

## **COMPUTER SUPPORTED COLLABORATIVE LEARNING IN THE TEACHING WRITING**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper seeks to investigate the effectiveness of computer supported collaborative learning in teaching writing. The discussion is begun with the use of computer supported collaborative learning, the nature of collaborative learning, and will be ended by discussing overviews of writing in general. The main focus of this discussion is the effectiveness of CSCL in teaching writing. In fact, students have low motivation and participation in writing. This is caused by the traditional method that is used by teacher in classroom. By presenting collaborative learning, students will motivate to write. The problem statement above will be analyzed in the term of how is CSCL able to support and enhance students' language development especially in writing skill. The conclusion is drawn in the form of applying CSCL in teaching writing and teacher role in the classroom.*

Keywords: Computer supported collaborative learning, collaborative learning, and teaching writing

### **ABSTRAK**

*Tulisan ini dimaksudkan untuk mengetahui efektivitas komputer didukung pembelajaran kolaboratif dalam pengajaran menulis. Diskusi dimulai dengan penggunaan komputer didukung pembelajaran kolaboratif, sifat pembelajaran kolaboratif, dan akan diakhiri dengan membahas ikhtisar penulisan secara umum. Fokus utama dari diskusi ini adalah efektivitas CSCL dalam pengajaran menulis. Bahkan, siswa memiliki motivasi yang rendah dan partisipasi secara tertulis. Hal ini disebabkan oleh metode tradisional yang digunakan oleh guru di kelas. Dengan menghadirkan pembelajaran kolaboratif, siswa akan memotivasi untuk menulis. Pernyataan masalah di atas akan dianalisis dalam jangka bagaimana CSCL mampu mendukung dan meningkatkan perkembangan bahasa siswa terutama dalam keterampilan menulis. Kesimpulan itu diambil dalam bentuk penerapan CSCL dalam mengajar menulis dan peran guru di kelas.*

Kata Kunci: Pembelajaran kolaborasi yang didukung dengan komputer, pembelajaran kolaboratif, dan pengajaran menulis

## **Introduction**

Collaborative learning is an umbrella term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students, or students and teachers together. Usually, students are working in groups of two or more, mutually searching for understanding, solutions, meanings, or creating a product. In collaborative learning, interactions among students are very important and essential for effective knowledge acquisition and to increase students understanding. Collaboration is a coordinated, synchronous activity that is the result of a continued attempt to construct and maintain a shared conception of a problem (Stahl., et.al., 2006:3). The growing of information and technological innovation in the form of internet (World Wide Web) cannot be separated in human daily life today. These interactive and technological innovations have effected to the nature of English language teaching from traditional to modern. Some experts propose the new strategy namely computer supported collaborative learning. Computer-supported collaborative learning (CSCL) allows group learning to take place in computer-mediated environments (Orvis and Lassiter, 2007:7).

In order to get maximum advantages of social learning, collaborative students must interact with each other, share information between them, and coordinate actions. For us collaboration meant consistently working together to accomplish a task; it was a series of actions that complemented those of our partner. .... plans we created together were greater than those we might have developed individually. Contributions from both of us led to more creative and complete lesson plans (Brandt, 1996:3). In fact, many students have low participation and motivation in writing and their score are not good enough, since they cannot write well. This condition is caused teacher always use traditional media in teaching writing. In this point, we are going to apply computer supported collaborative learning in developing students writing skill. This strategy is viewed as a solver for the problem stated above. The computer supported collaborative learning is designed to value the individual and emphasize each individual's essential role in the learning process through the use of computer.

This paper therefore aims to discuss the effectiveness of computer supported collaborative learning to improve students writing. Thus, how effective is the use of computer supported collaborative learning in the teaching writing is the main focus of



this discussion. The interactive media in computer connected to the internet such as e-mail, social networking, or hypertext navigation would give the students the chance to more active in the interaction, to participate more, and to communicate easily with the other students (Rangoonaden and Bordeleaus, 2000:361). Based on social interaction among group members, Computer Mediated Collaborative Learning is believed to possess a number of potential benefits, especially in academic, social, and psychological areas of language education (Nguyen, 2010:203). Theoretically, attention has shifted from psycholinguistic approaches to socio-cognitive perspectives, emphasizing language development through meaningful social interaction (Nguyen, 2010:203).

## **Literature Review**

### **Computer Supported Collaborative Learning**

Computer cannot be separated in human daily life and it can be applied in the classroom setting with the various strategies. With the development of technology for example computer, some of experts attempt to apply it in the classroom setting. It is aimed to develop students' motivation in learning English. Computer Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL) is based on precisely the opposite vision: it proposes the development of new software and applications that bring learners together and that can offer creative activities of intellectual exploration and social interaction (Stahl., et.al., 2006:3). Computer supported collaborative learning (CSCL) allows group learning to take place in computer-mediated environments. To receive the full benefit of social learning, collaborative students must interact with each other, share information, and coordinate actions. Stahl et al. (2006:410) indicate that "CSCL arose in the 1990s in reaction to software that forced students to learn as isolated individuals".

