

Teaching English Writing for Primary Students: Constructivism Views

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ABSTRACT

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As one of the productive skills, writing is highly required to be mastered in English as a foreign language. Moreover, communication can occur not only in spoken form but also in written form. In creating a good learning atmosphere for the students, teachers try to use the most appropriate approach to achieve the learning goals, especially in mastering the writing skill. The constructivism approach is commonly used by teachers to enhance it. The implement of constructivism in teaching writing emphasizes students' activities in building knowledge, interacting with others, constructing ideas, presenting critical thinking, and collaboration. Those elements from constructivism are also integrated into the teaching method that has been implemented by the teachers. However, teaching writing to primary students is challenging in many contexts. Therefore, this literature article review presents a closer look at the constructivism views for teaching primary students' English writing. The implication of this article is that it is hoped to be used as the supplementary information for primary teachers and other researchers on similar topic in teaching writing using constructivism approach.

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INTRODUCTION

In several countries, constructivism approach is used in teaching writing. It is believed to be able to increase students' writing ability through its chances for students to collaborate, to expand their critical thinking, and to explore their own ideas. For teacher in Omani context, constructivism approach is proved to support them in collaborate with other teachers and increase their professional teaching skills (Wyatt, 2023). In another country, Ethiopia, students' attitude toward learning writing used constructivism approach is positive and it helps the teachers to easily reach the learning writing goals (Galgalo et al., 2020). Moreover, the constructivism approach that also implement collaborative learning in performing task can involve and also provide the activity of peer feedback and teacher feedback (Schcolnik et al., 2006). As it is known that Language usage is influenced by interactions between people processes (Huang et al., 2020). From the collaborative learning in constructivism approach it is hoped to provide the opportunity for the students to share their ideas which relate to construct new ideas into their writings. As known as one of the effective approach, constructivism is commonly used in EFL teaching, including for teaching primary students. However, previous scholars (Al-Jarrah et al., 2019; Fahady, 2019; Galgalo et al., 2020; Rahmat, 2014; Taufik et al., 2020; and Wyatt, 2023) focused on constructivism approach implemented for higher educational level particularly in teaching writing. Questioning how the teachers implement constructivism approach for primary students, this article would like to provide such information.

In accordance with constructivist theory, learning environments that prioritize the use of authentic tasks in relevant contexts can be highly effective (Jonassen, 1999). When teaching the primary students, teachers mostly used authentic tasks and/or materials in performance-based assessment (Shaaban, 2001), oral activities (Becker & Roos, 2016; Bland, 2015), portfolio tasks (Aziz & Yusoff, 2018), games (Hedberg, 2010), and also writing tasks (Aziz & Yusoff, 2016; Heinitz, 2012; and Setyowati, 2019). In response to the teachers, using authentic resources made students more excited about learning English (Erlina et al., 2023). Therefore, young learners can give their excitement to learn English through authentic tasks or materials. Additionally, both teachers and students can achieve the learning goals.

Writing is considered the most demanding and challenging learning skill by both native and non-native learners (Pardede, 2024). It's a useful linguistic ability that needs a lot of other abilities to be learned (Srouf et al., 2021). The constructivism then found as one of the approaches that can be involved in teaching and learning writing. Based on Vygotsky's (1978) social-constructivist theory, Rahimi and Fathi (2021) conducted research on the use of constructivist medium, *Wiki*, to build their writing performance, self-regulation, and self-efficacy. In the current study, *Wiki* enabled more proficient students to use writing self-regulation techniques to mediate amongst less proficient peers. When more capable peers worked with them to define writing goals, produce and organize new ideas, and assess the collaborative writing projects, the less capable peers got more involved in the writing assignments. Later, the less skilled classmates expressed more satisfaction with their writing abilities.

The study above is in line with According to Yang's (2018) research, students who participate in collaborative writing are more likely to develop new language knowledge.

Furthermore, Li and Storch (2017) noted that there has been a growth in the study on computer-based collaborative writing and hypothesized that in the age of computer media communication, second language learners will be able to pick up new literacy skills more and more. Lastly, Wichadee (2010) reported that the majority of students believe that group work can improve their writing proficiency by allowing them to see their peers' edited work.

For instance, AL-Ghazo and Al-Zoubi (2018) discovered that constructivist learning design improved the writing abilities of college students. According to their studies, the majority of conventional tactics have not helped students become better writers. As a result, EFL students require additional practice in order to develop their writing skills in English, and English language learners who have learning disabilities should receive extra support. Consequently, teachers must select appropriate and successful exercises and methods to help students advance their writing abilities.

