness to write well. The use of an appropriate learning approach in teaching this skill leads the students to learn better. In this context, the teacher should be a good learning designer who is able to control and manage the class through the various events, such as: organizing the class condition, conducting an interactive language learning, and giving learning feedback. The students’ passiveness in learning is affected by the failure in activating the students’ role in the writing class. The passive learners tend to learn longer than the active learners, therefore, the teacher need to show the greater efforts in teaching the course accordingly. A similar experience in the writing context is also faced by many Indonesian learners. Many higher education students face challenges in writing. A lot of students still have difficulty in composing a well-structured paragraph.

The actual scenes of writing class tend to guide the students to produce written expressions and give the score as the consequence, in spite of the condition that the students have obstacle to develop their ability in writing for losing the experiences in learning, exploring, deconstructing, and constructing ideas in the written expressions. Product-based approach in writing class is relevant applied for advanced than novice writers. In addition, the class does not promote the students to have in accordance of a meaningful writing experience like learning this skill by reviewing and giving score of the other’s work. Considering the fact when the students have more chances to review the others’ writing, the students have more chances to be better writers than those who are not able to do so. The implementation of peer-assessment in writing provides the students as the writers to take their classmates’ feedback into account as a tool to reflect their improvement. It means that a passive learning climate should be sifted to create a constructive learning climate to meet the core value in the writing class by giving more attention on empowering the students’ writing ability through collaborative learning. Considering the fact that interaction is considered to be a fundamental factor for effective teaching learning process. This learning provides the students to conduct constructive learning, the learners construct their own knowledge through interaction.

Constructive learning is required to overcome the existed condition that it can upgrade the students’ quality in writing. Constructive learning conducts active engagement in the process of meaning making. This learning may build up the students’ ability in expressing ideas through written expressions when the teacher gives serious concern of it contextually. The teacher needs to dig more on the aspects of composing and reviewing the writing interactively. It refers that it
is worthy to teach the students to have ability in composing paragraph writing by considering its content and form. Besides, the teacher is also required to guide the students to have ability in giving review on the other’s writing. It means writing is not a simple course that the students need to construct their ability in writing constructively by composing and reviewing their writing recursively, the student as being the active learner, playing a central role in mediating and controlling learning.

The students need more chances to have writing practices by involving a learning community that the students are guided to review their writing each other through collaborative action. They involve groups of learners working together to solve a problem, complete a task, or create a product. A classroom learning community gives contribution in facilitating the class members to have meaningful learning experiences. It refers that social constructive learning is meaning making applied in a writing class since it opens more possibilities to learn better in writing in which the students may experience a meaningful learning. This learning creates long term memory for the students for its contextual experiences in learning.

However, the importance of social constructive learning has not widely discussed in the classroom contexts that the reformation of classroom climate is necessary to be applied. In the social constructive learning, the students are easier to learn from others since it accommodates them to get in touch on this matter deeply by asking, answering, exploring, elaborating interactively. Many writing classroom contexts tend to be a passive zone in which most of the activities give emphasizing in teaching writing by focusing on training of how to compose a paragraph.

The application of peer-assessment is a reflection of social constructive learning in which the students are promoted to be critical writers during the course by asking them to conduct writing activities collaboratively.

The application of peer-assessment can be a means of meaningful language learning sources when it is appropriately and thoroughly used. This assessment contributes in guiding the students to be active, explorative, and collaborative writers. In applying peer-assessment, the peer checks all of writing components like organization, content, vocabulary, grammar and punctuation after getting feedback from the peer. Peer-assessment is meaningful applied to improve students’ appreciative critical abilities by involving fellow students to assess their respective work. This assessment gives students freedom in expressing opinions. The peer provides suggestions to notify the writer in revising the draft. It is a practical and time-saving way to foster the students’
writing performance because the students may learn on their own by considering the oblivious errors as well as their mates also have a chance to reflect and learn through peer-assessment.

Some studies of peer-assessment in writing indicate that the students are triggered to have better comprehension and show positive attitudes in writing after they have direct experiences in using this assessment. The students’ writing ability is constructed well when the students have enough experiences to use peer-assessment in their learning process. The peer gives detail information of the other’s writing by reviewing its the strengths and weaknesses. Then, the writer makes reflection and correction of the mistakes. Peer assessment is an interactive assessment that may enhance the students’ ability in writing and boost their learning interest in the writing class.

Building a social constructive learning in paragraph writing class mediated by using peer-assessment is needed to facilitate the students in identifying and reflecting their mistakes cooperatively through constructive activities. These assessments create qualified-writing classroom contexts by directing the students to be active, explorative, and collaborative in composing a paragraph. This study is aimed at describing the use of peer-assessment in the paragraph writing class to build the students’ ability in composing a well-developed paragraph through the process of learning interactively and constructively.

