

Original Research Article

Tertiary Level Exchange Students' Perspectives on Self-Efficacy: Toward EFL Writing

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the students' self-efficacy on their writing competence. Descriptive study was implemented by distributing closed-ended questionnaires in addition to interview and the result of writing task. The subjects of this study were three students from Thailand. The students' responses in questionnaire were analyzed through frequency distribution and percentage. For the result of interview, it was transcribed in written form and used coding technique to classify the relevant points. The result of writing task became the supplementary data to confirm the findings and support conclusion. In a nutshell, the subjects of this study have moderate level of writing self-efficacy. Each student showed diverse selection in writing stage. The first student had moderate self-efficacy, but he relatively could cope with the writing problems. In the second student, the writing self-efficacy was the highest one, and it was proven from her better writing result. For the last student, similar to the writing quality, he considered himself weak in this skill.

Keywords: EFL writing; self-efficacy; tertiary level

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1. Introduction

Learning in another country gives challenging atmosphere for someone who get scholarship to be a foreign exchange student. It seems that he or she needs to do big adaptation to connect the background knowledge and self-habit with new condition such as neighborhood, teachers, materials, friends, and so forth. Culture shock is undeniable to take a part as well for their learning success. When a student gets an opportunity to be an exchange student in learning English, he or she is supposed to think what he or she is going to do in the new country. There are two possibilities for this option. First, they can go to the English speaking countries where the people inside of outside institution use the standardized English such as America, Britain, New Zealand, and Australia. The second, they probably select a non English Speaking country which provides Education about

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English language. All of those countries can give the learners about the knowledge of the target language, yet to produce the successful English teachers, the methods used by the two groups are not similar (Medgyes, 1992).

With changing condition of the new environment, it automatically gives effect to the student's self-efficacy in academic life. Self-efficacy is interesting part that can be observed in the exchange students. It needs to be explored since this factor takes a part in influencing students' achievement in any education level including university stage. According to (Hsieh, Sullivan, & Guerra, 2007), self-efficacy is judgments about someone's abilities to complete a particular task. It means that when the students have high self-efficacy on their learning, it be one predictor to achieve their academic success. Zajacova, Lynch, & Espenshade (2005) further explain that academic self-efficacy is a stronger and consistent predictor of the student's success. Bandura (1977) states that in its Social Cognitive Model, there are three aspects that influence someone's self-efficacy, namely behavior, environment, and cognitive. From the three aspects, cognitive seems to be the most significant one. Another supporting idea about self-efficacy is proposed by Kerpelman & Mosher (2004). They state that self-efficacy give contribution to the students' future orientation that is interconnected with future success in career.

In the context of mastering English skill, learning writing is interesting activity for some students. For the others, it is something frustrating to conduct. It depends on the teaching and learning situation and motivation around the individual who learns the new language. (Noom-Ura, 2013) found that majority of Thai students get difficulties in learning English skills due to some factors, namely limited exposure and language materials, low confidence in using English for daily conversation, and the teacher with low qualification. Similarly, Suwanarak (2012) found surprising result that many of Master Degree students judge themselves as unsuccessful English language learners. From those two studies, it indicates that the implementation of English class needs attention and improvement in various aspects.

To relate the issue on low ability of the Thai students in learning English with self-efficacy on writing skill, it seems that there is limited reference that provides supporting information. Thus, taking into consideration the significance of the students' self-efficacy in producing better composition result and few references on foreign exchange students' self-efficacy belief mainly in writing skill, this study would like to highlight the Thai English learners' self-efficacy on their writing competence. Having experienced several

semesters in campus life, it is believed that the students have set their beliefs on their English writing learning. More specifically, the researcher is interested in exploring their self-efficacy on writing process stage, namely generating ideas, revising the draft, feedback, writing collaboration, awareness and control of writing process. It is considered significant to investigate since the result will give reflection for the teaching process of the English lecturers in English Education Study Program to pay attention to Thai students' need and to develop meaningful writing activity in the class.

