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Improving Students' Academic Journal Writing Competence through a Collaboration Approach

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Abstract

This research examines students' capacity to compose academic journal articles. This research seeks to (1) assess students' accomplishments in writing academic articles for accredited national journals and (2) enhance students' competencies in academic writing for scientific journals, utilizing final assignment data that possesses novelty for potential publication in accredited national journals. This study employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing observation and focus group discussions (FGD) as its research design. The data analysis process had three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The research findings propose two options for the UPNVY Public Relations Study Program: firstly, developing a curriculum that mandates students to provide outputs in the form of scientific publications published in approved national journals. Secondly, the Final Project option for students encompasses not only a thesis but also a scientific paper published in a recognized national journal or a respectable international publication.

Keywords: Academic Writing Skills, Accredited National Journals

1. Introductions

Academic writing is conducted to aid students in composing scientific research papers using a certain rhetorical structure, manifested in a sequence of phrases inside each motion. The objective is for students to compose scientific articles aligned with their studies, according to the conventional framework of rhetoric, while employing a diverse range of permissible language. The primary rationale for this practice is that students frequently encounter challenges in composing scientific articles. Additionally, pupils struggle to convey their intended meanings across many languages that conform to the established genre framework.

Writing is typically regarded as the most challenging and intricate language talent due to its need for comprehensive understanding and the necessity of rigorous cognitive processes. This challenge arises from the fact that writing is not yet a prevalent activity, particularly in Indonesia. A primary factor for students' writing deficiencies is their insufficient understanding of the writing processes necessary for effective composition. Numerous research indicates that writing instruction has predominantly concentrated on grammatical theory and writing methods, lacking engagement and participation with writing instructors. The introduction to writing models is frequently constrained. This plays a crucial role, as frequent exposure to the genre being studied enables students to develop a conceptual understanding of it, ultimately aiding their writing skills.

The academic writing abilities of students in the Public Relations Study Program require enhancement. A key indicator is the inadequate quality and number of scientific articles published in recognized National Journals as a result of student's final projects, particularly regarding grammatical use and rhetorical growth and structure. The primary problem is that pupils lack comprehension of rhetorical growth. One option presented in this research is the practice of composing collaborative scientific papers (Collaborative Writing). Students must collaborate in groups on specific thesis topics with their supervisor based on their interests and will collectively deliberate on the writing they will create following their rhetorical progression. Subsequently, in small groups, they must review each other's work and offer feedback on the writing. Following several revisions, conversations, and collaborative efforts, each composition can be deemed satisfactory, and all will submit their work as the final result. This constitutes the essence of collaborative writing.

The implementation of collaborative writing techniques in the instruction of writing skills through Academic Writing training and mentorship is imperative, as this approach enables students to enhance one another's writing through mutual reading (proofreading) and peer correction. This is significant due to the inherent difficulty in identifying errors we commit ourselves. This collaborative writing approach is readily applicable in teaching writing skills since it does not need complex learning materials. Conversely, students are just obligated to contribute to their writing and condition, as well as to help the conversation process. The assessment of students' writing outcomes occurs at the concluding phase of the collaborative process, following mutual revisions of their compositions.

2. Literature Review

There are several concepts and definitions regarding collaborative writing put forward by several experts, including Saunders, who makes a distinction between co-writing and other forms of collaborative activities such as co-publishing and co-responding (Saunders, 1989). Other experts call the term group writing rather than collaborative writing and define it as all writing activities carried out in collaboration with other people (Ede, 1991). Another definition defines it as several group members interacting together during the process of creating a piece of writing, and the group is responsible for the final result of the activity (Louth, 2004). Bosley defines collaborative writing as two or more people working together to produce writing in a situation where all group members directly involved must own and assume responsibility for whatever results they have attempted and obtained (Bosley, 2002). A somewhat new opinion was put forward by Storch, who defined collaborative writing as joint production or the creation of a text jointly by two or more writers. What makes his definition different from previous definitions is the emphasis placed on joint ownership and collaboration with the partner in the entire writing process (Storch, 2011).

Next, Harris differentiates the meaning between collaborative writing and collaborative learning about writing. According to him, collaborative writing is writing that involves two or more writers working together to create a joint product, while collaborative learning about writing involves interaction between the writer and the reader to help the writer improve the writer's abilities and produce a manuscript by the author (Harris, 2012). From the definitions above, it can be concluded that collaborative writing will culminate in a joint product of cooperation by two or more writers, whereas in collaborative learning about writing, interaction occurs between writers and readers whose main target is to help improve the writer's ability and produce text.

Student writing collaboratively has been the subject of scientific research as well as research in the business field for the last few decades. Several authors have conducted studies in this area, and each has slightly different views regarding strategies for collaborating.

