

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the introduction of the present study elaborating into four subtitles. This chapter elaborates the introduction of this study. It is divided into several parts. The first part tells about the background underlying this study. The following parts point out the research questions, the purpose of this study, the significance of this study, and the definition of terms.

1.1 Background

Compared to other language skills, writing is arguably the most complex skill in language learning. As it is a highly complex process, comprised of various sub-processes that occur not one after another in a strict linear sequence, but cyclically and in varying patterns. Writing differs from speech in a variety of ways, which is not only the representation of what is thought but also said. Zamel (1982) stated that writing can be a way to explore one's feelings or thoughts. Thus, to make this feeling or thought exploration have surprising effects, writing more refers to compose sense rather than to transcribe or copy.

Academic writing is indispensable for students' academic success (Leki & Carson, 1994) and also perceived as a difficult skill to acquire for non-native speakers' students due to linguistic differences of L1 and L2 and unique generic features (Hinkel, 2003; Hyland, 2004). In addition, Reynolds (2005) points out that the limitation in grammatical competency and lack of practice resulting in students writing difficulty and fluency.

Meanwhile in School of Applied Science, especially in Informatics Management, this writing difficulty and fluency has become a very long-time issue trying to be tackled using various methods and approaches, such as one on one feedback in the class, student daily journal, etc. Most errors and mistakes occurring on the students' writings are tenses use, vocabulary, and connection among each sentences/paragraph. These issues might be as the result from EPrt (English Proficiency Test) of university entrance test showing that mostly students are in low level.

Within the university environments, students have to deal with various types of academic texts including narrative, descriptive, expository and argumentative. Argumentative writing appears to be the most important task for the students., which also has been justified by many researchers due to its nature as the most difficult type of writing (Ferris, 1994; McCann, 1989), as its complexity in activity in that the writer takes position on a controversial issue and gives reasons and supporting evidence to convince the reader to accept his or her position (Anker, 2004; Intraprawat, 2002). In addition, argumentative writing requires students to embrace a particular point of view and try to convince the reader to adopt the same perspective or to perform a certain action (Nippold, Ward-Lonergan, & Fanning, 2005). Thus, the writer needs to draw upon his or her knowledge of argumentative discourse and create sub-goals related to supporting a thesis (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1986).

In School of Applied Science, academic writing is taught on English IV categorized as a supplementary course supporting communication skill

competence which is delivered on the 5th semester. As English IV has focus on academic writing, the students are provided with basic knowledge of steps in writing process. In syllabus description of English IV (Academic Writing), the aim of the course is clearly stated as below:

“English IV is the continued course of English III focusing on academic writing skills. This course will support students’ competence in understanding English text and expressing idea by having writing skill in form of complete paragraph and producing an academic paper or proposal using proper English and based on related issues, problem solving and solution based on Information System point of view.”

Based on English IV syllabus, student only learn text of descriptive, procedural and argumentative. The most problems occurring when students are asked to write an argumentative text are, they sometimes are still confused to differentiate which issue is controversial and which issue is not. In addition, they failed to provide supporting facts or evidences. They mostly just come with bunches of reasons, even they provided facts or evidences, still they were shallow and not really supporting as evidences.

Telkom University, School of Applied Science specifically, has been familiar with Blended Learning environment in their teaching and learning process. Most of courses have already two types of class, - face to face class and virtual class. To facilitate learning management, one integrated LMS (Learning Management System) called IGRACIAS-46 is provided. In addition, some other free applications are also used such as Google Classroom, Edmodo, WordPress and other social media platforms, - Facebook, WhatsApp’s, and Line, for giving more colors in Blended Learning environment. Meanwhile, based on researcher and some other English lecturers’ experiences, the tools such as Line, Edmodo, PBworks

and YouTube Channel have actively integrated to be used in all English courses.

Some studies claimed collaborative writing impacts on higher quality of writing (Beck, 1993; Storch, 1999; Storch, 2005), the acquisition of writing knowledge, including grammar, vocabulary usage, and text structures (Kowal & Swain, 1994; Swain & Lapkin 1998). Thus in Informatics Management study program, collaborative writing has been implemented since 2014 using various asynchronous CMC such as blog websites, - wordpress and blogger and wikis, - Wikispaces and PBworks.

