PERPUSTAKAAN UNIVERSITI MALAYA

ACH - 812 G
INVC.....nms 5/2/01

COLLABORATION IN NETWORKED WRITING CLASSROOMS

Lee Chien Sing

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Education,
University of Malaya in Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Education

1999

Perpustakaan Universiti Malaya
A510141714

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to help make this study possible. I am grateful to my supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Zulkifli Abdul Manaf for his assistance and advice. I would also like to extend my appreciation to Puan Abtar Kaur for her invaluable constructive feedback to my research proposal.

Special thanks also goes to Puan Zainab Kechik, the English Language officer in the MARA Secondary School division, Mr. Asrokin Sanuji, the principal of MRSM Jasin, Melaka, Encik Mohammad Ariff Hassan, the MRSM teacher advisor and the students for their co-operation throughout the study.

Last but not least, I am grateful to Professor Ghauth Jasmon, President of Telecom University; Associate Professor Dr. Abu Hassan Ismail, the Dean of the Faculty of Multimedia Arts and Science, Telecom University; Puan Nurhayati Yusoff and Encik Abdul Malik Abdullah, my colleagues in Telecom University, for their support throughout the duration of the study.

ABSTRACT

The communicative function of writing is often submerged under the plethora of punctuation, grammar and vocabulary. This denies the value of writing as an active and creative process of discovering meaning, as well as an iterative process of developing, reflecting and revising ideas, as new perceptions form and deeper understanding of the topic develops. Furthermore, since the audience involved is often limited to only the teacher, there is little feedback. Hence, some students do not see the need to revise their ideas. Even if they do want to clarify what they mean to an imagined audience, they will have difficulty in determining which ideas are unclear to others and why. They need an external reader to help them. Therefore, it is imperative to find means to highlight the value of writing as an iterative exploratory process by providing real-life audiences. Based on successful networked collaborative activities among K-12 students in the ESL/EFL context, this case study aims to identify whether collaboration among form four students in a residential school in Malaysia and two other schools in America and France will facilitate the writing process. The second research question is whether there are obstacles to effective collaboration in networked classrooms. The third research question looks into whether the networked classroom can motivate students to write more and better. Data for the first and second research question will be obtained from learning journals and electronic mail transcripts from among the three schools. A pre and post-test questionnaire administered at the beginning and the end of the study will answer the third research question.

KERJASAMA DI KELAS PENULISAN BERANGKAI

ABSTRAK

Penekanan terhadap hasil penulisan telah mengenepikan peranan penulisan sebagai suatu proses heuristik dalam usaha berkomunikasi dengan berkesan. Kekurangan audiens sebenar turut mengurangkan kepentingan mengimbas kembali atau mengasah ide agar hasil komunikasi lebih menepati maksud. Dengan demikian, guru patut mempertimbangkan kaedah-kaedah menggalakkan proses penulisan heuristik misalnya dengan menambah bilangan audiens sebenar dalam kelas berangkai. Justeru itu, berlandaskan kejayaan aktiviti kelas berangkai di negara maju dalam konteks Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua atau bahasa asing, kajian kes ini bertujuan menjawab tiga soalan penyelidikan. Soalan penyelidikan pertama akan mengenalpasti sama ada kerjasama kelas berangkai di antara pelajar-pelajar tingkatan empat di sebuah sekolah berasrama di Malaysia dan dua buah sekolah lain iaitu di Amerika dan Perancis akan mempertingkatkan mutu proses penulisan. Soalan penyelidikan yang kedua bertumpu kepada kesulitan yang mungkin dihadapi semasa kerjasama kelas berangkai. Soalan penyelidikan ketiga pula memperlihatkan sama ada kerjasama kelas berangkai akan memotivasikan pelajar untuk menulis lebih kerap dan menghasilkan penulisan yang lebih bermutu. Data analisa untuk soalan penyelidikan pertama dan kedua akan berdasarkan jurnal pembelajaran dan kandungan mel elektronik antara ketiga-tiga buah sekolah. Soal selidik pra dan pos yang diberi pada permulaaan dan akhir kajian akan menjawab soalan penyelidikan ketiga.

