

Teachers' Beliefs and Practices about Teaching of Writing: A Pathway to Holistic Teaching

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Abstract: This research investigates teachers' beliefs and practices about EFL writing. The teachers of EFL writing become potential asset to promote holistic teaching. Teachers of EFL writing are challenged to facilitate meaningful writing class to provide holistic learning. Under the principal theory of writing instruction, the data were analyzed to identify teachers' orientations in teaching writing. The data reveal that the teachers' beliefs about writing are writing as formal system, cognitive process, social activity, content-focused form, creative expression, and text function orientation. The beliefs, then, influence the practices since the teachers employ activities reflecting the diverse beliefs. The practices direct to holistic teaching since it meets the students' spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual needs. Through the empirical evidence of this research, we argue that the exploration on teachers' beliefs and practices can be inspiration for other EFL practitioners in building classroom atmosphere leading to millennial holistic teaching in EFL writing.

1 INTRODUCTION

Global challenges expect people to have strong capability on every single human aspect including being whole person who is balance in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. It is crucial to build human resource having strong interconnectedness of experience and reality, and of the surrounding context and environment to have a sense of meaning and give meaning to life. This challenges any institutions to provide. The spirit of holistic education offers the great chance for developing human beings with a global conscience, a vision of peace, love, and intelligence (Jafari, 2012).

The area of education contributes much on reaching the goals. The strategic role of education creates possibilities of making the whole individual. In the context, EFL language teachers as one of contributing elements are expected to facilitate the students into stimulating classroom activities. The teachers are responsible for bringing the students become the actor of the learning process which is commonly known as student-centred learning. It directs to become holistic person who learn best when s/he encounter whole ideas, events, and materials in purposeful contexts, not by studying subparts isolated from actual use. They must aware of the connection, the relevance, and the tide between the classrooms

and outside. The EFL learning that requires both teachers and students to have strong connection to outer aspects is EFL writing course.

In the area of EFL writing, most teachers are using process approach to facilitate the students to be able to have good writing skill. The approach has been applied for years ago. It was the beginning of the shift toward more holistic teaching. The process oriented writing class tries to see writing as the way to make the students feel that writing is discovering meaning and involving many stimulating aspects for students' writing skill. It encourages the students to be independent writer, and makes them aware of the back and forth process of writing (Rohmah, 2009). Shifting from product and process approaches EFL writing class indicates that EFL writing was not only focus on micro-aspects but also macro-aspects (Rohmah, 2008; Ling, 2012). It became a great leading activity toward millennial holistic teaching in writing.

It has been accepted idea that teachers' way of thinking and understanding are very crucial component of their teaching practices. Language teachers themselves may hold certain beliefs about language learning that will have an impact on their instructional practices and that are likely to influence their students' beliefs about language learning (Rula, 2009). The beliefs, then, influence the way the teachers conceptualize the tasks and contextualize the

idea in the classroom. The teachers' beliefs play important role in their development because teachers are highly influenced by their beliefs, which in turn are closely linked to their values, to their views of the world, to their conception of their place within it (Khanalizadeh & Allami, 2012).

Therefore, this paper describes what the teachers' beliefs are and how the beliefs are applied into practices which facilitate holistic learning in the writing courses. The results can be intellectual resource to make better policy in teaching and learning process, and the guideline to plan professional development activities associated with specifically holistic teaching in language learning and globally holistic education at university level.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Defining the Teachers' Beliefs

Exploring the teachers' perception, view, and mental process has been major concern since 30 years ago. It is very important research interest because the exploration provides information about what are the teachers' beliefs and how the beliefs affects their teaching practices, the way they see their works, the mental process of preparing the works. Moreover, the beliefs also show the teachers' instructional thought, the actions they do in the classroom, and the decision making for teaching problems.

Teacher's belief is a complicated phenomenon that involves various aspects. Beliefs might be defined as one's personal views, conceptions, and/or theories. Belief systems represent a personal guide by helping individuals define and understand the world and themselves. Teachers' beliefs play a central role in the process of teacher development because teachers are highly influenced by their beliefs, which in turn are closely linked to their values, to their views of the world and to their conceptions of their place within it (Yu & Lee, 2014).

2.2 Holistic Education and 21st Century Skills

The historical background of education that education should be understood as the art of cultivating the moral, emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual dimensions of the developing child (Miller, 2014) inspires the movement of holistic teaching. The dimensions explain some important intellectual sources that make the existence of holistic education influence education practice today. Starting from the idea of wholeness of all phenomena, joyful and

suffering-mind and matter-human and non-human-son, meaning it is to synthesis and integration rather than separation. The second is the life is not mechanistic but meaningful. The complexity of life and human being should not be seen only from cause and effect relationship and like calculating machine. It was based on the belief that language is a whole; therefore, it is to be taught as a whole (Çekiç, 2010).