A paragraph is composed of a topic sentence supported by relevant supporting sentences. It is the basic unit of academic writing that is required to learn because all other types of academic writing are based on paragraph. Organization of a paragraph is a fairly simple. It is started with a main idea as a core point to discuss, a topic sentence as the scope of discussion in a paragraph, three to five supporting sentences to elaborate the topic sentence, and end with a concluding sentence to sums up the discussion of a paragraph. A well-developed paragraph has three characteristics that consist of: (1) unity, means that all sentences in the paragraph explain, develop, and support a central idea in some way; (2) development, it refers to the ability in exploring the paragraph in a well organization; and (3) coherence, it is about the use of related sentences in a paragraph in which one and the other sentences have close connection. All the supporting sentences should be composed in a good order.

Social constructive learning is crucially needed to build classroom community learning through actively involving the students’ role in the learning context. A social constructive learning focuses deeply on how individuals come together to construct and apply their knowledge in socially mediated contexts.
Social interaction is held to engage the students to acquire knowledge and ability in writing by doing elaboration and reflection through the process in producing a written text, giving and receiving feedback after the process of drafting has been done. The sociocultural perspective on second language learning is worthy applied to create a meaningful learning, since it is based on contextual viewpoints in designing instructional learning. Moreover, it promotes language learners to have better learning experiences by constructing ability in learning with the other student. Social constructive learning in writing refers to the process to build the student’s writing performance critically by getting direct input from the other student as the meaningful feedback.

![Social Constructive Learning Design](image)

**Figure 1. Social Constructive Learning Design**

Constructive learning is required to build a well-developed paragraph since it promotes the learners to experience in depth learning by involving external guidance derived from the teacher or the peers to maximize the students’ performances. Constructive learning refers to have understanding of a subject matter, applying concepts, constructing meaning, and thinking about ideas. A human being has some layers in term of learning development. One of the layers indicates that a human has a capacity to learn alone. The other layer indicates that there is a zone of learning can be developed because of the other’s role in learning development either from the teacher or the friends. Thus, there is a chance for a human being to upgrade capacity in learning. The teacher needs to dig it to increase the students’ progress in learning. The students are social creatures that their performances can be maximized through learning community.

Peer-assessment helps a writer to share and think about a piece of writing with the other group members. It is a powerful way to provide the students with important information and feedback of their learning. The students get advantages of using this assessment because it improves the quality of their
writing. This assessment facilitates the students to learn and work together collaboratively.

Peer feedback is meaningfully applied in writing classes because this assessment stimulates students to conduct constructive learning identified by some features: (1) it directs the students to show active participation in the process of learning; (2) the use the assessment creates authentic communicative context; (3) it builds community learning by minimizing the nonjudgmental environment in giving assessment; (4) it creates positive learning atmosphere which reduce apprehension about students who may not use feedback by their peers in writing; (5) it develops students’ critical reading; and (6) it also reduces teacher’s work load in giving assessment. The use of peer-assessment provides each student to get comprehensive feedback from other students. This assessment guides students to conduct either director indirect learning together in a small group community. Additionally, peer-assessment trains the students to conduct personal and social enhancement in their learning communicatively. This assessment produces constructive feedback which leads group members to be sensitive about the kind of feedback they get from others.

METHODS

Research Approach and Design

This article promotes qualitative descriptive research with the aim to describe a social constructive atmosphere in a paragraph development class. It focuses on exploring the students’ experiences in writing by involving peer-assessment during the learning process. It involved 23 students at the second semester of the English department of Institute Islamic Study of Ponorogo. The data were gathered from performance tests of all the participants, supported by interview and documentation. The data were analyzed interactively through (1) data reduction; (2) data display; and (3) conclusion.

The writer took four meetings to conduct this study. It involved some activities that consisted of (1) giving the overview of the objective, producing draft 1 to know the students’ input, (2) exchanging the first draft to the other student to give feedback and rewriting the first draft through drafting 2 based on the feedback given, (3) exchanging the second draft to the other student to give feedback and rewriting the second draft through drafting 3 based on the feedback given, (4) submitting drafting 3. These steps were done to see the students’ progress in writing after they were guided to elaborate their ability in through social constructive learning atmosphere self-assessment and peer-assessment were applied during the writing process that occurred for four weeks.
Table 1. Implementation of Peer-Assessment in Paragraph Writing Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Description of each meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1.  | Meeting 1 | a. Giving overview of paragraph  
|     |         | b. Modeling a good paragraph  
|     |         | c. Assessing a paragraph with peer-assessment  
|     |         | d. Deconstructing a paragraph  
|     |         | e. Giving assignment to write a descriptive paragraph (draft 1) |
| 2.  | Meeting 2 | a. Giving example in applying peer-assessment  
|     |         | b. Assessing draft 1 using peer-assessment  
|     |         | c. Revising draft 1, the writer revise draft 1 based on the feedback from the peer (to produce draft 2) |
| 3.  | Meeting 3 | a. Assessing draft 2 using peer-assessment  
|     |         | b. Revising draft; the writer revise draft 2 based on the feedback from the peer (the revision is submitted to the lecturer) |
| 4.  | Meeting 4 | a. Write draft 3 based on the feedback given on draft 2  
|     |         | b. Submit draft 3 to get score from the lecturer |