Other studies about constructivism also has been conducted by Agustini et al. (2019) with the focus on young learners as the subjects. The implementation of constructivism approach for young learners is believed to be impactful for their gaining knowledge process. It is considered as constructivism emphasizes a learner-centered approach and the importance of giving students the chance to create meaning and participate actively in the teaching-learning process. For instance, Dagar and Yadav (2016) in their study confirmed that since constructivism places more of an emphasis on learning and creative activities, young learners in constructivism classrooms perform better academically than those in traditional classrooms. It is supported by Zein (2017) who stated that generalist teachers also employ traditional techniques, such as reading aloud or dictating a book's content and asking the kids to repeat it, or writing on the board and having the class copy what they write. This approach is unsuitable for the features of young learners since it ignores students natural desire to play and have fun and limits their ability to use their imagination. Those statement from previous studies are in lined with Piaget's (1964) theory which stated that constructivism approach gives young learners learning opportunities deemed appropriate for their ages and developmental stages while also giving them the freedom to "construct" their own education. Therefore, the implementation of constructivism approach for young learners is proven to be advantageous in enhancing their English skills, in particular productive skills.

As aforementioned, this study identifies an acknowledged knowledge gap in the scope of prior research on constructivism for young learners, which has not received much attention. In addition, the previous research did not address the subject of teaching English writing using constructivism approach. This includes a number of undiscovered dimensions that have recently drawn interest from researchers in various disciplines (Agustini et al., 2019; Zein, 2017). The constructivism approach in teaching English writing for young learners should be explored further to provide understanding to the educators and students on how constructivism approach works in teaching young learners, especially in English writing class. Therefore, this literature article formulated a research question: "What is the suitable implementation of constructivism in writing class for primary students?"

METHOD

This research has been conducted in article literature review research by using Synder's

research (2019) that has four steps in conducting literature review; designing the review, conducting the review, analyzing the review and writing up the review. The data used in this research were taken using journal articles database such as Google Scholar, Taylor and Francis, Onlinelibrary.wiley, ERIC, DOAJ, JSToR, international proceeding journals, and national accredited journal. 23 research articles that used in this research were classroom practices research, literature research, exploratory research, and explanatory research.

In finding the research, the researcher used guideline from the keywords such as teaching writing use constructivism, constructivism approach in language teaching and related words. The researcher used the prior researches in publication range 1994-2023 with as newest articles as possible with inclusion criteria. The keywords used such as "teaching writing through constructivism", "teaching young learners + constructivism", and "constructivism + students' writing". Those articles that published in 1990s were the articles that explained the very first discussion which talked about Piaget's constructivism. Moreover, some studies that has range more than 10 years still be used by recent researches because its broadly used by the scholars.

DISCUSSION

Definition of Teaching Writing from Constructivism Views

Teaching and learning writing should not be generalized as common writing, because it has each specialization in it (Hyland, 2003). For example, there will be teaching writing that focus on genre and context, while there will be someone who wants to focus just on its language structure or text function. Therefore, between teacher and students, it is important to decide and make an agreement on what is the learning goals in learning writing with certain duration of time. Myhill and Watson (2011) defined writing as a mirror for everyone to express their ideas, opinion, feelings, and etc. On the other hands, for students, writing is something that they wanted to avoid, because writing is identically with examination where the students should struggle to put all words on a piece of paper, or they have to type it down in the limit of time. However, writing task is an essential assignment for students to increase their writing ability (Weigle, 2007). Then, this statement is clarified by Myers et al. (2016) who stated that writing involves intricate cognitive, physical, emotive, and social processes. It is an expression of thoughts, hand, and heart. Composing is a component of communication overall. There isn't just one way to write. As they progress through the phases of planning, drafting, revising/editing, and presentation, writers employ a variety of techniques. In their daily lives, people write in a variety of written genres and formats for a range of readers and objectives.

Constructivism centers on the notion that individuals deliberately generate their own knowledge and that what people have experienced as a learner influence reality. Teachers implement the constructivism approach in their teaching process to deliver the knowledge between students and teacher, teacher is in the class as the guide not as the center of learning process, and it provides collaborative learning for students to students or students to teacher. This approach has been implemented by some teachers for students with special needs (Algahtani, 2017; Graham & Harris, 1994). By implemented constructivism in teaching writing, it facilitates the students with 'more time' to write. The chance that has been given to the students, activate their writing progress regularly (Graham & Harris, 1994). It resulted

to their attitude to writing activity. Then, during the learning process, teacher also can provide the students with authentic materials that close to their daily activity. It can help the students to understand the complex lesson especially to elaborate their ideas (Algahtani, 2017). Moreover, for the regular students, constructivism approach also plays its role to enhance students' writing ability. From the views of constructivism, the students are more confident to work with their friends rather than work alone especially in writing essay. It indicates that collaborative writing is better for the students particularly in elaborating their ideas into an essay. However, constructivism also emphasized its function to the meaningful context. In Rahmat's (2014) study, the collaborative writing used a movie as the authentic material to support the students to easily understand and expand their ideas into an essay. It is supported by Liu and Lan (2016) who conducted similar study and the result showed that from the views of constructivism, work collaboratively can motivate students to support the peer learning to gain more knowledge and to construct ideas together in order to strengthen their writing task.