The implementations of holistic education in Indonesia have been done in some educational levels with different subjects (Mardijono, J.J., 2004; Yuniarto & Khasanah, 2014; Rochmawati, 2015; Sutarmanto, Tjahjono, & Hamami, 2017). In the area of English Language Teaching, it has been implemented in teaching Syntax course where the students were assisted with not only theoretical forms but also more practical applications. Students cooperated and supported each other to improve and make progress in doing various provided activities. Students' comments and inputs in the end of the course show that the applied model is worth continuing and adapted to the other courses. In addition, in high school level, this approach has also been implemented in the assessment process for Junior high school students in which the results show that the assessment is applicable, practical, authentic, effective and efficient.

2.3 EFL Writing

Writing has been one of language skills involving many aspects of the language. It needs grammatical accuracy and proper word choice. It involves well-organized ideas and logical content. Moreover, the current discussion on EFL Writing about various orientations of writing brings another challenge for EFL teachers and learners. Formal system of writing commonly found in the last decade focusing on proper grammar, correct development of ideas, and rigid standards. It has been familiar with product oriented. The cognitive system has been applied to accommodate the students' need to experience the process of writing. This system allows the students to discover the meaning through writing.

With the high standard competence to achieve, writing course should facilitate the students not only with the systematic rules of academic convention which is called micro skills of writing but also the macro skills. Teaching writing meaningfully is the paramount target. The teacher as the facilitator is expected to bring writing class out of the box. Being in the box is still needed, but with the different learning outcome, of course, the teacher should think deeply about giving more than that. Thinking that writing is also the place for students to represent or to voice their beliefs and values should be respected. Thinking that writing as the way to train students

about respecting each other, that writing is a freedom, writing is the place to be critical and respectful, and so on (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012). The teaching of writing is place where the teacher can meet the students' spiritual, physical, intellectual, and emotional needs.

2.4 Holistic Teaching in EFL Writing

Contextualizing the idea of holistic approach in the teaching process requires that holistic teachers are expected to have these following criteria: 1) holistic teacher is sensitive of knowing the types of the students. Teachers must encourage students' personal construct, 2) holistic teacher elicits the students' construction system through meaningful communication on students culture, way of thinking, 3) the holistic teacher enables students to elaborate their construction system and then relate the taught subject knowledge to it, and 4) holistic teacher is able to develop critical students for generating knowledge, questioning, and learning (Patel, 2003).

3 RESEARCH METHOD

This research is qualitative research as stated by aims at understanding human behaviour by building complex, holistic pictures of the social and cultural settings in which such behaviour occurs. The data are the teachers' viewpoints on EFL writing and holistic teaching, and the teachers' explanation on the way they teach EFL writing representing holistic teaching. The research subjects are ten EFL Writing teachers at English Letters Department, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. The instruments to get the data are questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The questions provided focus on two main topics; one is to see what the teachers' beliefs and the other one is to explore how the practices of teaching writing. Recording done by using recorder is that the recorded information can be played back several times. Note taking is done by checking the alternative answers and writing some additional information as necessary.

The data analysis is begun with the review on the results of the interview. The data are described from the teachers' belief, the teaching practices, and the explanation on the teaching practices. Each teacher's answer is arranged one by one to have comprehensive information. The beliefs are seen from the teachers' opinion, viewpoints, and logical explanation. The application of holistic teaching is seen from the teachers' experiences in the classroom connected with the holistic theory. The problems are mostly from the instructional context. The solution is about

the way the teacher finds better activities, tasks, and materials to facilitate the holistic learning.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 The Belief That Writing as a Formal System

The writing instruction focuses on students' application on grammatical knowledge and lexical knowledge. Almost all teachers (9 out of 10) have this view. They give grammar as important aspect in writing. The outstanding features are: familiarization, controlled writing, guided writing, and free writing. T5 explicitly teaches writing using controlled writing. The major idea of having this orientation is that one of criteria for assessing the students' writing is language involving the accuracy of grammar. By building students' awareness on the importance of correct grammar in writing, it does not mean that teachers give much attention only for that. It is mostly because of building good habit in writing good academic paper (Hyland, 2003). The basis for having this orientation is structuralism and behaviourism. Building habit in having correct grammar intensively in writing helps the students to automatically apply when they write. The more the teacher exposes students with grammar exercise while writing, the more awareness of grammar accuracy the students have. In this learning process, the intellectual dimension of holistic education is facilitated.

