

USING COLLABORATIVE WRITING TECHNIQUE THROUGH MIXEDINK AS MEDIA IN TEACHING WRITING A DISCUSSION TEXT AT SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Khainur Jannah¹, Rusdi Noor Rosa²

Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris

FBS Universitas Negeri Padang

Email: ana_versus_banana@yahoo.co.id

Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas bagaimana cara mengaplikasikan teknik menulis kolaborasi melalui media *MixedInk* dalam mengajar menulis di sekolah menengah atas. *MixedInk* adalah sebuah aplikasi berbasis web yang mempunyai fitur-fitur unik yang dapat membantu meningkatkan kemampuan menulis siswa. Dalam mengaplikasikan media ini, ada empat langkah kegiatan menulis yang harus diikuti. Pertama, siswa membuat rangka paragraf dari topik yang diberikan (*Drafting*). Selanjutnya siswa mulai menulis sebuah monolog teks. Kemudian mereka bersama-sama akan memberikan revisi dan suntingan terhadap hasil tulisan siswa lainnya (*Revising and Editing*). Kemudian siswa dapat menggabungkan hasil revisi siswa lainnya (*Remixing*). Tahap berikutnya adalah memberikan rangking terhadap tulisan semua siswa (*Rating*).

Kata kunci: writing, discussion text, collaborative technique, MixedInk,

A. Introduction

Writing is one important language skills to be mastered. It is a skill that bridges readers to meaning of texts. Through writing, people can share information correctly and quickly in form of written language. Writing is defined in various ways. According to Bello (1997), writing process usually begins with some form of pre-writing activity in which learners work together in groups to generate ideas about a particular topic. This includes sharing the free writing

¹ Student of English Language Teaching Program of FBS UNP graduated on September 2013

² Advisor, Lecturer in Faculty of Languages and Arts, State University of Padang

topic, brainstorming, making a list or timeline, or simply reflecting on an experience. Each group members then works to compose a first draft. Then they read peer's draft in pairs or small group.

The members of group give comments and suggestions. Revising begins based on these comments and responses. Revision should be shared until the ideas seem clear. Then, editing begins as the focus move to spelling, grammar, punctuation, transition words and signal words. Students should be encouraged to edit what they know or have studied. Finally, Bello (1997) clarifies that when the students and the lecturer satisfy with a particular piece of writing, it should be shared with a wider audience.

Writing is a skill that a person uses to deliver his or her ideas, feeling, thought, or information to the reader or paper. And because writing is one of the most important skills to be learnt by students, it only can be gained through practices and experiences. As Raimes (1983:73) says, writing reinforced grammatical structures, idioms and vocabulary that the students have learnt, and when the students write they have chance to be adventurous with the language. In other word writing itself is not simultaneously skill, the students have to get practice of writing. Besides, it provides the opportunity to apply the grammar, idioms and vocabulary.

Related to this, Gillespie (1986:14) says that writing is learned behavior that takes long time to master by students. In other words, it can be said that teachers should give time to students to practice regularly and make effort to arouse curiosity and self-confidence by matching student's interest to the writing topic. By doing this activity regularly the students will get used to and feel that it is a part of activity should be done.

In English curriculum in Indonesia, writing is taught from elementary school up to university level. In the recent English curriculum namely School Based Curriculum (KTSP) for writing competence in senior high school, students are expected to express the content of functional texts (announcements, advertisements, invitations, personal letter memo, etc) and essays or monolog texts in the form of genres (recount, narrative, procedure, descriptive, news item, report, analytical exposition, hortatory exposition, spoof, explanation, discussion and review) in daily lives contexts and to access knowledge. The students are also required to achieve informational level of literacy in which they use language to get knowledge.

In senior high school, one of the genres that learned is discussion text. According to Gerot and Wignel (1994) discussion text is a text that has function to present (at least) two points of view about an issue. Discussions are like expositions in many ways except that discussions consider at least two sides of an issue, not just one. The generic structure of discussion based on Gerot and Wignel are issue, arguments for and against or statement of differing points of view and conclusion or recommendations.

However, writing is not an easy thing to do for the students. Most of students in senior high school encounter some obstacles or difficulties in writing monologues text. It happens due to several factors. First, the students have poor

linguistic knowledge such as vocabulary and grammar. Then, another factor comes from teachers' side.

Most of the teachers can not give their maximum effort in conducting successful teaching and learning process. Teachers can not present teaching and learning writing as an interesting activity because they do not use variety of media that is new and interesting for students. Interesting media will help students to improve their writing skill and change their assumption about how the writing is really difficult. If students find that writing is interesting they will have good motivation and willingness to compose a good text.

Teachers have tried to overcome these problems, but the efforts still do not give significant effects in improving students' writing ability in writing a discussion text. One of the solutions to solve the problems is by doing collaborative writing. Collaborative writing is the way that gives chance to students to learn from others' corrections and comments in order to improve their writing skills. It is the activity in which more than one person produce a single text. Through collaborative work, students learn from one another when working together and also correct and suggest one another.