The process of writing on each meeting involved the stages of (1) planning, it required the students to conduct brainstorming and outlining before drafting; (2) drafting, the students poured ideas in draft 1 (3) editing, the students revised the first draft to the second draft and (4) submitting, the students submitted the second draft to the lecturer.

The data source of this study were descriptive paragraphs written by students of English Department Program at the second semester of Islamic Institute of Ponorogo, East Java. It involved 23 students, 5 of them are boys and 18 of them are girls, who had attended integrated course for writing.

Data Collection Technique

The data of this study were collected from the results of performance tests, interviews, and documentation. The first performance test was conducted at the first meeting to see the students’ actual performance. The students were instructed to write the first draft of a descriptive paragraph. Then, they exchanged their writing to others and assessed the works using the provided rubric. The second performance was held at the fourth meeting to see the students’ ability after they had experiences to compose the second draft in meeting 2, the third draft in meeting 3, and the students submitted the third draft that had been revised to the lecturer at meeting 4. Interviews were held in the last meeting to get information of the students’ attitude in writing. Documentation was derived by analyzing the students’ portfolio of draft 1, revision of draft 1, draft 2, revision of draft 2, draft 3, and the revision of draft 3.

Compilation of the students’ drafts contributes to show the students’ progress indicating from the improvement on their performance. At the first meeting, paragraph, it showed the students’ actual performance in which many of them still have problems in composing a paragraph. At the second and third meeting, the students got corrections of some basic mistakes from their peers in
line with rubric for writing that covers writing components as a guidance in giving score (Table 2).

This rubric was socialized to the students during the process of learning. Having knowledge of scoring and direct experience to conduct assessment on the other’s writing stimulated them to be critical writers since it directly guided them to be careful and alert during the writing process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Score 3</th>
<th>Score 2</th>
<th>Score 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>A well-organized paragraph, a topic sentence is supported by 3 supporting sentences</td>
<td>A topic sentence supported by 2 supporting sentences</td>
<td>A topic sentence without sufficient supporting sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>The paragraph only discusses one idea</td>
<td>The paragraph not only discusses one idea but also talks something else out of the main point</td>
<td>The paragraph discusses some ideas simultaneously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>No mistakes in using sentence expressions</td>
<td>1-3 mistakes in using sentence expressions</td>
<td>More than 3 mistakes in using sentence expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Use relevant words</td>
<td>1-3 mistakes in using relevant words</td>
<td>More than 3 mistakes in using relevant words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>No mistakes in using capitalization and punctuation</td>
<td>1-2 mistakes in using capitalization and punctuation</td>
<td>More than 2 mistakes in using capitalization and punctuation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Data Analysis

Data analysis were carried out during the fourth meetings until the data collection process. The stages of analysis the students’ writing include of: (1) recording the students’ score of the first draft; (2) making a note of the students’ performance in writing the first draft; (3) recording the students’ score of the second draft; (4) making a note of the students’ progress in writing the second draft; (5) recording the students’ score of the third draft; (4) making a note of the students’ progress in writing the third draft; (5) giving the score of the last draft. The notes were used to identify the students; problems during the learning process and the scores were used to determine the students’ comprehension during the course.
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The use of peer and self-assessment in paragraph writing class boosts the students’ ability in composing a paragraph through ongoing process in which the students were directed to be interactive in the learning process by giving feedback and suggestion each other. In addition, the students were stimulated to pursue self-mastery that they are individually motivated to be active self-learner who is persistent to improve ability in writing during the learning process.

The learning process in this context refers to a set of process involved in the writing course to guide the students to have ability in producing a well-organized paragraph. The process was focused to empower the students’ ability in writing by giving more emphasizing on the aspects self-reflection as the result of sharing and getting peer-feedback. Moreover, the detail exploration of the students’ writing reflected through interactive and collaborative experiences that is promoted by using peer-assessment. Therefore, the use of self and peer-assessment in a writing class constructed the students’ writing ability. Peer-assessment built the students’ mindset of meaningful learning experiences. It promoted the efforts in internalizing a process of personal mastery constructed during the learning experiences collaboratively by checking the other’s writing, showing the other’s mistakes, discussing the problems to meet the solution, and giving the relevant solution.