4.2 The Belief That Writing as a Cognitive Process

There are nine teachers having this writing orientation. The patterns are pre-writing, outlining, drafting, editing, revising, and publishing. The major goal of this writing process is to shape the students become independent producer of the text. Probably the model of writing processes most widely accepted by L2 writing teachers is the original planning-writing-reviewing framework. This sees writing as a "non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning" (Mulligan & Garofalo, 2011). When the teacher facilitates the class with this focus, s/he is trying to bring real experience of the long process of writing.

The process of writing begins with selection of topic which can be done by the teacher and/or students. Mostly the topic is from the students as the

way to promote liberation for them. The more familiar the students are the better. It is commonly happened that students are happy to write about topic they chose. They can explore more and find the supporting information easily. However, it is also important to select a topic from the teacher. The beginning session of writing class is appropriate way to have a topic from the teacher. It is effective since the students will understand the possible topic to specific type of writing. The next stage is prewriting in which students are assigned to ask questions to find ideas, continue to collect relevant ideas for paragraph/essay development. It is possible for them to take notes and of course make an outline.

After the outline finished, it is the time to compose or write the essay through systematic and logical arrangement. The idea about coherence and connection is essential at this stage. For ensuring whether the composition is on the right track, the students have chance to be given any feedbacks, correction, responds both from teacher and audience. This is normal stage to pass since audience and their contribution plays very important role to shape the composition. The teacher's respond covers all micro and macro aspects of the composition while the students' respond with their limited knowledge usually covers the grammar and spelling.

Revising or respond to revisions is the following important stage in the process. The students refine the composition based on the respond. The stage is to build students' awareness on collaborative work in producing a composition. After that, proofreading and editing that is the time for the students to double check the form, the layout, and evidence for final drafting. The evaluation stage is the time when the teacher evaluates the students' improvement along the process of writing. The next stage is publishing that is the time for students to circulate or present the composition. Unfortunately, this stage is not frequently done due to limited time. The final stage is follow-up tasks to address weaknesses of the composition.

When a teacher of writing applies this orientation, the major purpose is to make students experience the recursive process of writing. Every stage is meaningful and contributing to the students' writing skill. The cooperation and collaboration experienced by the students also facilitate the holistic learning, namely spiritual dimension. Students help and trust each other in peer assessment process. However, there is a problematic situation when this orientation dominates the class; the substance of the content of writing is not really discussed. Some teachers also involve the discussion on the basic elements of a paragraph or an essay, and during the first stage it is one of the topics.

4.3 The Belief That Writing as a Social Activity

There are three teachers hold this orientation. It is in line with the premise that writing activity cannot be separated from social activity in which all member of writing community in a class work together. Writing is seen as not only producing a text, but also an activity to achieve some purposes. It is more than just co-creating the ideas into writing; it needs other external factors mediating the writing process. Achieving the purpose needs the collaboration among the member of the class. Therefore, teachers should be able to create the situation contributing to involvement from different learning resources. Making students aware of what writing types will be acceptable in society is the most paramount goal.

Developing factual genres such as recount, procedure, description, report, and explanation is the main focus. The first procedure is analyzing a model from its elements such as the organization, the content, and the language. After that, the students and teacher have joint construction meaning they all work together to construct the essay (Fung, 2010). At the following time, the students independently write their own essay. To shape the students' essays meet the expected genre, the teacher provides a session called teacher-student conference. Based on all feedbacks given at the conference, the essays are revised and edited. Thus, this activity facilitates spiritual, emotional and intellectual dimension of holistic learning where personal assistance is provided by the teacher to solve student's problems.

4.4 The Belief That Writing as Focus on Content

There are two teachers have this orientation. The teachers who have this orientation direct the students to the substantive content of the essay. It is close to the belief that effective writing is linked to effective reading thus both are interconnected (Pierre, 2014). Teachers view that the substantive content of the essay is the main focus. The dominant activity associating this orientation is mind mapping and library research. Teachers develop students' topic familiarity through brainstorming ideas and reading relevant resources.

The main stages are generating ideas, developing ideas, and organizing ideas. Being able to generate ideas, the students need high schemata that can be gained from the reading process. The role of reading is very essential since the common topics for the essay are about social issues such as pollution,

smoking, crimes, etc. This needs more supporting information to make the content is academically accepted. The key feature of this focus is the use of mind-map where the theme becomes the central of essay development. Through this belief, the practice of teaching writing facilitates the emotional dimension and intellectual dimension in which students can explore many ideas, feel the sense of usefulness and experience read-before-write process.

4.5 The Belief That Writing as Focus on Creative Expression

Only one teacher has this orientation. The focus is on students' self-expression since many activities are directed to give students a place for sharing their personal aspects; hence, the students are the centre of the writing activity. There is no rigid practice like when the focus is on the formal system. The students can share personal beliefs, point of view in the form of journal writing in very positive and cooperative environment as it is for students' creativity, and free-writing model (Koupae, Rahimi & Shams, 2010). From this orientation, teachers try to build students' ability in doing self-construction. This belief is focusing on text function. It leads to the effort of making students aware of the elements of writing including micro and macro elements. Thus, by doing this activity, the teacher facilitates the emotional and intellectual dimension of holistic learning.