Collaborative is a term used to describe classroom activities in which students work and learn together. Viggiano (n.d.) explains that the term can describe activities as peer tutoring/response/discussion (in which students comment on each others' work) and group papers (in which several students or the entire class work together to create one finished product).

In a true collaborative environment, each contributor has an equal ability to add, edit and remove text. The writing process becomes a recursive task, where each change prompts others to make changes. It is easier to do if the group has a specific end goal in mind, and harder if a goal is absent or vague. Related to the explanation above Harmer (2004) adds that one of the ways of encouraging drafting, reflection and revision is to have students involved in collaborative writing.

A very good technique of discussion and communication is essential, especially if disagreements arise. Learning to write should be done through collaborative as a media in having conversation between students with the teachers. Correcting each other and giving corrective feedback is the effective way to build the reader oriented awareness and at the same time it is also the ways to handle the big classes. Collaboration technique can be applied to teach writing in any kinds of text.

Other issues why collaboration is needed is to handle big classes which is one of teacher's constraints to monitor and examine students' writing in short time through dividing the students into small groups for collaborate each others. In collaboration activity the students are asked to read their colleges' writing and correct it so they can avoid the same mistakes. The explanation above emphasize that collaboration system is a solution for teacher in handling big classes. It can be said that collaborative writing is one of best techniques to help students in developing their writing skills.

There are a lot of tools that offer collaborative activity. They are google docs, MixedInk, writeLATEX, web2practice, storymash, etc. Each of these tools

has their own characteristics and features. One of tools that can be used to facilitate collaborative writing is MixedInk. MixedInk is a free collaborative writing tool which allows groups of any size to bring the best ideas and language together in a single text. It allows users to create and edit documents, including authorship tracking and also to give rating to other's works. When the students work collaboratively on a text, MixedInk enables an unlimited number of users to collaborate on a task at once. It also displays every user's works. Besides, it also provides the opportunity to allow the students to experience a more learner-centered.

MixedInk is a tool that facilitates collaborative writing which address is <http://www.mixedink.com>. It is educator friendly tool allows small groups or the whole class to reflect on several versions of a text written on the same topic and to weave ideas from peers' work into a single text that credits multiple authors (Castek, 2012). It allows the user to create, edit and storage their documents online. MixedInk includes five phases in documenting and sharing users' ideas: writing, reading, rating, remixing, and revising.

MixedInk provides some unique features that will help all students improve their writing skills and techniques, and work as a class to produce well-constructed essays, reports, and problem solutions. While students collaborate throughout the writing process, MixedInk keeps track of student progress and color-codes the contributions of every student. Both students and teachers can also provide suggestions for improvement, allowing students to assess each other's work. Finally, students may "rate" each version, allowing for peer evaluation and development of every group project. Ultimately, a "Top Version" is chosen which recognizes all student input.

There are some advantages of using collaborative writing through MixedInk that founded in teaching writing. First, the students will able to revise and edit the writing of their peers, besides they are given more opportunity for practice. Second, the students are motivating because of the use of technology. Third, MixedInk accommodates an unlimited number of students at once and each of students' works is appreciated by a system of star. Fourth, authorship are tracked automatically and color-coded.

With the use of MixedInk, it is expected that students not only can have stronger motivation to write collaboratively, but also that their higher-order thinking skills, such as evaluating and commenting on peers' written work, can be enhanced.

Based on explanation above, to improve students' writing ability, there are many things to do. One of them is to use various and appropriate techniques and media in teaching writing. This article will discuss the using of collaborative technique through web based media that is MixedInk.

B. Discussion

1. Preparation

Before using MixedInk in teaching collaborative writing, both teacher and students need to know how to use it. The teacher can introduce MixedInk to students at the beginning of the semester since they are more willing to try new things. It helps both the students and lecturer to do collaborative writing, give comment and feedback. In using the MixedInk to provide the collaborative writing, both students and teacher need a computer and access to the internet. Then they have to sign in to the site as stated at the previous discussion. The teacher needs to create a new project, and then share the URL project to students.

2. The Process of Using Collaborative Writing through MixedInk

In teaching writing discussion texts by using MixedInk as a media to senior high school students, there are some activities that should be followed. There are three stages of teaching namely pre writing activities, whilst writing activities and post writing activities.

1. Pre Teaching Activities

Pre teaching activities are done in the beginning of the lesson. There are several activities in this phase. Teacher greets the students, leads to pray and checks students' attendance. Then, teacher activates students' background knowledge to the lesson by asking some questions to the students and also introduces the competences that students should achieve in the end of the lesson that is the students are required to compose a simple discussion text.

2. Whilst Teaching Activities

There are three steps to be followed in whilst activities: exploration, elaboration, and confirmation.

a. Exploration

In this stage the students are given a chance to start thinking about the topic and to become familiar with the topic before they start writing. The teacher gives the topic, and asks the students about their knowledge and familiarity with the topic by asking some questions. Then together with the students list the relevant words on the context of the topic or make the draft.

Then the teacher gives the model of the text and explains the students to the social function, schematic structures and language features of the text. The explanation is given in order to get the students comprehension about the discussion itself. The model of the text is presented as a whole text.