Therefore, involving peer-assessment in a writing class contributed to elaborate comprehension in writing that the students had more chances to achieve in depth learning as the result of cooperative and constructive learning. Because of it, the students were able to have better enhancement in writing process (Table 3).

Enhancing on Students’ Ability and Experiences in writing Class

Writing ability is not an instant process since it requires genuine efforts to direct the students to have enhancement in elaborating their writing skill. In this study, students’ social constructive learning was an approach that was appropriate used to construct the students’ mastery. It involved the class members as the community learning designed through a set of meaningful process.

| Table 3. The Strengths of Social Constructive Learning by Involving Peer-Assessment |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| No.             | Writing Components | Draft 1 Average Score | Draft 2 Average Score | Draft 3 Average Score |
| 1.              | Content           | 1.5               | 2.0               | 3.3               |
| 2.              | Organization      | 1                 | 2.5               | 3.5               |
| 3.              | Grammar           | 1                 | 2                 | 3                 |
| 4.              | Vocabulary        | 2                 | 2.2               | 2.5               |
| 5.              | Mechanics         | 2                 | 2.5               | 3.5               |
| Total Score     |                   | 7.5               | 11.2              | 15.8              |
Peer-assessment facilitated the students to be critical writers by learning the strengths and weaknesses of their friends’ writing. The use of this assessment helped the students as the novice writers to learn from the peers of how to deliver ideas appropriately. They could learn together meaningfully that they could get explanation from the writer and imitated to produce such expressions. Even, the students were possible to get detail feedback from the peers when the teacher applied this assessment. This assessment also provided information to the students to be better writers since the implementation of peer-assessment in writing gave the chances to the students to learn the other mistakes in writing that they did not do the same mistakes.

Thus, peer-assessment is also worthy applied in paragraph writing class for its role in giving detail information of writing quality. The detail exploration in writing was clearly depicted when the teacher applied this assessment provided by rubric for assessment. The rubric guided the peers to give detail reviews of a paragraph in line with its, content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics.

Besides, it provided interactive learning experiences among the students that they had more chances to learn together by sharing and discussing their problems during the assessment time. Learning by doing was the most effective way in this context since the students had more chance to learn by asking the peers of a difficult matter. The student in the group who were considered to have comprehension of writing knowledge and writing ability that they could share and explain these experiences to others. Therefore, these experiences created a meaningful learning atmosphere that directly influenced the quality of the writing that was produced. Group sharing and discussion during the reviewing process from draft 1, draft 2, and draft 3 were worthy applied since it upgraded their writing ability. Table 3 showed the students’ writing result from the first draft, the second draft, and the last draft. It indicated students’ progress in writing because of using peer-assessment and self-assessment in the writing class. In such context, the students were provided by constructing learning experiences. The students got some pin points in this contexts that included: (1) clear instructions from the lecturer; (2) clear modeling; (3) writing experiences through drafting sessions; (4) discussion through peer-assessment; (5) reflection from self-assessment. Hence, the highest score is achieved as stated in draft 3.

**Enhancing on Writing Process**

At the end in writing, the students were able to produce a well-organized writing that were derived from some features like imitating a text model, organizing an idea, drafting, practicing for mastery, and producing the expected writing (Table 3).
Enhancing Students’ Ability in Composing a Well-Developed Paragraph through Social Constructive Learning Facilitated by Peer-Assessment (Tintin Susilowati, et al.)

Table 4. Characteristics of Writing Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Process writing</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Text is used as a resource of comparison</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Ideas are used as starting point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. It involves more than one draft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. It is focused on meaning making text for its readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. It involves collaborative learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. It is oriented on creative process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Enhancement of the students’ ability in writing was indicated from the quality of their writing. It was reflected from their ability in applying the concept of writing components like (1) content, (2) organization, (3) grammar, (4) vocabulary, and (5) mechanics in the written expression. The students were able to produce a text as a writing product well after they follow the stage of process writing. The use of self-assessment and peer-assessment in a writing class facilitated the students to produce a well-organized writing because it directed the students to elaborate their writing experiences thoroughly.

CONCLUSION

Boosting the students’ ability in composing a paragraph by promoting self-assessment and peer-assessment during the learning processes is crucially needed to build a positive learning atmosphere. The use of these assessments construct the students’ ability in writing through the process of elaborating meaningful learning experiences. The learners are supported to have the efforts in minimizing the students’ weaknesses in writing, empowering ability in writing by reading the relevant references, enriching the students’ viewpoint in writing by discussing the difficulties of it, and having ability in delivering ideas in the written expressions in a well-organized writing. The use of self-assessment and peer-assessment in the writing class leads the students to be constructive learners.

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