2. Methods

Data for the research were collected during the 2016-2017 academic study year. Three foreign exchange students from Thailand majoring in English Education Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo were involved. They consisted of two males and one female. They were about twenty years old. From the general result of their writing, it indicates that they were classified in between intermediate Mid-level and intermediate Low-level based on ACTFL Guidelines-writing revised by Breiner-Sanders, (Breiner-Sanders, Swender, & Terry, 2002). The subject selection was purposively taken in accordance with the condition that they were exchange students who took Paragraph Writing course. They had passed Free Writing course and got basic concept of English writing in the previous semester.

A descriptive research methodology was implemented in this study. The instruments used were closed-ended questionnaire and interview. The questionnaires were adapted from "Writing Skills Questionnaire" (n.d.). From thirty questions, 26 were considered suitable for the instruments. All the questions were in the form of "can" indicating the capability they have in the process of writing. There were three options to answer the questions, namely Yes, No, and Sometimes. Option Yes indicates that the students have strong belief they can do the certain writing activity. Option No indicates they cannot do the given writing activity. The option sometime indicates that the students believe they were not totally confident to do certain step in writing. More specifically, in one moment, they can do it, but in another time they cannot. To support the data, the result of their writing also contributed to support the findings. To know the variable, sub variables, and the total numbers for each, it is explained in table 1.

Table 1. Variable, sub variables, question number of questionnaire

| Variable | Sub Variables | Question Number |
|--------------|--|-----------------|
| Writing Step | Generating Ideas | 1-6 |
| | Revising | 7-16 |
| | Feedback | 17-22 |
| | Collaboration | 23 |
| | Awareness and Control of Writing Process | 24-26 |

After collecting the questionnaire answers, all the data were coded and then analyzed through frequency and percentage. In the students' writing, the focus to analyze was in terms of five writing elements covering generating ideas, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics.

3. Findings and Discussion

Having got the result of the questionnaire, the analysis of the data was summarized in the following table 2 and chart 1.

Table2. The students' responses on their self-efficacy in EFL writing

| NO | STUDENT | FREQUENCY | | | PERCENTAGE (%) | | |
|------|---------------|-----------|----|----------|----------------|-------|----------|
| | | YES | NO | SOMETIME | YES | NO | SOMETIME |
| 1 | Student 1(M) | 1 | 5 | 21 | 3.7% | 18.5% | 77.7% |
| 2 | Student 2 (A) | 7 | 1 | 19 | 26% | 3.7% | 70.3% |
| 3 | Student 3 (I) | 1 | 9 | 17 | 3.7% | 33.3% | 63% |
| MEAN | | 3 | 5 | 19 | | | |

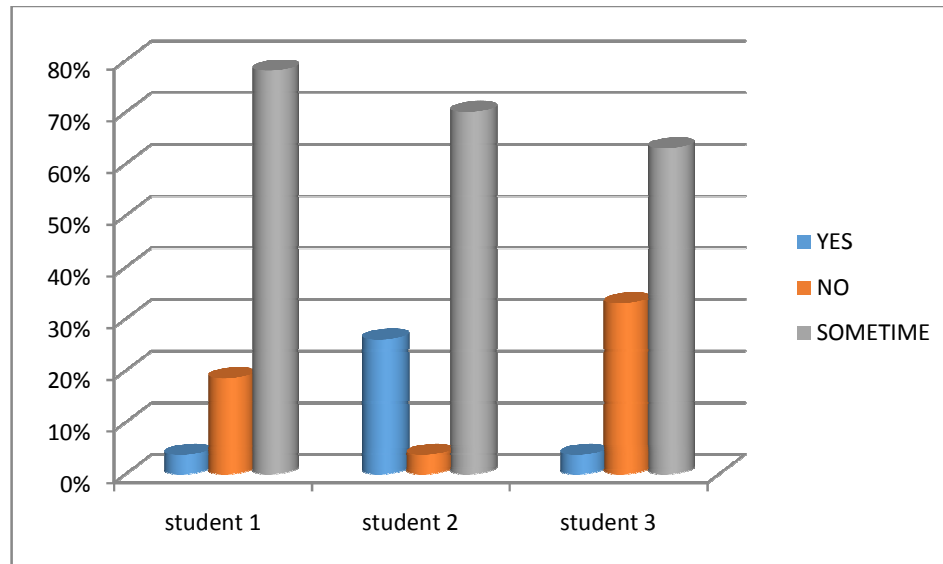
Note :

High self-efficacy : if the subject selects Yes more than 50%

Moderate self-efficacy : if the subject selects Sometime more than 50%

Low Self-efficacy : if the students selects No more than 50%

Chart 1. The students' responses on their self-efficacy in EFL writing



Based on the data in table 2 and chart 1, it tells that the students' self-efficacy laid into the moderate level. The more the students selected Yes, the higher the self-efficacy is, and vice versa. If the option sometime is selected more than 50%, the self-efficacy can be classified into moderate category. The following part is the description of the students' response in each option. The first and the third students were males and the second one is female.