There are some reasons why collaborative writing should be implemented. First, the insufficient time allocation, which is two credits per week, per semester. Writing should be taught as a craft, which needs a lot of practice, guidance and feedback, not as a “one shot activity”; therefore, two credits for teaching writing in big classes (30 – 40 students) is not sufficient. It makes difficult for the lecturer help the students to develop their writing skills in such a short period of time. Second, virtual class environment, which demands the lecturer and the learners to keep communication during their virtual class session. Last but not least, as it is a vocational college, the schedules are more hectic compared to not vocational ones. The students are demanded not only to fulfill regular classes but also the practicum classes, which take their time fully in weekday, from morning until afternoon. Thus, doing collaboration with asynchronous media only, such as wikis or blogs, was not effective. The synchronous media is needed for brainstorming and quickly sharing ideas

anytime and anywhere. A combination of synchronous and asynchronous seems to be necessary to promote the kind of engagement and depth required in collaborative learning.

Some studies have been focused on the value and significance of online collaborative learning environments and the interaction and participation level of learners (Shale & Garrison, 1990; Moore, 1989), as the engagement of learners in synchronous or asynchronous discussions leads to successful learning and building up a social community (Wenger, 1998; Gunawardena et al., 1997). Therefore, to encourage participation in interaction, researchers have tried to introduce various tools and techniques. It has been demonstrated that participation and interaction in online discussion forums adds value to student learning outcomes (Garrison & Anderson, 2003). Interaction, using knowledge as a tool of mediation among a community of learners, becomes a social mode of thinking where students learn by engaging in dialogue (Van Boxtel, 2000).

In previous study, Blake (2000) revealed that the combination of using synchronous and asynchronous CMC in collaborative writing to his ESL has increased opportunities to engage in collaborative tasks online could provide a significant benefit in light of the arduous journey. Providing students with increased opportunities to engage in negotiations, in the sense defined above, could direct language teachers to accord CMC a more expanded role in the L2 curriculum. In addition, well-designed networked tasks promote learners to notice the gaps in their lexical interlanguage in a manner similar to what has been reported in the literature for oral

learner/learner discussions. Another study was conducted by Nguyen (2011) to his Vietnamese students in English Major. In his study, he compared two classes, - one class with ACMC and SCMC and another class with face to face. The study showed that learners' language production in the online discussion was not significantly high, but the interaction and negotiation led to a satisfactory level. In addition, the use of wiki as a platform for peer exchanges made the students more on participation, interaction and negotiation. Unfortunately, the study conducted by Nguyen was still in classroom which cannot be generalized as online collaborative writing demanded by the students in present time, which is anywhere and anytime.

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) can be the most appropriate environment to learn writing if learner benefits are considered. CMC presents students opportunities for written interaction; not only in one-on-one interactions, but also in communication with a variety of partners (Warschauer, 1996). In addition, writing activity can be more motivating through the use of ICT (Wu, 2011). As a result, the use of computers in L2 writing classrooms has got more and more increased, and more attention is being given to the effects of computer-mediated communication (CMC). Thus, this study was aimed to investigate on the use of asynchronous PBWorks and synchronous Google Hangout as CMC tools in the process of collaborative writing in Argumentative texts.

1.2 Focus and Sub-Focus of Study

This study mainly focused on the use of the combination of two CMC types, - Synchronous CMC and Asynchronous CMC, in collaborative writing project in Argumentative texts. The tools used were Google Hangout and PBworks. The sub-foci of this study were to identify and analyze the writing process stages in finishing the project, the quality of students' writing, the interaction occurring in collaboration process, and finally the students' perceptions on the use of APMC and SPMC as tools to help them in conducting collaborative writing project.

1.3 Identification of Problems

Based on the background, there are several possible background reasons. First, referring to the result of EPrt (English Proficiency Test) and ECCT (English Communication Competence Test), - tests for measuring students English when entering Telkom University, especially School of Applied Science, showed the level of their English proficiency was low to middle. In addition, most of students consider English is boring, difficult, and not important compared to other core courses in their majoring, and even some students who are good at English but during the times they become demotivated.

Secondly, the integrated genre based as teaching approach implemented has been suited to accommodate the teacher and students in the need of understanding writing process stages and types of academic texts. Yet, the insufficient time allocation, which is two credits per week, per semester. Writing should be taught as a craft, which needs a lot of practice,

guidance and feedback, not as a “one shot activity”; therefore, two credits for teaching writing in big classes (30 – 40 students) is not sufficient. It makes difficult for the lecturer help the students to develop their writing skills in such a short period of time.