From the explanation above, the definition of writing from the views of constructivism approach is an activity that emphasized written language in building knowledge through authentic materials to achieve the meaningful context in daily life. In other words, the process of producing written form of language that consisted of meaningful understanding which relate to daily context. Therefore, constructivism is commonly used by teachers in teaching writing.

The Process from Writing and Constructivism

In Glaserfeld's (1982) study there is a statement from Piaget related to constructivism. The statement is "For a constructivist, of course, that is how it has to be. From that perspective there is no way of transferring knowledge – every knower has to build it up for him/herself. The cognitive organism is first and foremost an organizer who interprets experience and by interpretation, shapes it into a structure world." (p. 613). By those statement, it can be inferred that in constructivism, people should build, meaning that people should find or create 'something'. Then, shape it into a structure world, which means that people should organize the 'something' together to become a unity. Another result came from Kamii and Ewing (1996) who inferred that in Piaget's constructivism theory, the process is started from the children go from "wrong" level to another level. It also can be stated as step by step.

While in writing process, students also should start from the beginning of the step, that is brainstorm or finding ideas. From Seow's (2002) article, there are four steps in writing; planning – drafting – editing or revising – and revising or editing. In writing process, students also need to ensure that their writing are based on the theme, has content, has purposes, and readable for the reader as the audience. In Zulfa et al.'s (2015) study, students are indicated has ability to develop their paragraph in academic writing. It has been counted from sentence to sentence. Thus, in writing process, students have to pass the sequence of construct letters to words, words to sentences, sentences to paragraphs, and paragraphs to a whole text.

In summary, in the process of writing, it also involves the constructivism approach where students need to pay attention to their steps. Build knowledge or find the ideas as planning, then interpret the ideas as drafting, and shape the ideas into more complex

information as revising. Therefore, the writing process matches with the constructivism theory which also can support the students to develop their ability in writing and the teacher also can use the constructivism theory in their teaching writing process to ease and motivate the students in learning writing.

The Interconnection between Teaching Writing and Constructivism

The relation between writing and constructivism approach brought them together in educational field particularly. By the use of constructivism, it has the benefits or the drawbacks for its implementation in English language teaching (Galgalo et al., 2020; Srour et al., 2021; Tarnopolsky, 2018; and Wyatt, 2023). A research by Zulela and Rachmadtullah (2019) has investigated about the use of constructivism in teaching writing especially in writing narrative for elementary students. The research was conducted by action research with three cycles. The pre-test and post-test have been implemented before and after the treatment of constructivism approach. The result indicated that students was increasing their learning narrative ability and actively involved in the teaching and learning process. Moreover, the students also actively build their knowledge based on their cognitive structure. Another research from Srour et al. (2021) revealed that in Palestinian context, English as foreign language that has been taught since grade 1 elementary school still became a burden for the students, moreover in learning English writing. Therefore, Srour et al. (2021) conducted an experiment used constructivism Read to Write which aimed to see the difference between experimental and control group. The constructivism approach that has been implemented required students to read and write the information based on their reading. In other words, it was a planning process or building knowledge. The result showed that the implementation of constructivism Read to Write is significantly improve the students' English writing ability.

From that two previous research, the two of them showed that by implementing constructivism approach students were significantly improve their writing ability. It can be seen from the students' changes in building their knowledge or finding the ideas, then students construct their knowledge or ideas into a written form. By doing so, teachers can implement the constructivism approach in teach their students how to write certain texts with certain theme, such as the narrative as mentioned early, descriptive text, academic writing, and etc.