The student 1 put his "can" in feedback point. More specifically, he could enjoy sharing with friends a draft of he has written. For the things he could not solve consisted of five parts. First, he could not write instantly or without preparation. He needed to have some thoughts before writing. In revising area, he could not easily change his mind when he had made his writing, get his sentence lively, and get rid off mistakes in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and other important element of writing. in feedback segment, he could not give noncritical feedback in pair asseement.

The things that can be confirmed to the interview result is that the student didn't have serious problems in learning writing since according to him, during the process of writing he could ask for help to dictionary, and mini discussion could be alternative solution to produce better composition. Different from writing course, in listening activity

he found big problems in interpreting the speaker's intended meaning due to limited background knowledge and exposure. He stated that when the lecturer asked him to catch the point of the audio recorder, he felt that it was very confusing since he needed to transfer the information two times. First, he tried to translate into Thailand language, then he continued to transfer it into *Bahasa Indonesia*. It seems that he did two jobs to accomplish the assignment and took long time than his Indonesian friends.

In the result of writing task, it is observed that he made mistakes in mechanics especially in capitalization and spelling. Here is the data when he wrote his paragraph about himself. Some of the initial letters were written in the small form although it appeared in the first sentence. In term of content he quite understood by giving relevant idea to support his paragraph unity.

Example of student 1 writing

*"I graduated from SMA Darussalam Narathiwat. **when** I was in senior high school, I like history subject. **in** kindergarten **untill** senior high school I studied English Language."*

Student 2 also showed the same level of self-efficacy. It was in the moderate stage. However, the items the subject selected for the option Yes are different from the previous one, and the number is bigger, seven yes options. It means that there is a slightly increasing number on the students' writing confidence. The first part is in the generating idea. She believed that she could write or think her way into actually *changing* her mind. The second is on revising segment. In this part the subject selected yes for three questions. She believed her capabilities that dealt with finding a main point in a mess of your disorganized writing, giving the sentences lively, and getting rid of most mistakes in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and so on, and cleaning her writing up so that it becomes readable. In feedback point, the subject believed that she could enjoy sharing with friends a draft she has written. The part of awareness and control of writing process, the subject believed that she could make changes in the way she goes about writing based on the things she noticed, and she could vary the way she goes about writing depending on the situation: the topic, the audience, type of writing, and so on.

The interview data involved to support the data are that she could enjoy writing class. The main learning problem actually laid on pronunciation; therefore, from the first semester if she attended the course related to spoken skill, she used to feel confused. Fortunately, many of her friends helped her to correct. As an attempt to improve her English skill, she convinced herself to spend her time to take English course during the semester holiday in Pare, Kediri. A month practicing English there, she could learn English intensively with effective supporting environment.

In the result of writing assignment, it is observed that she has minor problems in mechanics such as spelling, grammar such as subject verb agreement and plural form. For the other elements, there is no significant mistake.

Example of Student 2 writing

*“A beggar has many problem. First, he is poor, doesn't **has** money, family, and home. Since he was born, he never **see** face of his parent. In another day, the beggar turns to be rich. However he never forget his previous condition.”*

The last part is describing the student 3. From the questionnaire response, the subject gave strong belief on Feedback that he could enjoy sharing with friends a draft of what he has written. However, he gave the biggest number of No than the other two friends. It indicates that he was not confident enough on his writing proficiency in terms of generating ideas, revising, and feedback. In generating idea part, he felt could not come up with ideas or insights he had not thought of before. Then, he could not develop lots of words quickly and freely on a topic that didn't much interest him, followed by inability to write changing ideas from his first thought. In revising part, he could not find a new shape of his writing which he had previously organized. He also could not find problems in his reasoning or logic and straight them out. To make the sentences lively and perfect from mistakes, he felt that it could not be done easily. For the last part, he selected that he could not listen to the reactions of a reader to his writing and try to see it as others see it, even if he thinks the reactions are all incorrect. He also could not give noncritical feedback to another writer.