Orvis and Lassiter (2007:7) stated that there are six guidelines for designing web-based courses to maximize learning. First, require trainees to be active during WBI. Trainees are highly active when they are asking questions, collaborating with other trainees, discussing training content, completing learning exercises, or practicing new skills, and are inactive when they are listening to lectures and reading a textbook. Second, incorporate a wide variety of instructional methods in WBI. One of the main benefits of WBI is the ability to customize instruction to the needs of different trainees. Third, offer a computer and Internet skills course for trainees

participating in Web-based courses. Fourth, provide trainees with access to online lecture notes. One of the main benefits of WBI is that it enables the instructor to provide trainees with control over the pace of instruction. Fifth, incorporate synchronous human interaction in WBI. Sixth, design WBI to provide trainees with control over the content, sequence, and pace of instruction.

The term of “CSCL” is very important especially for the interaction and socio-cultural researchers in which the approaches of interaction and socio-cultural involve active construction of knowledge, can be potentially used as a powerful tool for collaborative learning and group communication. It is in line with the Kaye’ statement that CMC can provide a valuable dimension to collaborative learning as it both fosters more equally distributed turn-taking and supports more thoughtfully composed inputs (Kaye, 1989:221). Similarly, Harasim (2007) claimed that this technology provides a new way for interaction between teachers and learners and among learners themselves and this new form of online environment creates a new domain which facilitates collaborative learning. Therefore CSCL is believed to foster the increasing acquisition of not only linguistic competence but also communicative competence, facilitates classroom practices which focus on both form (grammar) and meaning through writing, and has the role of fostering greater amounts of participation, equalizing contribution, augmenting autonomous learning, enhancing class control via electronic computer and facilitator and motivator when students find difficulties in writing.

Through computer supported collaborative learning in teaching writing, students will be promoted to learn new information, ideas or skills, students have to work actively with them in purposeful ways. They need to integrate the new material with what they already know-or use it to reorganize what they thought they knew. In collaborative writing, our students are not simply discussing and taking in new information or ideas. They are creating something new with the information and ideas. It means that they in the phase of “write what they discuss” in the form of internet or computer use. CSCL in writing activities frequently begin with problems presented in the internet which encourage students to explore their experience and discussing it with the other, for which students must focus on facts and ideas.

## **Collaborative Learning**



Collaborative learning is an instructional strategy in which small teams, each with students of different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of a team is responsible not only for learning what is taught but also for helping team-mates learn, thus creating an atmosphere of achievement. Students work through the assignment until all group members successfully understand and complete it. Collaborative is defined by the American Heritage Dictionary as to work jointly with others or together especially in an intellectual endeavor. Indeed, the collaborative learning literature suggests that collaborative learning is, first and foremost, a social-intellectual exercise concerned with the creation of new knowledge, whereby a problem or task is posed, and a solution or solutions sought (Brody, 1995:134).

A collaborative learning strategy is group of learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others (Richard and Rodger, 2001:195). For many years, theories of collaborative learning tended to focus on how individuals function in a group. More recently, the focus has shifted so that the group itself has become the unit of analysis. In terms of empirical research, the initial goal was to establish whether and under what circumstances collaborative learning was more effective than learning alone (Dillenbourg, et.al., 1996:1).

In a collaborative classroom, students and teachers work together to pursue goals and objectives. A classroom that is collaborative, usually involves the learner-centered characteristic. Collaborative is more structured, more perspective to teachers about classroom techniques, more directive to the students about how to work together in groups. As students work together in pairs and groups, they share information and come up to each others' aid. They are "team" whose players must work together to achieve goals successfully. As stated by Johnson (1994:78), collaborative learning is a group whose members are committed to the common purpose of maximizing each other's learning. Each member takes responsibility for the performance of himself or herself, all team-mates, and the group as a whole. Pilkington and Parker (1996:1) suggested the need in collaborative environments for pairing students with symmetrical roles to encourage them to argue and to prompt reasoning.

The term of collaborative learning is similar with the term of cooperative learning. The differences place in the goal. Cooperative learning is a very structured process characterized by a high degree of individual accountability, positive member interdependence, and social skill development. In contrast, collaborative learning does not share the elements of cooperative learning, nor does it share the common goal of cooperative learning. In short, the goal of collaborative learning is to create new knowledge through a social context (Orvis and Lassiter, 2007:27). Cooperative learning represents the most carefully structured end of the collaborative learning continuum. Defined as “the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning” (Johnson, et al. 1990:13).

There are five characteristics of collaborative learning based on Johnson (1994:22-23): First, positive interdependence means the interaction among students determines the outcomes of learning because a collaborative learning is designed to foster cooperation rather than competition, that is the students encourage and facilitate each other’s efforts to learn. Second, individual accountability means all students in a group are held accountable for doing their share of the work and for mastery of all of the material to be learned. Third, promotive interaction means students need to do real work together in which they promote each other’s success by sharing resources and helping each other’s efforts to achieve. Fourth, interpersonal and small-group skills means members are taught social skills and are expected to use them to coordinate their efforts and achieve their goals. Both task work and teamwork skills are emphasized. All members accept the responsibility for providing leadership. Fifth, group processing means team members set group goals, periodically assess what they are doing well as a team, and identify changes they will make to function more effectively in the future.