Teaching Method Used in Implementing Constructivism Approach

In the implementation of constructivism in English language teaching, the constructivism also has been integrated with teaching method used by the teachers. There are some teaching methods that teachers use in English language teaching, but not all methods were implemented with constructivism. A number of scholars were interested or focused on project-based learning (PjBL) integrated with constructivism approach in their English language teaching process (Abdulwahed et al., 2009; Masrom & Yusof, 2013; Gangwar, 2017; and Matriano, 2020). The used of PjBL in Masrom and Yusof's (2013) was about the use of English games as a constructivist approach. The result showed that the use of English games in advantageous for students to increase their confidence especially for their speaking skill ability. The communication aspects are the important value from the

implementation of English games. In another words, games are requiring the students to collaborate, so that they need to have a good communication skill among others. However, in this case, PjBL is not the solution to increase students' confidence because the 'products' (games) is the solution from the problem appeared, not the PjBL itself. Then, research by Matriano (2020) who explored the use of PjBL and constructivism in an experimental called Exploration, Research, Interaction, and Creation (ERIC) as learning model. Unlike the research by Masrom and Yusof (2013), Matriano's research showed that the implementation of ERIC in PjBL integrated with constructivism showed significant improvement for students, particularly for students' engagement and interaction "by exploration, research, interaction and creation so that they can adapt the skills and strategies for them to become responsible learners and lifelong learners", (p. 225). Those two previous research on PjBL integrated with constructivism approach showed that the constructivism has its benefits and drawbacks which can be suitable for one group of students, but may not suitable for another.

The other teaching model that integrated with constructivism is problem-based learning (PBL). Schmidt et al. (2019) and Srikan et al. (2021) have conducted research about constructivism approach in PBL. In Schmidt et al.'s (2019) research, it found six main points in the implementation of constructivism in PBL. First, a discussion on a problem in a small group is able to activate the students' prior knowledge which help them in solving those problem. "Second, problems drive learning through the generation of situational interest" (p. 41). It means that by solving a problem, students are explicitly increase their level of curiosity and interest towards new knowledge. Third, it supports the relationship among students in society in academic ways. Fourth, it is also beneficial for the teacher to deepen their professional skills in guiding students to solve problem. Fifth, it enhances students to be more active to learn something new in their life by searching more learning sources through library, internet, and stuff. Last, both group work and individual work is equally implemented in PBL. Therefore, it can be concluded that the integration of PBL with constructivism approach give positive improvement to increase the students' ability in learning English.

From the two differences of teaching methods that integrated with constructivism approach showed that the implementation of constructivism brought its benefits and drawbacks towards the learning process. In PBL, constructivism tends to show that it is effective to enhance the learning process for the students. While in PjBL, constructivism's role does not really as effective as in PBL class. By those two differences, it depends on the students' skills and classroom condition whether the teachers can apply PjBL with constructivism or use another teaching method.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Teaching writing is one of the important aspects to increasing students' communication skills. As the important aspect in helping students' communication skills, teaching writing sometimes is combined with one ground learning theory. In this article, the ground theory that has been revealed is constructivism approach that is well-known from Piaget and Vygotsky. Moreover, this article presents the teaching writing from constructivism views particularly for primary students. Unfortunately, research on primary or young learners students with constructivism approach had not been found that many. Therefore, this

literature review article cannot provide rich information about that. However, in this literature, it revealed the suitable constructivism implementation for primary students in learning writing through the existing research.

In the realm of teaching writing, the constructivism approach that has been used as it is promoting the students' centered learning, it enhances students' active learning. The activity in teaching writing process will focus on students' engagement in building their knowledge, ideas, and critical thinking. Moreover, it also enhances the students' collaborative learning. Therefore, in the implementation, there will be some activities where the students can collaborate with other students and/or asking and giving comments or suggestion among students. Those collaborative activities are believed give the students chance to get more and new knowledge, particularly in increasing their writing skills. The role of teacher in teaching writing process uses constructivism approach is as the guide who pay attention on every single students' action during the teaching and learning process. By implementing constructivism approach in teaching writing, most teachers believe that there is a significant improvement in students' learning motivation and it increases students' score as well.

Another thing that can be highlighted is that, constructivism is suitable to be implemented in a class that use problem-based learning (PBL) method. It has been proved by some scholars that by integrating PBL and constructivism gives significant improvement and showed students' positive attitude towards the learning process. It is because in PBL method, it provides more activities where students need to expand their knowledge by discussion, interaction, research, and creation. By doing so, students can involve in some collaborative environment that can help them to gain more knowledge which also can help them to improve their writing skills.

This article is just seeing teaching writing from constructivism views. For the future researchers, it may be beneficial to explore the teaching writing from another views of learning theories and to provide empirical data. Providing the empirical data can prove whether the integration of certain teaching method in writing class with constructivism approach is significantly improve students' writing skills or not. It is hoped that this article can be used by teachers as the information sources in implementing constructivism approach in their writing class. Then, for the other researcher, this article may be one of the sources for the upcoming research in similar topic or field.

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