In the interview result, the student shared that he found difficulties in learning English. He felt that his English background knowledge was still limited. He also explained that when he first come to Indonesia and learned in campus, it seemed that he learned English in the beginning level with many basic concepts that needed to be reviewed many times. What he has got was not enough to support his English competence in following the decided learning objective in campus. Consequently, he had to push himself to be active in discussion activity with his classmate both from Thailand and Indonesia.

The following is the example of student 3 writing and some of his mistakes. It could be seen that the students still did not know how to relate ideas in making effective writing. It seems that the unity of sentence was not well-ordered. Another problem is grammar such as the incorrect arrangement of quantity expression. Spelling also becomes his next attention.

Example of Student 3 writing

*“Chickens make the best pets for tau reasons. **Chicken is one food for humans all. By for that chicken including the food at the very delicious. Because people like to eat chicken’s meat. The chicken meat is delicious.**”*

The results of the three students showed similarities and differences. The same thing relates to their language learning experience which was not quite satisfying to equip them mastering the four skills of English including writing. In line with this, Landau, Gleitman & Landau (2009) agrees that the success of language learners also depends on their experience. Noom-Ura (2013) stated that the condition of English instruction in Thailand needs to be improved including the qualification of the teachers. The teachers give many inputs in the class. If what they transferred is appropriate, it can enhance the students’ competence. On the other hand, if the teachers do not have accurate and adequate sources for the learners, it gives bad impacts to the students’ future success in language mastery. Besides, the position of English not used for daily communication makes them find English difficult in this country. It is almost the same with Indonesian learners condition. The people who have to speak English are the ones who work in company under the cooperation with foreign countries, government, International based school, not in all areas. This probably brings low motivation on the students to use English more.

Nevertheless, experience cannot be an excuse to be left behind in this era. Plenty of online access are available, there is a kind of autonomous learning if the students wants to improve their English. It happened in the first subject. He tried hard to make English progress by watching You Tube video or movie with English subtitle. It is admitted by previous studies that in English teaching and learning video movie become supporting media to enhance students' ability (Kelsen, 2009; Wood, 1999). It also helps the student generate ideas in writing, particularly vocabulary items. Additionally, Mayora (2009) argues that using You Tube is beneficial to encourage authentic writing in EFL class.

To draw a conclusion, it can be said that although the three students has moderate level of self-efficacy, it still can be differentiate from the number of the option selection. The second student has higher self-efficacy than the first, and the first students self-efficacy is higher than the third. If it is connected to the grade of self-efficacy, it seems there is connection between the students self-efficacy and their writing proficiency. In the student 2, she felt confident to several abilities and in her writing result, the mistakes was minor, While in the third student his higher numbers of No is confirmed in his writing result. The mistakes found were major. According to Zajacova et. al., (2005), the higher self-efficacy the better performance the teacher can predict. Linnenbrink & Pintrich (2003) mentioned that self-efficacy is one that is keys to promoting students' engagement and learning.

To cope with the writing problems, the students often gathered with friends form both Thailand and Indonesia inside and outside class. This activity gradually helped them to get accustomed with the new learning style and can accept friend's feedback sincerely. It supports the concept of cooperative learning which highlights sharing to solve learning problems. It is also believed to enhance their active learning (Meyers & Jones, 1993). From the question belonging to collaboration items, all students agree that it make them easy to write. The pair or group assignment was interesting to do in the class for them. It is also justified by Noom-Ura (2013) that joint construction of the text particularly in genre based approach helps a lot for students with low English proficiency.

4. Conclusions

The results of this study show the picture of the Thailand students' self-efficacy in writing class. It got the same result which is on moderate level. It indicated that the students are not maximal in following the writing course. They need more guidance regarding the very different education background and learning situation. The efforts conducted by the students to get English exposure need to be maintained so that they have habit for improvement. Getting familiar with online source, collaborative activity, and taking additional English course can be alternative to get the best result. For the future research, it is expected to explore more aspects on the exchange students' self-efficacy since it can help to determine the best treatment for better English learning.

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