4.6 Holistic Learning in the Practices of Teaching Writing

The second important point to discuss is the holistic view gaining from the teachers' beliefs and teaching practices. The teaching practices are identified into four areas of the students' needs such as spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical. It is found that the students' spiritual needs are met when T1 understands the natural development of the students. T2 provides time to listen students' ideas and problems on writing. T3 encourages students to explore their own value in writing. T4 engages the students into truth relationship, and provides peer review. T5 directs students to contemplate their personal aspects. T6 has personal conference with students to show whether the ideas make sense or not. T7 asks students to be good listener to other ideas. T8 facilitates with trusting relationship.

The fulfilment of the students' emotional needs is represented through several features. T1 give a freedom for students to explore ideas. T2 makes students are aware of the idea of usefulness. T4 also

give students sense of usefulness of reading and satisfaction. T5 develops students' sense of freedom. T6 gives choice for realistic hope by allowing the students to choose the topics. T7 designs a situation where students give a respect for other choices. For the physical need, it is identified that only T1 who provides relaxing atmosphere through allowing students to listen music, eat, and drink. It is uncommon, but it helps students much. They can learn in nice situation which later influences their learning. The students' intellectual need is facilitated by T2, T3, T4, T5, T7, T8, and T9. T2 provides teacher-student consultation. T3 creates an effective communication while T4 lets the students to experience decision making. T7 promotes activities to develop students' habit. T9 makes students feel safe since she guarantees the students that the teacher herself writes many writing activities.

Related to the influence of the beliefs to the teaching practices, the researcher finds that most teaching practices are strongly influenced by the beliefs of teachers. The teaching practices employed by the teachers include implicit grammar knowledge by placing students' grammatical accuracy as one of criteria. The teachers' practices on cognitive process can be seen from the process approach applied in the writing stages. Teachers state that they begin the class with selecting topic, brainstorming, planning, drafting, editing, revising, and publishing. When it comes to writing as social activity or genre based approach, the practice is reflected in modelling stage where teachers give a model of essay to be analyzed from its organization, its content, its language, and its rhetorical features (Qian, 2010).

The practice close to focus on content is from the activity of doing mind mapping before writing. Teachers' assignment assigning students to tell themselves in writing is the close to the view that writing is creative expression. The practice for showing writing focuses on text function is through long discussion on constructing topic sentence and thesis statement, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. Also, it can be seen from the writing course outline which mentions the different texts to develop by the students.

The relationship between the beliefs and the practices are clearly seen from the previous part of the conclusion, moreover, this research also finds that the two aspects correspond to the holistic teaching. The practices done by teachers have purposes to fill students' needs as a whole person. The spiritual need is given by the teachers through understanding students' natural development on writing skill, listening to students, allowing students to hold their own value, building trusting relationship through peer reviewing on strengths and weaknesses, facilitating students to raise their personal aspects, asking

students to see any usefulness in writing process and to see whether the writing makes sense or not, asking students to listen other ideas. While to meet the students' emotional needs, teachers provide situation to acknowledge students' sense of freedom, to bring students into the use of reading in writing, to help students making realistic hope, and to train students respecting other choices.

To fill students' physical need, one teacher creates relaxing situation by allowing students to enjoy their drink and snacks during writing process in the classroom. For filling students' intellectual need, teachers provide teacher-student consultation, effective communication, and decision-making.

5 CONCLUSION

The teachers' beliefs are seen from the writing orientation as part of the writing pedagogy. There are five beliefs of the teachers regarding the teaching of EFL writing. Two beliefs seeing writing as a formal system focusing on language structure and writing as a cognitive process focusing on the writing process are of the most viewpoints among all teachers. The other three beliefs see writing as social activity, as content focus, and as creative expression. Those five beliefs provide the practices of teaching writing that facilitate four dimensions of holistic education, namely spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual dimensions.

Therefore, it is recommended to EFL practitioners to provide various activities and consider the dimensions of holistic education into their classrooms for both writing course and other language courses. The research also suggests that having clear orientation of writing directs teachers to have effective teaching. EFL writing classroom is potential place to promote holistic teaching since the process of writing requires teachers to fill not only mental/cognitive process but also other essential aspects. To explore more comprehensively holistic education in English language learning, it is better to delve into how students see and perceive the learning process they experience in holistic learning environment. It is also suggested that educational researchers have further investigation on the relationship between the beliefs and the practices, and what factors influence the relationship and what factors making no relationship between beliefs and the practices.

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