According to Lowry et al. (Lowry, 2003). There are five strategies for writing collaboratively, namely:
a. Single-author writing occurs when a team member writes as a representative of the entire team. This strategy is usually used to complete simple writing assignments.

b. Sequential-single writing is a collaborative writing strategy that gives each group member the task of writing one portion of a document according to the division that has been previously determined, then continued by other group members, and so on.

c. Parallel writing is a form of collaborative writing that divides the writing work equally among all group members, and at the same time, they write according to their respective parts. There are two forms of division in parallel writing, namely; 1). Horizontal division of parallel writing is the distribution of tasks to each group member into sections, and each is responsible for their section. 2). Stratified division of parallel writing is the distribution of tasks to all group members with different levels or roles, such as some being writers, others being editors, facilitators, or team leaders.

d. Reactive writing is a form of collaboration in writing where all team members work together synchronously to develop their product. Each team member checks, revises, or improves the writing that has been written

e. created by other group members.

f. Mixed mode is a form of collaborative writing that combines two or more collaborative writing strategies, as described previously.

Onrubia and Engel (2009) also proposed five main strategies for collaborating in writing as follows:

a. Parallel construction 'cut and paste.' Each member of the group contributes to a different part completely of the completed assignment, and the final document is constructed through juxtaposition of the different parts without the contribution of other authors.

b. Parallel construction 'puzzle.' Each group member contributed to the initial document with a complete or partially complete assignment, and the final document was constructed by juxtaposing small core parts of the initial contributions of other co-authors.

c. Sequential summative construction. One group member presents an initial, partial, or complete (perfect) piece of writing in the form of a proposal for discussion, and other participants successively provide input on the initial document without changing what was previously written, ultimately agreeing to accept the writing systematically.

d. Sequential integrating construction. One group member presents an initial document that is half finished or one hundred percent complete, and other group members successively contribute to the initial document or writing, propose improvements or modifications, and then decide whether the writing is accepted or not.

e. Integrating construction. Document writing is based on regular discussions through very friendly conversations with revisions several times where all group members provided responses, comments, and changes and additions to previous comments.

Ritchie and Rigano (Ritchie, 2002) describe three collaborative writing strategies used in academic settings.

1. Turn writing. This form of writing is cooperative rather than collaborative, with the authors contributing different parts of the text, which are then combined and refined by the lead author.

2. Lead writing. This strategy directs one student to create a draft on a certain topic, which is then revised by other group members.

3. Writing together side-by-side. A text is prepared by two or more people who think seriously together, then negotiate, and then improve the entire content or part of the writing. One of the writers plays the role of copying the document and, if possible, also supervises the process of writing the text until it is finished.

Posner and Baecker (Posner, 1992) describe four types of collaborative writing strategies as follows:

1. Single writer: One person writes, while others play other roles in the group, such as editing, revising, duplicating, and so on.

2. Separate writers: In implementing a collaborative writing strategy like this, each group member works on a different part. This is in line with the strategy of Sharples et al. (1993), which he calls parallel partitioning.

3. Joint writing: Writers work together synchronously in a form of collaboration, and they sit side by side to complete one text.

4.   Scribe: Based on the results of the group discussion and based on mutual agreement between all members of the group, one of them is entrusted to write the document in its entirety

This research aims to find out the process of improving students' skills in writing scientific papers through a collaborative learning approach and how to improve student's skills in writing scientific papers in English after implementing a collaborative learning approach among students together with lecturers in the Public Relations Study Program.

3. Research Method

This research utilizes a descriptive-qualitative strategy, used to gain a comprehensive comprehension of the capacity to create scientific articles. This method is especially effective for examining the intricacies and subtleties of writing proficiency in higher education, particularly regarding content development, idea organization, vocabulary usage, language structure application, and adherence to spelling conventions (Bashir, 2018). Descriptive research facilitates an extensive examination of these domains without modification or intervention, offering a lucid depiction of existing abilities and obstacles in academic writing (Creswell, 2014).

This study comprised 8th-semester students in the Public Relations department and their academic supervisors. The sample comprised ten students engaged in thesis writing and nine lecturers from the same academic program, chosen to offer perspectives on the students' writing progression and the instructional methods employed in the program (Patton, 2015). The study aims to triangulate viewpoints on the writing process by including both students and supervisors, analyzing students' practical writing skills alongside the educational tactics utilized by their supervisors (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

The data for this research was obtained from the Siyanma Fisip UPN VY site, which serves as a platform for student publications and academic accomplishments. The quantity of journal articles by students in approved national journals functioned as a major measure of writing skill. A focus group discussion (FGD) was undertaken, convening lecturers and students in a study program meeting style. The FGD discussions concentrated on measures to enhance student proficiency in writing scientific articles, highlighting the necessity for targeted interventions and professional development (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Engaging professionals to conduct training sessions focused on improving the quality and quantity of student writing in authorized journals was a significant component of the research design (Elbow, 1998).

This study utilizes cross-site analysis, a technique that compares data from many instances or locations to discern similar patterns and trends (Yin, 2018). Each instance in the study, whether about a student's thesis composition or a supervisor's pedagogical strategy, will be examined independently to ascertain how various factors, such as writing methodologies or supervisory practices, affect academic writing results. The cross-site study facilitates a comprehensive comprehension of the elements that influence effective academic writing within the realm of public relations (Stake, 1995).