Next, students are asked to read and comprehend the text before they start to do the writing assignment. It will help them to understand the text. This stage is intended to build up students' background knowledge about the topic of writing itself. Besides, it helps the students familiar with the purpose, schematic structures and language features of discussion text.

After reading the model of the text, the teacher introduces MixedInk and its features to the students. While students create a new account on MixedInk, the teacher also makes a new group and a new project on Mixedink. The link of new

group and new project will be shared to the students. Therefore the students do the writing process on MixedInk.

b. Elaboration

In this step, students list the arguments from many points of view based on the topic given. This activity is aimed at providing the students with the information on the topic of writing in order that they have background knowledge of the topic they are going to write. The process of composing a discussion text will be showed in this paper.

Example:

Topic: National Examination in Indonesia

Title: National Examination in Pros and Cons

Issue: National exam becomes the hot topic in most of discussions.

Argument for: the current system should be defended

Elaboration: the quality of the Indonesia education system will drop without the national exam

Argument against: high-school does not need national exam

Elaboration: the quality of education does not just depend on the national exam

Elaboration: national exam only measures a small portion of students' competence in specific subjects

Recommendation: the national examination can still be useful as an instrument to evaluate or detect the level of students' cognitive competence in several subjects, on a national scale.

Then, the teacher gives the instruction to the students to write a discussion text based on the given topic. The discussion text must have introductory paragraph which includes the statement of issue of concern, body of paragraph includes arguments for and against and the supporting arguments (elaboration), and concluding paragraph (recommendation).

After making a draft, students will write a simple discussion text. The text will be written based on the drafts. When students finish their own writing, they are given chance to read each other on writing. They can identify the mistakes, comment and critic on the organization and content of each other's writing. The comment and critic from the friends and teacher will be used to revise the text.

They also are able to give directly the revision and edit others' text. The revision will be in different color from the real author of the text. More over, with the revision from other students, each of students then remixes the revisions with their own text. Therefore, the author still can see their own text and other's revision without change the text automatically. In other word, students have their own authority on their text or their revisions because the author of every single

text is color coded. With the help of MixedInk, the process of revising and editing can be done from anywhere and anytime since both the students and teacher have the computer and access to the internet.

In this stage, students may “rate” each version, allowing for peer evaluation and development of every group project. The teacher has students rate each other’s work using a system of stars which range from ½ stars (needs more development) to five stars (very well developed).

The purpose of these activities is to practice students’ writing skill through collaborative process which can be done in the classroom and out of classroom with the help of MixedInk. The aims of collaborative activity in this stage are to identify the grammar mistakes and the mechanics of writing. At the end the students are accustomed to write and change their thought of how difficult of writing becomes how easy it is.

c. Confirmation

In this stage, the students will compose a good discussion text by themselves. Then the teacher confirm the students’ writing whether it is correct or not. If there is a significant mistake, the teacher will give explanation to make it clear to the students.

3. Post Teaching Activities

In this stage, the teacher concludes the lesson with the students. The teacher makes sure that all students are participating in concluding the lesson through giving their own opinions. If the teacher finds students who still confuse or have problem, the teacher should give further explanation.

C. Conclusions and Suggestions

Based on discussion above, it can be concluded collaborative writing through MixedInk as media in teaching writing is one of a good way to improve students writing ability. Through collaborative writing, the students can learn from another when they are working together. The students can work collaboratively on writing tasks without being restricted by time and space. In teaching writing, it is suggested for both of teacher and students to use MixedInk as media in collaborative writing. Both students and teacher should have an account in MixedInk in order to help them to use it as facilitator in collaborative writing.

Note: This article is written based on the writer’s paper with advisor Rusdi Noor Rosa, S.S, M.Hum.

References

- Bello, Tom. 1997. *Improving ESL Learners' Writing Skills*. Washington DC: in Eric Digest. Retrieved on October 6, 2011 from http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/Writing.html
- Castek, Jill. 2012. *The 4R's of Collaborative Writing: Reading, Rating, Remixing, and Revising*. Retrieved on January 15, 2013 from <http://literacybeat.com/2012/04/19/the-4-rs-of-collaborative-writing-reading-rating-remixing-and-revising/>
- Gillespie, Sheena. 1986. *The Writer Craft: A Process Reader*. New York: Scoft Fresman and Company.
- Hadley, Omaggio. 2004. *Writing in Foreign Language*. Retrieved on September 24, 2011 from <http://www.Kyoto-su.ac.jp/information.tselley/es22/al.htm>
- Harmer, Jeremy. 2004. *How to Teach Writing*. England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Raimes, A. 1983. *Technique in Teaching Writing*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Richard, Jack C. 2001. *Curriculum Development in Language Teaching*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Ur, Penny. 1991. *A Course in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Viggiano, Emily. n.d. *Teaching Tip Sheet Collaborative Writing*. Retrieved on December 17, 2011 from wac.gmu.edu/supporting/tip_sheet_collaboration.pdf
- White, R. and V. Arnd. 1998. *Process Writing*. London: Longman.