List of figures

Figure 1: Discovering and generating ideas in the creative process model for writing ... 29

Figure 2: The role of re-vision in the creative process model of writing 30

Figure 3: The relationship between process and product in the creative process model of writing 31

Figure 4: Kucher's text world production model of writing 33

Figure 5: Flower and Hayes' cognitive composing process 34

Figure 6: Computer-mediated communication as a mindtool 59

Figure 7: Computer-mediated communication as a facilitative tool for collaborative group work ... 61

Figure 8: The AT & T web-based discussion forum 83

Figure 9: Histogram of frequency for mean motivation score (pre-test) 137

Figure 10:Histogram of frequency for mean motivation score (post-test) 148

List of tables

Table 1: Mean motivation scores and levels of motivation 139

Table 2: Questions with mean significantly less than a neutral three .. 140

Table 3: Reverse-coded questions with mean significantly less 141
than a neutral score of three

Table 4: Comparison between motivational factors in 142
Tables 1 and 3

Table 5: Questions with mean significantly higher than three 144

Table 6: Questions with mean scores higher than three 145

Table 7: Communicative aspects in using the networked classroom .. 149
for writing and communication

Table 8: Learning aspects in using the networked classroom 151
for writing and communication

Table 9: Achievement aspects in using the networked classroom 154
for writing and communication

Table 10: Top ten motivational aspects with mean scores 155
significantly higher than three

Table 11: Other motivational aspects with significant mean scores ... 156

Table 12: Questions with significant contrast between pre-test 157
and post-test mean motivation scores

Table 13: Cohen's guidelines for small, medium and large 160
correlation coefficients

Table 14: Correlation between the mean and the overall mean 161
motivation score which are greater than 0.3

TABLE OF CONTENTS PAGE

Acknowledgement i

Abstract ii

Abstrak (Malay language version of the abstract) iii

List of figures iv

List of tables ..... v-vi

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

Background to the problem 1

Difficulty in gauging the reader's knowledge and expectations 2

Little opportunity to clarify the writer's ideas 2

Disregard for the value of revision. 3

Lack of motivation to write 4

Need for a change in the teaching paradigm 5

Need to highlight the communicative function of writing..... 5

Need to highlight the process involved in writing..... 6

Need to provide interaction..... 6

Need to provide a supportive collaborative environment..... 7

Statement of the problem 7

Difficulties faced 7

Possible reasons for the state of writing in today's Malaysian schools

Lack of training in forming conceptual framework 8

Insufficient reason to explore..... 9

Lack of knowledge about the audience 10

Lack of feedback and remedial exercises from the teacher 11

Solution: the networked classroom..... 12

Virtually extended classroom 12

Not constrained by time, space and geography 13

Provision for active and interactive learning 13

Encouragement of critical thinking skills..... 14

Increase in the value of their ideas..... 14

Regard for language as the medium, not product of 15
communication

Clearer writer-reader relationship 16

Greater willingness to revise 16

Conclusion 17

Research questions 18

Significance of the study 19-20

Limitations of the study 21

Definition of terms 21-27

CHAPTER TWO - REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical models of composing 28-34

Problems with the traditional method of teaching 35

The rationale behind these problems

Lack of receptiveness to research findings 36

View of teachers towards themselves as language teachers ... 36-37

Disregard for the value of revision 38-40

Lack of motivation to write due to an unsupportive 41

environment

A new paradigm to teaching writing

Importance of interaction between the writing environment 42-46

and the writing process which focuses on purposeful writing and

meaningful content

Collaboration in networked classrooms

Advantages of collaboration in networked classrooms

Equal opportunity to communicate 49

Active and interactive learning of language 50

Greater awareness of the writer-reader relationship 50

Inculcation of critical thinking skills 51

Promotion of deeper comprehension 52

Sharing of cognitive load 53

Opportunity to publish on-line 54

Creation of a positive learning environment 54

Opportunity to train the students to enter the workforce .. 55-56

Teacher's role 57

Criteria for successful collaborative learning 58

Computer-mediated communication (CMC)