In conclusion, descriptive-qualitative approaches are adept at elucidating the intricacies of academic writing skills development, offering significant insights into how students might be more effectively helped in creating high-quality scientific publications (Macmillan & Schumacher, 2010). Moreover, the emphasis on collaborative initiatives among students, instructors, and specialists underscores the need for a community-oriented strategy for enhancing writing skills in higher education (Weissberg & Buker, 1990).

4. Results and Discussion

A collaborative methodology for composing scientific publications entails the participation of several writers or researchers to attain a shared objective. In this setting, collaboration may involve task division, idea discussion, and skill integration. Collaboration enables authors to leverage a variety of viewpoints and experiences, resulting in more thorough work.

Students encounter challenges in composing scientific articles, including difficulty in articulating concepts and a deficiency in self-confidence. Revansha, a student of the Public Relations Study Program, stated, "The internal factors I encountered originated from within myself." I have difficulties in the interpretation of concepts. Occasionally, the failures that manifest in my thoughts are hard to articulate on paper. Often, certain compositions that the speaker evaluates during class remain perplexing. I lack confidence in the outcomes of the scientific publications I compose.

Additionally, challenges in identifying pertinent subjects frequently hinder students from advancing their conversations. It is anticipated that this issue may be handled by a collaborative approach, emphasizing that thorough discussion will provide improved outcomes. Engaging in discussions with peers or instructors can yield more inventive and complete thoughts. A variety of viewpoints facilitates the discovery of more effective solutions. Additionally, pupils might exhibit greater innovation and comprehensiveness. A variety of viewpoints facilitates the discovery of more effective solutions.

Students have another challenge in composing scientific essays due to their inability to locate authentic and pertinent scientific references, in addition to issues with grammar. As articulated by Priscilla in the subsequent interview. Pricilia, a student in a Public Relations study program, stated, "I encounter challenges in locating valid and pertinent sources for specific topics, as well as in composing formal and standardized academic language without appearing overly rigid." In addition, the challenge of articulating concepts, although possessing a comprehensive overview, is in deconstructing the concept into smaller, coherent, and organized components, which presents a problem for me.

Students typically encounter several challenges in producing scientific papers, including a lack of confidence in selecting relevant topics and identifying suitable sources for their study. Collaborating with peers is essential for enhancing their confidence in articulating thoughts and ideas through discussions, thereby fostering the mutual development of concepts. This collective engagement prevents stagnation in transforming an idea into a viable research topic.

The establishment of groups and task division, initiated by basic talks, appears to create environments where pupils may overcome self-doubt. Students exhibit more boldness in articulating their thoughts within peer groups, prompting feedback from others and fostering a more open-minded discourse. The convenience of technology enables individuals to acquire information more readily while collaborating with others, as opposed to searching independently.

Collaborative learning enables students to learn from one another, enhancing comprehension and retention of information. Once students were organized into small groups, they appeared to become more open, exchanging experiences, discussing references, generating ideas, and establishing a framework for thought. This fosters more self-confidence in kids, enabling them to articulate phrases derived from their thoughts.

Students engaged in the FGD articulated that cooperation may enhance their interpersonal abilities, including communication, negotiation, and problem-solving. On a separate occasion, Adam Firdaus, a student in the Public Relations Study Program, stated, "Through conversations with peers, I became more open and was able to articulate my thoughts and ideas without hesitation, which enhanced my confidence and eliminated my reluctance to write articles based on my ideas."

Group conversations reveal a challenge for each member to demonstrate their capabilities, fostering a sense of duty to contribute according to their skills. Members proficient in the flow of thought will elucidate the background, while those adept in the application of scientific references will identify pertinent scientific sources related to the themes discussed by their peers. This enables pupils to enhance their writing skills, and the challenges they encounter may be addressed. It can motivate pupils to avoid being entangled in the intricacies of identifying pertinent issues.

A cooperative methodology has several advantages in corporate, educational, and research settings. Notwithstanding its hurdles, excellent communication, trust, and well-defined shared objectives may yield more

imaginative and efficient solutions through cooperation. Effective cooperation management may enhance performance and foster mutually advantageous relationships among the participating parties.

Nonetheless, hurdles inevitably emerge in collaborative tasks since the cultural and value differences among group members can occasionally lead to conflict or communication issues. Additionally, various architectures may induce intricate coordination, resulting in challenges regarding coordination and decision-making. The presence of uneven membership in organizations, such as those including professors and students, frequently results in an imbalance of roles and resources, hence posing a danger of disproportionate contributions among the collaborating parties, which may lead to friction or unhappiness. Nevertheless, this can be mitigated by enhancing the understanding of each participant concerning the objective of augmenting the number of publishable pieces, therefore enabling mutual restraint.

5. Conclusion

A collaborative approach to writing scientific papers offers many advantages that can improve the quality and effectiveness of research. By implementing the right strategy, authors can create a productive and innovative work environment, which will ultimately produce better scientific work. Collaboration is not just about sharing the workload but also about enriching the creative and intellectual process.

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