

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

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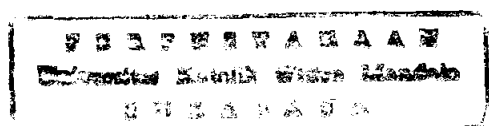
1.1 Background of the Study

Writing, as a component of literacy, is a skill that is considered to be essentially important in today's culture. In the increasingly connected world since the advancement of Internet, people becoming more and more dependent on writing as a means of communication. E-mail, chatting program, blogs, social networking program, web sites, and other online communication are becoming common nowadays. According to Hyland (2003) "the ability to communicate ideas and information effectively through the global digital writing network is crucially dependent on good writing."

Realizing the importance of writing, at a school where I teach and where I conducted this study, students have been introduced to the process of writing since an early age. Surabaya International School is a school that uses American curriculum that put a lot of emphasis in literacy as a part of its program.

Surabaya International School (SIS) has students from various countries around the world. The school is having students from a wide range of countries such as France, China, India, with the majority of students came from Korea and Indonesia. Most of the students did not use English as their first language. However, at school they are required to use English as the language for learning.

Students have been taught to write in English since an early age. In fifth grade, they are learning to become writers. In the classroom, they have writing workshop where they have special time to create their own writing. During the writing



workshop, the students think about ideas for writing topic. Then, using paper and pencil, or using Microsoft Word, they create the first draft, second draft, revising and editing on their own. They learn about the 6+1 Traits of Writing to identify good quality writing. They have time for discussions with their teacher about their writing. During those times, the teacher gives suggestions for revising and editing. However, students often do not revise or edit their works as suggested by the teacher, especially for the ESL (English of Second Language) students. Since their English acquisition is not as good as the native speakers, they often do not realize that they made mistakes. They sometime cannot identify the parts of their writing that they can still improve. They rely on the teacher to show them which parts to edit and revise and what kind of revision and edition that they have to do. They rely too much on the teacher for revising and editing their writing piece.

To minimize students' dependency on the teacher for revising and editing, students can work collaboratively in peer revision. However, sharing students' writing was not easy because of the tool that the students use in creating writing. If the students wrote their first draft on books, then they had to make another copy after being revised, which was not practical. If the students use Microsoft Word to create their drafts, they have to print out or send it by e-mail if they want other people to read their writing. If they had to print, then they would waste a lot of papers, since each student had to print more than once during revision. Furthermore, if they had to send by e-mail, the students got confused by the number of files that they accepted during the revision. It was difficult for them to keep track of the files, separating between the newest one with the older ones. As such, this writing process was conducted in seclusion, where they have to think on their own about their writing.

This is where wiki comes into the equation. Wiki create an environment where students can collaborate with their peers and teachers in the writing process. The word wiki is from a Hawaiian word, *wiki-wiki*, which means quick. A wiki is a collaborative web space where anyone can add content and anyone can edit content that has already been published (Richardson, 2009). Wikis allows students to write collaboratively, to revise their writing, to get input or suggestions from their peer and teacher in an asynchronous way during the creation of the writing piece. Wiki pages are available for editing and commenting to all members at all times. No one has to wait for latest updated file to be forwarded to them. It is easy to track each person's contributions and to maintain a record of all changes and edits (Waters, 2007 as cited in West & West, 2009). Many wikis also offer advanced features that enable file sharing, commenting, and embedded discussion (West & West, 2009). As such, wiki has many possibilities as a technology tool to support learning.

Even though wiki is not the only technology that people used for teaching writing, I considered wiki as the most appropriate for this particular study. There are other technologies that have been used for teaching writing beside wiki. The most similar one that has gained popularity is a blog. A blog is similar with a wiki, but actually they are very different. A blog is essentially an online journal or diary, usually written by one person, which is added regularly to the blog. Visitors can add comments to any of the posting in a blog. On the other hand, a wiki is like a public website or public web page, started by one person, but which members can add to, delete or change the content as they wish. Members of the wiki can contribute to any writing piece that already displayed by editing it online, and then the wiki will displayed the newest version while still keeping the previous version in the page history. A wiki is more dynamic because it can have more than one author. A wiki is

not linear, like a blog. Pages can be linked back and forth as you like. One popular example of a wiki is the Wikipedia. Based on its nature, a wiki is more appropriate for collaborative writing which allows peer revision and feedback during the writing process on the wiki. Therefore, for this particular study, I chose to use wiki instead of blog.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In order to improve their writing, students must often revise and edit their writing piece, creating first draft, second draft, and so on in a recursive writing process. However, since the ESL students are still trying to master the English language, they rely too much on the teacher to point out which part of their writing that needs improvement, which part to revise and edit, and what kind of revisions that they need to do.