Aspects of computer-mediated communication 59-62

Motivational aspects of using computer-mediated communication for writing and communication

CMC facilitates communication 62-64

CMC empowers students 64

CMC enhances learning 65

CMC provides a sense of achievement 66

Other studies on motivation in networked classrooms 67-68

Conclusion 69

Limitations of computer-mediated communication 69

Computer-mediated communication in the context of the Malaysian educational system

Current problem 70

Global scenario 71

Possible solution 72-73

Support from the constructivist learning model 73-75

The AT & T virtual classroom contest

Purpose and aim 75

Activities 75-76

Advantages of networked environments

Decentralised control 77

Teachers' professional development 77

Conclusion 78-81

CHAPTER THREE -. METHODOLOGY

Methodology 82-85

Sample 85-87

Instrumentation

Preliminary study 87

Qualitative data collection and analysis

Learning journals and electronic communication transcript ... 88

Researcher and school co-ordinator's observations 89

Quantitative data collection and analysis

Pre-post test questionnaire 90-91

CHAPTER FOUR - RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Preliminary findings

Familiarity with the Internet 92

Attitude towards the Internet 93

Attitude towards collaborative efforts 94

Attitude towards the importance of audience 95

Qualitative data analysis

Question 1 (i) 96-102

Question 1 (ii) 103

Question 1 (iii) 104-107

Question 1 (iv) 108-110

Question 1 (v) 110-114

Question 1 (vi) 114-117

Question 1 (vii) 117-118

Question 1 (viii) 118-120

Other benefits in joining the virtual classroom contest

Redefinition of the term collaboration 120-121

Exchange of culture 122

Question 2 a (i) 123-126

Question 2 a (ii) 127-128

Question 2 a (iii) 128-130

Question 2 a (iv) 130

Question 2 b (i) 131-134

Question 2 c (i) 135-136

Quantitative data analysis

Pre-test analysis 137-138

Items with mean scores significantly less than a neutral..... 139-140

score of three

Confirmation of findings through reverse-coded items 141-143

Items with mean scores significantly higher than three 144-147

Post-test analysis

Motivational communicative aspects 149

Motivational learning aspects 150-152

Motivational achievement aspects 153-155

Questions with significant contrasts between pre- and 156-159

post-test scores ...

Correlation between mean motivation scores and the overall mean 159-160

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Research Question 1: Benefits to collaboration in networked classrooms

RQ 1 (i) 163

RQ 1 (ii) 164

RQ 1 (iii) 165

RQ 1 (iv) 166

RQ 1 (v) 167

RQ 1 (vi) 168

RQ 1 (vii) 169

RQ 1 (viii) 170

Implications to teaching

Reconceptualisation of the teaching and learning 171-174
process of writing and the methodology involved

Change the mode of assessment 174

Provide opportunities for actual experimentation in 175
teaching practice

Provide actual examples 176

Encourage collaboration with other teachers, experts 176
or industries interested in the application of technology
in education

Research Question 2: Obstacles to collaboration in networked classrooms

RQ 2 a (i) 177

RQ 2 a (ii) 177

RQ 2 a (iii) 178

RQ 2 a (iv) 179

RQ 2 b (i) 179

RQ 2 c (i) 180-181

Implications to teaching

Care in choosing collaborative partners 182

Negotiation and team-building training 182-183

Research Question 3: Motivational aspects of collaboration in networked classrooms

Communicative aspects 184

Learning aspects 185

Achievement aspects 186

Implications to teaching 186-189

Conclusion 189-191

Future areas of research 192

References 193-198

Appendices

Appendix I: Preliminary study 199-204

Appendix II: Pre-post test questionnaire 205-207

Appendix III: Example of students' journal 208