Slavin (1996:43) states that a number of strategies which have been found to enhance and encourage cooperation and collaboration in small group settings. Some of the strategies described include: developing investigative and controversial tasks without single answers to encourage articulation, discussion, and debate among learners; creating group goals for learning tasks which promote collaboration and individual accountability; and providing strategies and support to promote and aid interactions between learners.

In applying computer supported collaborative learning in teaching writing, there are some problems that are faced by students. Based on Repman and Logan as cited by Rangoonaden and Bordeleaus (2000:367), they identified why interactions in an internet based course are at times, irregular. To begin with, they identified four types of interaction: First, learner-content interaction, this type of interaction should lead to knowledge acquisition. This knowledge is built on the prior learning experiences of the learner and the ability of the learner to interact with the content. Second, learner-learner interaction, this type of interaction is the bilateral communication between learners. Through the collaborative process, students enrol in the Internet courses have to interact with each other through e-mail. Teacher role in this type is a provoker in students' writing when they face difficulties in getting idea or discussing with their partner and also be feedback provider. Third, learner interface interaction, this type is depending on the technical knowledge of the learners, have been problematic. However, steps are taken to ensure that all technical difficulties encountered would be resolved at the beginning of the learning. Fourth, learner-instructor interaction, instructor (teacher) should comment on assignments or even to offer moral support. He encourages regular communications between he and his students. His instructions for the writing task are concise and precise, and enable students to establish clear time frames for study and revising the assignments.

### Teaching Writing

Writing is one of productive skills, which contains of a symbol (orthographic) and involves a complex process. In making good writing, we must use correct grammatical rules, choose appropriate vocabulary, and consider the coherent and cohesion. Some linguists gave some definitions of writing that may help us get clearer definition. One of them is stated by Celce-Murcia (2000:142), "Writing is the production of the written word that results in a text but the text must be read and comprehended in order for communication to take place. White (1986:12) states that writing is an act of sharing new ideas or old ideas with a new perspective with the human community. Written language is simply the graphic representation of spoken language, and that written performance is much like oral performance, the only

different lies in graphic for writing instead of auditory signals for speaking (Brown, 2001:335). So writing is closely related to speaking not only in such item of content, organization of ideas, and vocabulary but also the relationship of the ideas or the coherent with the other sentence.

Writing as one of productive skills needs a process. This process sues writer to write in sequence stages. Harmer (2001:4) states that the writing process is the stages that a writer goes through in order to produce something (a written text) before to be a final draft. There are four processes of writing; planning, drafting, editing, and final version. At planning stage, the writer must think about three main issues. Those are the purpose, the audience (the reader), and content structure. In the drafting, the writer must use the idea that he generated in the planning as a guide. This stage needs an editing for checking the text. It is almost impossible to write a perfect paragraph on the first try. The way to revise and improve the first draft is called editing. Once the writer has revised and edited the draft and made the changes that considered to be necessary, he has produced the final version.

According to O'Malley and Pierce (1996:137-138), there are three purposes of writing that describe the kinds of students writing. Those are informative writing (informative writing helps writers integrate new ideas and examine existing knowledge. So, writers can share knowledge and give information, directions, or ideas), expressive or narrative writing (expressive or narrative writing is a personal or imaginative expression in which the writer produces story or essay), and persuasive writing (in persuasive writing, writers attempt to influence others and initiate action or change).

A paragraph is a basic unit of organization in writing in which a group of related sentences develops one main idea. A paragraph has three major structural parts: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. Every good paragraph has unity, which means that in each paragraph only one main idea is discussed. If the writer starts to discuss new idea, he must start a new paragraph. Furthermore, every supporting sentence in the paragraph must be directly related to the main idea (Oshima and Hague, 1996:17). Group writing involves students working in small groups at every stage of the writing process. Many writing groups begin as composing groups: they formulate ideas, clarify their positions, test an argument or focus a thesis statement before committing it to paper. Writing groups



also serve as peer response groups. Students exchange their written drafts of papers and get feedback on them either orally or in writing.

## Conclusion

Based on the theories above, we conclude that teaching writing through computer supported collaborative learning (CSCL) strategy is very effective to motivate students learning especially in writing and improve their ability in writing. As we mention above, collaborative learning strategy enables the students to move more easily from receiving knowledge to generating knowledge. In addition to the benefits of group work activities, the group work has several advantages, such as: it increases the amount of the students' participation in the class, it promotes collaboration among the students, and it enables the teacher to work more as a facilitator and motivator in students' writing. Collaborative learning can give students more active role in learning. After discussing a theory above, we suggest that the English teacher should be creative to find and adapt the new technique and technology that could support students' achievement and motivation. One of the new technique is computer supported collaborative learning as a teaching medium, especially in teaching writing. Because by using CSCL, students will discuss and share their idea with the partners, therefore it will occur meaningful communication and interaction among students and students will be active in teaching writing.

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