To minimize the dependency of the students to their teachers, they can work collaboratively with their peers to help them improve their writing. Technology, or wiki in this study, may give a solution in creating an opportunity to get peer revision for helping students in the writing process. Based on this idea, the study aimed at exploring and finding an effective way of using wiki-based collaborative tasks to help students revising and editing their writing piece. Thus, the study tried to answer the following questions:

1. As a collaborative writing tool, how could wiki help students with peer revision and feedback to create a better writing piece?
2. How do students perceive the wiki-based collaborative tasks as a support for their writing?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study was to explore the use of wiki as a tool in helping students to improve their writing piece by getting peer revision and feedback during the writing process.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The study was based on the constructivist theory which claims that “meaning is gained through active learning, social interaction, and the construction of knowledge” (Bruner, 1990; Fink, 2003; Jonassen, Howland, Marra, & Crismond, 2007, as cited in West & West, 2009). In collaborative work, students share the process of developing their ideas, instead of working in seclusion. They can reflect and expand their ideas and at the same time evaluating their peers’ ideas.

1.5 The Significant of the Study

Currently, there are not many studies done about the use of wiki for teaching writing. This study gave insights on the use of wiki collaborative tasks for improving students writing skills. By giving insights on the use of wiki as a new technology to improve writing skills, this study has contributed to the field of teaching writing, specifically, and to education in general. Educators, researchers, and administrators can use this study to gain knowledge about how to use wiki in education.

1.6 The Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study mainly discussed the use of wiki collaborative tasks for peer revising and editing stages in the writing process to improve writing skills, including the students’ perception about these tasks. The revising and editing process followed the 6+1 Traits of Writing guidelines which was the model for teaching writing in fifth grade at Surabaya International School. Following this model of teaching writing, the

revision consisted of revising for ideas, organization, voice, word choice and sentence fluency, while editing consisted of editing for conventions which include spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization. Writing skills in this thesis were limited to the skills stated in the assessment used for assessing students writing piece. It included the skills for writing ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions only, and excluded the presentation skill since this thesis did not concern with the presentation of the writing piece.

Since the schedule between writing workshop and computer time were not always the same, the students did not always do their writing tasks on wiki in the computer lab. They received their instructions from the fifth grade teacher either in the classroom or in the computer lab. Since I work as a computer teacher, the observation that I conducted was limited only when the students receive their instructions in the computer lab. However, the students writing activities were monitored through wikis.

1.7 Assumptions

- a. Participants have the same level of English language skills that enable them to write in English.
- b. Participants have basic skills for using technology.
- c. Participants have an e-mail account that was used to sign up for the wikis.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

- a. Wiki is from a Hawaiian word, *wiki-wiki*, which means quick. A wiki is a collaborative web space where anyone can add and edit content that has already been published (Richardson, 2009). In this thesis, wiki refer to the technology being used as a tool in teaching collaborative writing.
- b. The 6+1 Traits of Writing is a model of teaching writing that gives a common

vision and expressions for describing the qualities of good writing, which consists of ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation (Culham, 2001). In this thesis, the 6+1 Traits of Writing was used as a technique for teaching writing process and for assessing students' writing piece.

- c. Writing process is the process of writing that goes through different stages which generally begin with:
- Prewriting
 - Drafting
 - Responding which includes teacher or peers feedback. However, in this thesis it only limited to peers feedback since the focus is students collaboration task to improve writing.
 - Revising which includes revising for ideas, organization, voice, better word choice, and sentence fluency.
 - Editing which include editing for conventions.
 - Publishing
- d. Revision is a part of the writing process where the author makes changes on their writing piece for better ideas, organization, voice, sentence fluency, and word choice (Culham, 2001)
- e. Editing is a part of writing process where the author makes changes on their writing piece to follow conventions, which include grammatical, spelling and mechanics improvements (Culham, 2001).
- f. Writing skills are “specific abilities which help writers put their thoughts into words in a meaningful form and to mentally interact with the message” (LinguaLinks Library, 1999). In this thesis, writing skills are connected to the abilities stated in the writing assessment used in 6+1 Traits of Writing. It includes

the skills to create a writing piece that has clear ideas, organization, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and excluded the presentation skill since the purpose of this thesis did not concern with the presentation of the writing piece.

- g. Asynchronous communication is a type of communication where the exchange of thoughts, contributions and information does not happen in real time, it occurs with a time delay, allowing participants to respond at their own convenience.
- h. Real time communication is a type of communication in which the exchange of thoughts, contribution, and information is received at (or nearly at) the instant it was sent.