Third, argumentative writing is type of text that need critical thinking, as a college student’s lack of practice to expose their own idea, by working collaboratively will increase student’s critical thinking. As it is a vocational college, the schedules are more hectic compared to not vocational ones. The students are demanded not only to fulfill regular classes but also the practicum classes, which take their time fully in weekday, from morning until afternoon. Thus, doing collaboration with asynchronous media only, such as wikis or blogs, was not effective. The synchronous media is needed for brainstorming and quickly sharing ideas anytime and anywhere.

1.4 Research Questions

As the background and the research problem are aroused, this study was highlighted the one main research question: ***How is the use of CMC in collaborative writing*** addressed by the following sub research questions:

- 1) To what extent, do SCMC and ACMC improve the quality of students’ writing argumentative texts?
- 2) What types of interaction do students have when using SCMC and ACMC in collaborative writing?
- 3) How do students perceive the use of SCMC and ACMC as tools in collaborative writing?

1.5 Purposes of Study

In line with the research questions above, this study was intended:

- 1) To find out in what extent the use of Asynchronous and Synchronous Computer – Mediated Communication, - PBworks and Google Hangout, improve the students' writing of argumentative texts,
- 2) To investigate types of interactions occur among students during the use of synchronous and asynchronous Computer – Mediated Communication in producing argumentative texts,
- 3) To identify students' perceptions on the use of Asynchronous and Synchronous Computer – Mediated Communication as tools in collaborative writing.

1.6 Scope of Study

This study covered on the students' interactions on online collaborative writing in Argumentative texts in School of Applied Science, Telkom University Bandung. It described the details of writing process stages conducted by the students in collaboratively working on Argumentative texts using Asynchronous CMC, - PBWorks, and Synchronous CMC, - Google Hangouts, as tools for collaboration. Then, the students' text writings were considered to identify the students' writing quality. Finally, the students' perception on the use of PBWorks and Google Hangout was considered to recognize the advantages extent for collaboration.

1.7 Significance of Study

This study has significance for three perspectives, - theoretical, practical and policy

- 1) Theoretically, the result of this study is expected to contribute to the theory of collaborative learning in teaching writing in EFL classroom as the theory in collaborative writing using ICT still develops, particularly on the combination of synchronous and asynchronous CMC.
- 2) Practically, this study contributes to the development of L2 teaching and ICT. The implementation of teaching practice using ICT will equip language learners and lecturers/teachers in a more collaborative way. When the problem and the solution will be explored in the study, the ideas will give more anticipation for lecturers/teachers who will apply the teaching activity. This study will also benefit more insight for future development of teaching ESL/EFL applying collaborative writing in using the combination of ACMC and SCMC, - especially PBworks and Google Hangout.
- 3) In term of policy, the results of this study is expected to lead the policy relating to collaborative learning in teaching writing, especially in EFL classroom and more specifically in the research site.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Computer-Mediated communication (CMC) - Technologies developed to facilitate the online communication between individuals either in an asynchronous or

synchronous environment.

(Warschauer, 1995)

Synchronous Computer-Mediated Communication (SCMC) - CMC with instant messaging where communication takes place live like chat room, instant messaging and video conference. Thus, the users have to communicate on line at the same time (Warschauer, 1995)

Asynchronous Computer-Mediated Communication (ACMC) - CMC that happens when the users communicate in a delayed fashion such as email, blog, wikis, and discussion board (Warschauer, 1995)

Interactions in CMC - The text-based dialog that occurred in the CMC systems through statements submitted by participants. (Storch, 2005).

Synchronous Interaction - The text-based dialog that occurred in the synchronous CMC tools, such as chat room, instant messaging and video conference, through statements submitted by participants. (Storch, 2005).

Asynchronous Interaction - The text-based dialog that occurred in the asynchronous CMC tools, such as

email, blog, wikis, and discussion board, through statements submitted by participants. (Storch, 2005).

Project activities

- In this study is defined as the activities conducted by students and teachers based on the collaborative project

Collaborative Writing

- Collaborative writing involves more than one author to produce a written text. These authors can collaborate on all aspects of writing: content, structure, and language (Storch, 2005).

PBWorks

- A website that provide classroom connection to do online learning collaboration around the world

Google Hangouts

- A communication platform developed by Google which includes instant messaging, video chat, SMS and VOIP features

Turn or entry

- In this study a turn or entry was identified as a line of conversation sent by a member by pressing the return key or by clicking the send button on the Google Hangout or Pbworks.

Episode

- In this study an episode in SCMC was taken as the unit of analysis which could be as short as a single turn, or as long as several turns, provided that these turns focused on a certain topic. Meanwhile, an episode in APMC was coded based on sentential meaning units. An entry could consist of several sentential comment units.